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English Housewives in Theory and Practice, 1500-1640

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AN ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS OF Lynn Ann Botelho for the Master of Arts in
History presented May 9, 1991.

Title: English Housewives in Theory and Practice, 1500-1640.

APPROVED BY THE MEMBERS OF THE THESIS COMMITTEE:



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Women in early modern England were expected to marry, and then to become housewives. Despite the fact that nearly fifty percent of the population was in this position, little is known of the expectations and realities of these English housewives. This thesis examines both the expectations and actual lives of middling sort and gentry women in England between 1500 and 1640.

The methodology employed here was relatively simple. The first step was to determine society's expectations of a good housewife. To do so the publish housewifery

advice books written for women were analyzed to define a model English housewife. This ideal woman was given three primary responsibilities: prepare food, preserve food, and care for the sick and injured. In addition, she was expected to perform many other duties both inside and outside the home, and regardless of the task, she was expected to perform these chores herself. All of the model housewife's responsibilities, however, were clearly centered around her role as a caretaker.

Personal documents such as letters, diaries, memoirs, and household account books were examined to see if and how actual women of the middling sort and gentry conformed to the published ideal. Women were grouped according to their social rank and divided into two groups: (a) the middling sort and lower gentry, and (b) the upper gentry.

The comparison revealed a large gap between the ideal and the actual lives of English housewives between 1500 and 1640. Women were still the primary caretaker and provider of food and medicine; however, they did not produce the meals, or preserve the food themselves, as the advice writers recommended. Instead, all of the housewives in the study acted primarily in a supervisory role, and only assisted with such tasks on occasion.

An interesting trend did emerge with regard to the degree of adherence to the published ideal. The farther down the social scale one looked, the closer the general conformance to the printed model. Middling sort and lower gentry women produced more and purchased fewer of their household necessities than their social betters. Likewise, they were more likely to be involved, along with their servants, in producing of such goods. Conversely, women of the upper gentry were more likely to purchase most of their household necessities. Housewives of the upper gentry were also more likely to function primarily as supervisors, and to participate in household chores infrequently.

There was, however, one point of universal agreement between advice books and all levels of housewives. The medical skills of middling sort and gentry housewives were as extensive as the advice books recommended. Likewise in this regard, English housewives, almost to a person, were personally involved in the practice of minor medicine, regardless of social rank.

The English housewife between 1500 and 1640 was expected to be the caretaker of her household, both indoors and out. While the actual housewife agreed with this expectation, her methods of achieving it varied depending upon her position in society.

ENGLISH HOUSEWIVES IN THEORY AND PRACTICE,
1500-1640

by

LYNN ANN BOTELHO

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

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TO THE OFFICE OF GRADUATE STUDIES


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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Present scholarship on women in early modern England is a product of a twenty-year period of intense research and writing. A significant part of the work on this era, however, has focused on women and work, especially woman's role in the wage economy of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. While study in this area has ranged from the specific, (Diane Willen's "York Guildwomen, 1560-1700"), to the general, (Margaret George's *Women in the First Capitalist Society: Experiences in Seventeenth-Century England*), little investigation has been done on the most common, the most universal, of women's roles, housewifery.¹ The two modern works on English housewives are superficial and trite: Catherine Hall, "History of the Housewife," and Christian Hole,

¹Diane Willen, "York Guildswomen, 1560-1700," *The Historian* 46 (February, 1984), p. 209-217; and Margaret George, *Women in the First Capitalist Society: Experiences in Seventeenth-Century England* (Urbana; Chicago: The University of Illinois Press, 1988). See also: Susan Cahn, *Industry of Devotion: The Transformation of Women's Work in England* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1987); Lindsey Charles and Lorna Duffin, eds., *Women and Work in Pre-Industrial England* (London: Croom-Helm, 1985); Alice Clark, *Working Life of Women in the Seventeenth Century* (London: George Routledge and Sons, 1919), still the standard work; Levi Fox, "The Coventry Guilds and Trading Companies with Special Reference to the Position of Women," in *Essays in Honour of Phillip B. Chatwin* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1962), pp. 13-26; Barbara Hanawalt, ed., *Women and Work in Preindustrial Europe* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986); Rosemary O'Day, "The Professions in Early Modern England," *History Today* 36 (June 1986), pp. 52-55; S. O. Rose, "Proto-Industry, Women's Work and the Household Economy in the Transition to Industrial Capitalism," *Journal of Family History* 13 (1988), pp. 181-193; R. J. Scott, "Women in the Stuart Economy," (M. Phil. thesis, University of London, LSE, 1973); and Richard T. Vann, "Toward a New Lifestyle: Women in Pre-Industrial Capitalism," in *Becoming Visible*, eds. Renate Bridenthal and Claudia Koonz (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1977), pp. 192-216.

The English Housewife in the Seventeenth Century.² Hall's article touched only lightly on various aspects of housewifery throughout time, and is limited to a small number of printed sources. Hole too, confined her research materials solely to printed matter. She looked at both published advice books and published family papers, but her romantic notions seem to have adversely restricted her choice of examples. Consequently, her book was written with a saccharine naivete and littered with images of housewives who "shouldered all the work that fell to their lot not only with cheerfulness but with pride."³ An important distinction Hole failed to make was in the nature of the advice books. The printed housewifery guides must be treated cautiously and carefully because of their ambiguous nature. Was their content prescriptive or descriptive? Did the housewifery guides offer a vision of how the housewife ought to behave, or did they reflect how she did behave? Unfortunately, Hole did not address this issue and instead treated all advice books as unquestionably descriptive of the sixteenth and seventeenth century housewife. This thesis, by providing a study of the early modern English housewife of

²Catherine Hall, "History of the Housewife," *Spare Rib Reader*, ed. Marshe Rowe (Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1982), pp. 131-37; and Christina Hole, *The English Housewife in the Seventeenth Century* (London: Chalton and Windus, 1953). The study of Colonial and Early American housewives, however, is at a much more sophisticated level. Of particular note is Laurel Thatcher Ulrich's *Good Wives: Image and Reality in the Lives of Women in Northern New England, 1650-1750* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982). Works which address housewives in a general manner: Mary R. Beard, *Women as Force in History* (c. 1946; reprint, New York: Octagon Books, 1976); Gamalial Bradford, *Elizabethan Women*, ed. Harold Ogden White (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1936); Charles Carroll Camden, *The Elizabeth Women*, rev ed. (Freeport, N. Y.: Books for Libraries, 1975); Alice Clark, *Working Life of Women*; Frederick George Emmison, *Elizabethan Life* (Colchester, Essex: Cullingford and Co., 1970); Georgiana Hill, *Women in English Life from Medieval to Modern Times*, 2 vols. (London: 1896); Doris Mary Stenton, *The English Woman in History* (1957; reprint, New York: Schocken Books, 1977); Penny Williams, *Life in Tudor England* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1964); and Violet Wilson, *Society Women of Shakespeare's Time* (New York: E. F. Dutton and Co., 1925).

³Hole, *The English Housewife*, p. 116.

the gentry and middling levels, will counteract the overly simplistic vision of the happy housewife offered by Hall and Hole, with a balanced and realistic image drawn from manuscript, as well as printed, sources.

Secondary work on sixteenth- and seventeenth-century England has consistently presented a picture of a self-sufficient housewife, and household. Susan Cahn, in *Industry of Devotion*, is typical in this regard. She asserted that English housewives

grew their own grains and other foodstuffs; they preserved their own meats; they brewed their own beverages; they spun the yarn with which they made their own clothes and linens; they concocted their own elixirs and medicines from the herbs and flowers they grew in their own garden.⁴

But was this really the case? Cahn was merely parroting back the skills found in the early modern housewifery guides without determining actual practices. In this regard, Cahn was not alone.

This thesis, then, is a necessary first step in moving beyond the general statements to a critical analysis of the sixteenth and seventeenth century English housewife, both in theory and in practice. It explores whether the English gentry housewife, between 1500 and 1640, lived up to the self-sufficient ideal. To do so, the first part of the discussion describes both the view of women and their status in sixteenth and seventeenth century England to provide the necessary backdrop for a detailed examination of housewives. The next section establishes the housewifery ideal and the following chapters examine the actual lives of selected housewives between 1500 and 1640, in light of the established ideal.

Focusing on the middling sort and gentry level housewives was a deliberate decision, in order to make the best use of the available sources. First, these groups were

⁴Susan Cahn, *Industry of Devotion*, p. 74.

inundated with popular literature on housewifery. Second, women who left behind surviving personal accounts were often gentlewomen. And third, extant account books, wills, and inventories all reflect those same levels of society.

A fundamental question at this point is what percent of early modern English women were literate? Recently, this question has become the center of an historiographical debate. Traditionally, David Cressy's work on early modern English literacy rates has held the floor.⁵ He concluded that female illiteracy during this period hovered between 82 and 89 percent of the general population, gradually decreasing over time. (In other words, during that period the rate of female literacy increased from 11 to 18 percent.) Cressy asserted that the East Anglian women who form the basis for his conclusions "as a whole were no more literate and had no more need of literacy, than building workers and rural labourers."⁶

This view, in turn, has influenced the work of others. Rosemary O'Day, in *Education and Society, 1500-1800*, disagreed with Cressy to some extent. She reported that in 1580, when the overall literacy rate was approximately 30 percent, the overall population consisted of one literate female for every eight literate males. This ratio, according to O'Day, increased to 1:3 by the end of the seventeenth century.⁷

This notion of vast numbers of illiterate women has also been challenged by

⁵David Cressy, *Literacy and the Social Order: Reading and Writing in Tudor and Stuart England*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980); *Education in Tudor and Stuart England* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1975); "Levels of Illiteracy in England, 1530-1730," *Historical Journal* 20 (1977): 1-24.

⁶Cressy, "Levels of Literacy," p. 9.

⁷Rosemary O'Day, *Education and Society, 1500-1800: The Social Foundations of Education in Early Modern Britain* (London: Longman, 1982), pp. 20, 190. See also: Kenneth Levine, *The Social Context of Literacy* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1986), p. 77.

Michael Van Cleave Alexander in his *The Growth of English Education, 1348-1648: A Social and Cultural History*.⁸ Alexander questioned Cressy's very low literacy rate for both women and men, given the "growing interest in education since the mid-fourteenth century" when scores of new schools and colleges were being founded.⁹ Unfortunately, Alexander did not provide his readers with an alternative literacy level. However, the questions he raised are still valid and pressing.

Investigation by Nicholas Orme in the west of England did confirm the presence of elite girls in school as of 1311, and of gentry level daughters being sent to a priory "to teche them scole" as early as the 1450s.¹⁰ Rosemary O'Day also suggested that formal education produced increased literacy rates among gentlewomen. She asserted that female schooling of daughters from the middling sort and gentry was becoming a part of their accepted life-cycle by the end of our period.

Few gentry or bourgeois parents could afford to support their daughters through an indefinite period of spinster-hood. In the past they had sold their daughters to the highest bidder. Now they were hard put to bid sufficiently high themselves for the eligible males in society. A timely, brief and often minimal investment in an education sometimes appeared to be an appropriate alternative. At best, it might win a girl a husband; at worst, it might win her a means of self-support.¹¹

⁸Michael Van Cleave Alexander, *The Growth of English Education, 1348-1648: A Social and Cultural History* (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1990).

⁹Alexander, *The Growth of English Education*, p. 10.

¹⁰Nicholas Orme, *Education in the West of England, 1066-1548* (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1976), pp. 201, 204, 209, 210. In contrast to Orme, Jo Ann Hoepfner Moran has found little evidence of the education of women in the diocese of York. Jo Ann Hoepfner Moran, *The Growth of English, 1340-1548: Learning, Literacy, Laicization in Pre-Reformation York Diocese* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985).

¹¹O'Day, *Education and Society*, p. 191.

Gentry and middling level women, one must conclude, were certainly a plausible audience for the housewifery books for a number of reasons, not the least of these being their ability to read them. Suzanne W. Hull concluded that "the publication of this many books for women readers is persuasive evidence that a substantial number of women knew how to read English by the end of the sixteenth century, and that their needs and interests were being recognized by both writers and booksellers."¹²

The terms gentry and middling sort are both terms which defined a person's place in early modern English society. A knowledge of their meaning is essential to understanding the distinctions between the different social ranks of this time, even though not all parts of society will be discussed in detail in this thesis. The gentry is traditionally defined as gentlemen and their immediate families. By the seventeenth century this included those of the baronet status and below, ending just above the yeomanry. Prior to that time the highest social sub-strata within the gentry were the knights. The gentry could be subdivided, based on wealth, into the upper gentry, the middle gentry, and the lower, or "parish" gentry. Further, these divisions are roughly equivalent to the status of baronet and knights, esquires, and gentlemen.¹³

The gentry could also be broken into general groups based on the size of their land holdings, and the type of local office held. For example, research has shown that gentlemen of seventeenth-century York were divided into three different groups based on their land holdings. The lesser gentry typically held 50 - 1,000 acres of land, the middle gentry held 1,000 - 5,000, and the uppermost gentry held lands of 5,000 - 20,000

¹²Suzanne W. Hull, *Chaste, Silent and Obedient: English Books for Women: 1475-1640* (San Marino: Huntington Library, 1982), p. 1.

¹³Keith Wrightson, *English Society, 1580-1680* (1982; reprint, New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1986), p. 25.

acres.¹⁴ Like land holdings, the type of office held by a gentleman also reflected his position within the gentry as a whole. Members of the lower gentry might serve as the High Constable of their Hundred, and the middle gentry would serve in more prominent offices, while the upper gentry would tend to hold the most prestigious places.¹⁵

However, gentility was more than a strict ranking of one's landholdings or offices; it was also a lifestyle and accompanying set of beliefs. Keith Wrightson explained:

Gentility was based on landed wealth, a wealth conspicuously displayed in the superior houses, diet and clothing of gentlemen, in the leisure which they enjoyed, in the numbers of servants they employed and in the memorials which they erected to perpetuate their memory after death.¹⁶

The gentry, then, was an elite group defined by their wealth, power, and social status, who were ranked among themselves yet united by their shared interests and by their "common claim to bear the name gentlemen."¹⁷ They represented approximately two percent of the English population.¹⁸

The distinguishing marks of the gentry are fairly clear and straightforward. The term middling sort, however, is less clear. This group was comprised of those groups of people--merchants, lawyers, yeomen, husbandmen, craftsmen--who were below the gentry and above the poor. While lawyer, merchant and craftsman do not need additional

¹⁴Wrightson, p. 25.

¹⁵Wrightson, p. 26.

¹⁶Wrightson, p 25.

¹⁷Wrightson, p. 26.

¹⁸Wrightson, p. 24.

defining, husbandman and yeoman do warrant discussion.¹⁹ Husbandmen were those who tended the animals and tilled the soil alongside their servants. As Peter Laslett said, "all yeomen were husbandmen, because they worked the land, but not all husbandmen were yeomen by any means."²⁰

The yeoman was of even more nebulous status than the husbandman. Legally the yeoman was one who held lands by freehold tenure which produced at least forty shillings income annually. However, this strict definition bears little resemblance to reality. The yeoman status was a fluid one, falling somewhere between the gentry and husbandry.²¹

Recent scholarship, having the benefit of an increased number of local histories, has maintained this understanding of the fluid nature of yeomanry, while refining its placement in society. Modern scholarship has discovered that while many yeomen were indeed freeholders, they were also leaseholders, and copyholders, and that some held their land by a combination of tenures. Additionally, there were forty shilling freeholders who did not label themselves as yeomen.²² Status among men in the country was determined not so much by land tenure, as by the size of one's holdings.

¹⁹Merchants and lawyers were considered quite distinct from the gentry class because their incomes lacked the "prestige historically associated with the tenure of manors and its traditional military and administrative obligations." Another factor which distinguished the professionals from the gentry was the constant attention to business required by a successful merchant or lawyer denied him time to participate in the leisure activities characteristic of the gentry. Wrightson, p. 28. Craftsmen were considered as distinct from husbandmen, although they were viewed as approximately equal, socially. Peter Laslett, *The World We Have Lost*, 2nd ed. (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1971), pp. 46.

²⁰Laslett, pp. 45-46.

²¹Albert J. Schmidt, *The Yeoman in Tudor And Stuart England* (Washington: The Folger Shakespeare Library, 1961), pp. 3-4.

²²Wrightson, p. 31.

Estimates of yeomen's landholdings range from just above fifty acres to over eighty acres for the wealthy yeoman.²³ His annual income could vary in proportion to his landholdings. The lesser yeoman commonly had income of £40 to £50 per annum and the substantial yeoman could well have income of £100-to £200 a year.²⁴ Given the size and value of many yeomen's holdings it is not surprising to find overlap between the wealthiest yeoman and the lesser gentry, or between the poorer yeoman and the greater husbandman. Then too, poorer husbandmen are sometimes difficult to distinguish from the more affluent laborers and shepherds. Yeomen, husbandmen, merchants, lawyers, and craftsmen, however, tended to be all grouped together by contemporaries when "in less formal moments, they simplified their terminology and spoke of 'gentlemen', 'the middling sort of people' and 'the poor'."²⁵

A contemporary understanding of the terms housewifery and housewife is also necessary before turning to a discussion of how the ideal was determined. The *Oxford English Dictionary* defined housewife as "a woman (usually a married woman) who manages or directs the affairs of her household; . . . a woman who manages her household with skill and thrift," and housewifery as "the function or province of a housewife: management of household affairs; domestic economy; housekeeping."²⁶

²³Wrightson, p. 31; M. A. Havinden, *Household and Farm Inventories in Oxfordshire, 1550-1590*, Historical Manuscripts Commission, Joint Publications, vol. 10. (London: 1965), p. 13.

²⁴Wrightson, p. 33.

²⁵Wrightson, p. 37.

²⁶*The Compact Edition of the Oxford English Dictionary* (hereafter *OED*) (1971; reprint, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980), pp. 1340-41.

The writers of the advice books often provided definitions themselves. The most comprehensive contemporary description was provided by Thomas Tusser in 1597:

Of huswife doth huswifery, challenge that name,
Of huswifery huswife, doth likewise the same.
Where husband and husbandry joyneth with these
there wealthinesse gotten, is holden with ease.

The name of a huswife, what is it to say,
the wife of the house, to the husband a stay:
if huswife doth that, as belongeth to hur,
if husband by godly, there neddeth no stur.

The huswife is the, that to labour doth fal,
the labour of hir, I do huswiferie cal.
If thrift by that labour, be honestly got,
then it is good huswifery, else is it not.

The Woman, the name of a huswife doth win,
by keeping hir house, and of dooing therein:
and the that with husband, wil quietly dwel,
must thinke on this lesion, and follow it wel.²⁷

Housewifery by definition, then, was the management and production of life's necessities by the housewife within the home as a requisite step in achieving and maintaining economic security.

The concept of the ideal housewife was determined by surveying the whole range of practical advice literature to housewives.²⁸ These books, all written by men for women, were chosen because of their idealistic approach. In other words, they

²⁷Thomas Tusser, *Five Hundreth Points of Good Husbandry United to as Many of Good Huswiferie* (London: P. Short, 1597), STC 24385, pp. 123-24.

²⁸Rather than using a sample, this study is based on the entire population of housewifery advice books known to have been published between 1500 and 1640. Most, but not all, are listed in *A Short Title Catalogue of Books printed in England, Ireland and Scotland, and English Books printed Abroad, 1475-1640*, 2 vols., compiled by A. W. Pollard and G. R. Redgrave, eds. W. A. Jackson, F. S. Ferguson, and Katharine F. Pantzer (London: The Bibliographical Society, 1967). Most were read on microfilm. However, some were read in the original editions in the Cambridge University Library.

presented what men assumed the model housewife should be doing. From the period between 1500 and 1640 there are thirty-five books which meet the necessary criteria of being directed toward women readers and discussing the housewifery arts.

At first glance some of these authors may seem to be unusual choices for our English housewives to have read, but closer examination shows that they were indeed most fitting. Johannes Ludovicus Vives initially appeared to be ill-suited for a discussion of gentry housewives. He was a noted Spanish humanist, whose work for women, *The Education of a Christen [sic] Woman*, was originally addressed to the English royal family, and certainly not the middling sort or even the gentry. Vives, however, was a particularly popular writer in England who had five other translated works in English at this time.²⁹ His *The Education of a Christen Woman* reflected this popularity by going through six editions by 1640.³⁰ The inclusion of his works among the advice guides is indeed warranted.

The use of two other authors, Xenophon and Tasso, also needs justification. Tasso was a noted Italian writer whose general influence on English manners was significant in the sixteenth century.³¹ The Thomas Kyd translation of his *The Householders Philosophie* also included a supplement "whereunto is anexed a darrie booke for all good huswives" which certainly justifies the work's inclusion in this study. Xenophon's inclusion in this investigation is warranted, like Vives, by his popularity in

²⁹*The Dictionary of National Biography* (hereafter *DNB*), vol. 20 (1917; reprint, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1950), p. 379.

³⁰Even though Vives originally wrote this book for the royal family, his popularity among the gentry and middling sort can be seen in the number of editions which were published.

³¹Felicity Heal, "The Ideal of Hospitality in Early Modern England," *Past and Present* 102 (February, 1984), p. 87.

the press. There were six English editions of his *Treatise of Householde* during our time period. Like Tasso's, Xenophon's writings were influential in early modern English society. The *Letter-Book of Gabriel Harvey, a.d. 1573-1580* included an entry which addressed Xenophon's influence in sixteenth century England.

All on the suddsayne offendid with those
 (Tullyes *Orations* and Aristotle's *Politckes*)
 I strayte gett Plato or Xenophon by the nose,
 Two excellent fellowes in every circumstance,
 If ether or both had sufficient mayntenance.
 Incredible it is,
 What in those twoe is.³²

The books which form the core of this study, then, are books written or published for English women of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

These books were analyzed in the following manner for this thesis. I constructed a standardized form to chart non-content-related aspects of the books which included the intended audience, the author's (and in some cases the translator's) religion if known.³³ In addition, the contents and publication dates were plotted on a spreadsheet and evaluated with regard to subject correlations, and changes over time.³⁴ This form helped evaluate the effect of religion on the concept of the ideal housewife, the effect the level of society had on this ideal, and the over-all popularity of a specific set of skills. Yet another form, this time a sample flow-chart, traced the "borrowing" of ideas from

³²Edward John Long Scott, ed., *Letter-Book of Gabriel Harvey a.d. 1573-1580* (London: Camden Society, 1884), p. 133.

³³See Appendix A.

³⁴See Appendix B.

one book to the next.³⁵ Finally, I plotted the number of books on housewifery published each year, as well as the number of conduct books published yearly. I then used that plotted publication information to compare the changing levels of interest in practical housewifery skills and leisure activities. Calculation of trendlines clearly shows that between 1580 and 1590 interest in practical housewifery books declined, while conduct books continued to grow in popularity.³⁶ Finally, a comparison was made between the ideal and the actual to determine to what degree the experience of real gentry women correlated with the printed standard.

The research model has been kept simple to compensate for the problematic nature of the source materials. The advice literature, as we have noted, is fraught with problems.³⁷ Who is the author's audience? What is his purpose in writing? Is he out to make a point; promote his own values; reinforce society's values? Or does he merely reflect life around him? These are a few of the most basic questions one must answer, or attempt to answer, before profitable use can be made of the material. Diaries, letters, and memoirs are not free from potential problems either. Again the questions center around the author's motivation in writing. Was it for public knowledge? Or were they

³⁵Upon examination of this chart (Appendix C) one can clearly see where certain books merely repeated, or perhaps repeated with a few additions, the contents of a particular volume. Those "copies" had little new to contribute to the housewifery ideal, but were important to the continuation of the ideal.

³⁶See Appendices D and E.

³⁷The following acknowledge these problems and discuss their conclusions in this light: Kathleen M. Davies, "Continuity and Change in Literary Advice Literature," in *Marriage and Society in the History of Marriage* ed. by R. B. Outhwaite (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1982), p. 25; and Alison Wall, "Elizabeth Precept and Feminine Practice: The Thynne Family of Longleat," *History* 74 (February 1990): pp. 25-26. Christine W. Sizemore, however, is much less cautious and does not refer to any problems in the use of these sources. Christine W. Sizemore, "Early Seventeenth Century Advice Books: The Female View Point," *South Atlantic Bulletin* 41 (January 1976): pp. 4-48.

being honest with themselves? What was the author's intent? Both Alison Wall and Kathleen Davies asserted that the writers of advice books were clearly describing what they expected of women, rather than reflecting the reality around them. Davies said, "it would be very difficult now to maintain that the conduct books can be used on their own to show how men and women actually behaved."³⁸

While no source is entirely free of problems, the use of more "factual" material, such as account books, wills, and inventories, has added a third and more concrete dimension to the study. Since these items usually consist of lists, they are much less open to conflicting interpretation.

Up to this point, the discussion of housewives has been centered on those of the middling sort and gentry level, with an understanding that they were a significant part of the intended audience of the advice literature, but how was that conclusion reached? The answer to this question is formed in part by the books themselves, and in part by the scholarship of others. The books often stated their audience in the preface, the introduction, or the title of the work.³⁹ The audience can also be found within the content of the book itself. For example, a sixteenth century edition of Xenophon's book, *Treatise of Household*, described the housewife as a manager, "and so I had my wife, that she should thinke her selfe to be, as if it were the overseer of the lawes within our

³⁸Wall, pp. 26-27; Davies, p. 59.

³⁹For example, John Partridge, *The Widowes Treasure Plentiffully Furnished with Secretes in Physyke. Hereunto are Adjoynded, Sundrie Prette Practices of Cookerie* (London: G. Robinson for E. White, 1586(?)), STC 19433.5; Thomas Tusser, *Five Hundreth Points*; Sir Hugh Platt, *Delights for Ladies* (London: H. L. and R. T., 1628), STC 199839; *A Closet for Ladies and Gentlewomen, or, The Art of Preserving, Conserving, and Candyng* (London: Arthur Johnson, 1608), STC 5434.

houses."⁴⁰ The implied presence of servants needing close supervision placed the reader among the strata of society that customarily employed help: the middling sort and gentry.⁴¹

Secondary sources are divided in their identification of the primary audience of these books. For example, Hull believed these books were not directed solely to the gentry, but were intended to be used as a tool for social mobility by the middling sort.⁴² Schmidt, on the other hand, disagreed, insisting that the gentry were the intended audience of these books. He asserted that "although these help and hint books coincided with yeoman prosperity," the books' contents only "trickled down to the yeoman from the gentry for whom the volumes were intended."⁴³ However, regardless of the intent, both Hull and Schmidt agreed that the advice books' message was heard by both gentry and middling housewives.

Earlier, both Xenophon and Hull inadvertently raise an important question. Did the gentry housewife merely act as a supervisor, as Xenophon suggests, or did she actually participate in the housewifery chores, as Hull contends? A point of divergence is reached within the ideal of the English housewife over the participatory nature of the woman, both views find support in the printed housewifery guides. The lives of actual

⁴⁰Xenophon, *Treatise of Householde* (London: Thomas Berthelet, 1532), STC 26069, f. 33v.

⁴¹According to Laslett, the mean proportion of households with servants within these social strata ranged from 23 percent for craftsmen and 47 percent for husbandmen, to 81 percent for the gentry, based on a sample of 100 English parishes. Laslett, p. 72. Nobility, because of their elevated position, would not be the intended audience of books which promoted such skills.

⁴²Hull, *Chaste, Silent and Obedient*, pp. 138-39.

⁴³Schmidt, p. 14.

housewives reflect this split as well. Some women were much more personally and physically involved in the performance of the housewifery tasks than others.⁴⁴

While determining an early modern housewifery ideal was not always an easy task, collecting the relevant background information on the advice writers has been much more difficult and much less successful. Research limitations due to the lack of sufficient research materials and facilities near Portland State University confined my biographical search to the *Dictionary of National Biography* and *Fuller's Worthies*.⁴⁵ From these two sources I had hoped to learn the educational, religious, and regional backgrounds of the advice writers. Unfortunately, this search proved largely futile. Of the thirty-five housewifery guides, nine were published anonymously, while the remainder were divided between fifteen authors. Of these fifteen, only nine could be located through the secondary sources.⁴⁶

Though impressionistic, this small sample did provide some significant insights into the lives of these writers which very well may reflect the backgrounds of the advice authors as a whole. The most prominent characteristic of this group was their occupation; they all made their living as writers. This supports Hull's view that women readers and a female market existed in early modern English literature. These men relied upon the sale of their books for their livelihood, and would therefore not have wasted their efforts on unprofitable topics.

⁴⁴This will be discussed more fully in the following chapters.

⁴⁵The *DNB* and Thomas Fuller, *The Worthies of England*, ed. John Freeman (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1952).

⁴⁶These are: Sir Thomas Elyot; Thomas Kyd; William Lawson; Gervase Markham; John Murrell; Sir Hugh Platt; John Partridge; Thomas Tusser; and Johannes Ludovicus Vives.

They were all educated to some degree, many having attended a university. Even those without formal schooling were well traveled and conversant in languages such as Greek, French, Italian, and Spanish.⁴⁷

At least two of the advice writers had high level political connections. Sir Thomas Elyot, who also wrote *The Boke Named the Governour*, enjoyed the patronage of both Cardinal Wolsey and Thomas Cromwell.⁴⁸ Thomas Tusser, though less well-connected, still had powerful patrons. He served William Paget until his wife's illness, then Sir Robert Southwell until Southwell's death.⁴⁹

The secondary sources do not, however, contain much information on the authors' religious affiliations. The *Dictionary of National Biography* indicates that Sir Thomas Elyot was an Henrician Catholic, as he "accepted the reformed doctrine" in 1536.⁵⁰ The same source also confirms that Vives was a Spanish Catholic.⁵¹ For the rest of the housewifery authors, these sources tell us little about their religious beliefs.

The content of their works does suggest certain religious beliefs. For example, Gervase Markham insisted that the English housewife be a:

⁴⁷Elyot had knowledge of Greek and Latin, *DNB*, vol. 6, p. 1293; Kyd attended the Merchant Taylor's School and had knowledge of Latin, Italian, French, and some Spanish, *DNB*, vol. 11, p. 349; Lawson, "seems educated," *DNB*, vol. 11, p. 739; Markham was in the army in the Low Countries and had knowledge of Latin, French, Italian, Spanish, and probably Dutch, *DNB*, vol. 12, p. 1051; Murrell had traveled in France, Italy, and the Low Countries, *DNB* vol. 13, p. 1314; Platt attended St. John's College, Cambridge and Lincoln's Inn, *DNB*, vol. 15, p. 1293; Partridge was a professional translator and poet, *DNB*, vol. 15, p. 427; Tusser attended King's College, Cambridge, *DNB*, vol. 19, p. 1301; and Vives was an internationally known Spanish humanist, *DNB*, vol. 20, pp. 377-78.

⁴⁸Elyot, *DNB*, vol.6, p. 765.

⁴⁹Tusser, *DNB*, vol. 19, p. 1301.

⁵⁰Elyot, *DNB*, vol. 6, p. 766.

⁵¹Vives, *DNB*, vol. 20, p. 377.

godly, constant, and religious woman, learning from the worthy Preacher and her Husband those good examples which she shall with all careful diligence see exercised amongst her servants.⁵²

The emphasis on the woman as the religious instructor within the household, as will be discussed later, was characteristic of Calvinist or Puritan leanings.

Unfortunately, the religious affiliations are not known for enough of the individual authors to make any sort of satisfactory comparison between religious groups and the housewifery ideal. The few known examples do not seem to suggest that housewifery skills promoted by writers from specific religious groups are markedly different from those skills advocated by the group as a whole. This admittedly weak generalization does, however, agree with the conclusion of Kathleen M. Davies in her study of the advice books on marriage. She concluded that there was little, if any difference between the advice offered by writers from divers religious groups.⁵³

As we shall see, there were significant differences between the published housewifery ideal and the actual lives of gentry housewives. The early modern English housewife did indeed meet the medical and physical needs of her household and neighborhood. She also saw to the running of her household. However, total adherence to the published model was not the case. Social rank determined the degree of adherence. The good housewife of sixteenth and seventeenth century England was not as self-sufficient as the advice writers would have liked. She often purchased finished or partially finished items which, according to the published literature, should have been the product of her own hands. The ideal generally reflected the priorities of English

⁵²Gervase Markham, *The English House-Wife* (London: N. Okes for J. Harrison, 1631), STC 17353, p. 2.

⁵³Davies, "Continuity and Change," p. 78.

housewifery between 1500 and 1640. However, the early modern housewife seldom performed the related prescribed tasks herself, and her household was seldom as self-sufficient as the advice books recommended.

CHAPTER II

VIEW AND STATUS OF WOMEN

Before one can begin a detailed study of early modern English housewives, a general understanding of the view and status of women in the sixteenth and seventeenth century is necessary.

The sixteenth-century woman was heir to over 3,500 years of literature, thought, and theology, which had debated her position in society and discussed her nature. In addition to being the benefactor of this body of writing, the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries contributed their own unique voice to the discussion. In particular, the Reformation added additional turmoil and questioning. England, between 1500 and 1640 felt the changes leading up to and reverberating from the Reformation. These changes were reflected in the status of Protestant women.

Woman's position in society was determined by a contemporary understanding of her nature. The views of four groups: the scholarly community, theologians, the medical world, and the "female controversy" in the popular press, all contributed to the formation of this understanding.

Scholars produced a view of woman through the literary efforts of the Italian Renaissance which gradually moved North, arriving in England in the early years of the sixteenth century.¹ These scholars relied upon ancient authority in arguing their

¹Ian Maclean, *The Renaissance Notion of Woman: A Study in the Fortunes of Scholasticism and Medical Science in European Intellectual Life* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), pp. 2, 5.

positions, either with regard to woman or literature.² Sixteenth century scholars were very much indebted to the writings of Aristotle, St. Paul, and St. Augustine. Aristotle asserted that "the female is, as it were, a mutilated male," colder than the perfect male and therefore, unable to contribute anything more to the reproductive process than the "material" while the man provided the soul.³ Woman's lack of the "male principle" downgraded their intellectual, bodily, and social status, as well. The result was her subordination to the authority of man, because she was viewed as physically weak and less able to think rationally.⁴

The misogynistic writings of the missionary, St. Paul, also influenced the sixteenth century view of woman. Specifically, Paul stressed that women were to hold no position of authority over men, nor were they to instruct or teach men. He wrote, "But I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God."⁵ Paul plainly denied women the opportunity to hold any position of authority by restricting them to silence and subservience to their husbands.

Augustine, like Paul, was a churchman whose writings discussed the nature of woman. In Augustinian thought, woman represented two things, good and evil. Throughout his writings, especially in his *City of God*, Augustine presented his ideal

²Marilyn J. Boxer and Jean H. Quataert, *Connecting Spheres: Women in the Western World, 1500 to Present* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), p. 23.

³Rosemary Agonito, *History of Ideas of Woman* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1977), pp. 46-47.

⁴Agonito, p. 42.

⁵1 Corinthians 11:3.

woman as one who was to serve her husband silently and raise his children.⁶

The writings of these three men, Aristotle, Paul, and Augustine, formed a picture of woman as imperfect, inferior, and at times evil. Scholars in the Renaissance tradition turned to this image as an early authority. The Renaissance humanists' veneration of the ancients ensured the continuation of that tradition and contributed to the development of the status of woman in England between 1500 and 1640.

The clergymen of the early sixteenth century reached the same conclusions as their scholarly counterparts, though for slightly different reasons. The churchmen placed the bulk of their argument on Eve's role in the fall of man; however, the end result of woman's inferiority remained a consistent theme for both scholars and clergy.

While the Catholic view of woman did not change from that of the church fathers, it has often been suggested that the Protestant Reformation did much to improve the status of woman.⁷ However, many historians now contend that the Protestant Reformation decreased the status of women in England and abroad due to the reformers' heavy reliance on a literal interpretation of Scripture and Eve's role in the fall of man, as described in Genesis.⁸

However, the greatest impact of the Reformation on the view of woman was a result of the reformers' emphasis on woman's role, and its restriction within the marriage

⁶Agonito, p. 79.

⁷Jane Dempsey Douglass, "Women and the Continental Reformation," in *Religion and Sexism: Images of Woman in the Jewish and Christian Traditions*, ed. Rosemary Radford Ruether (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1974), p. 303.

⁸Bonnie S. Anderson and Judith P. Zinnser, *A History of Their Own*, vol. 1 (New York: Harper and Row, 1988), p. 263; Mary R. Beard, *On Understanding Women* (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1931), p. 392; Susan Cahn, *Industry of Devotion*, p. 2; and Amaury de Riencourt, *Sex and Power in History* (New York: David McKay Co., 1974), p. 261.

and family.⁹ In Martin Luther's *Table Talk* he straightforwardly assigned woman the place as the mother in the home.¹⁰ Luther and the reformers' firmly restricted women virtually within the walls of their homes and removed all other lifestyle options. Housewifery was a woman's "vocation," or "calling," imposed and ordained by God for the good of the commonwealth.¹¹ In effect, by removing the traditional Catholic avenues for a woman's salvation, Luther deftly altered the view of woman to be a creature fit only for the duties associated with a house and a family headed by her husband. In the process, Luther gave this image the support of theological argument and religious law.¹²

From our examination of the scholarly and religious writings we can begin to see the interdisciplinary use of arguments in the sixteenth century discussion of the view of woman. Physicians and medical writers drew upon the observations of other fields as well, and in combination with their own medical conclusions, offered opinions on the nature of woman in society. Perhaps the most common assumption in medical writings, was the idea of an "animal" within the female body. This animal, the uterus, was considered the primary medical reason for woman's irrational behavior and out-of-

⁹See below for a discussion of the changes in the status of women that this theological shift produced.

¹⁰Martin Luther, *The Table Talk of Martin Luther*, ed. Thomas S. Kepler (New York: The World Publishing Co., 1952), p. 89.

¹¹Michael Roberts, "'Words they are Women, and Deeds they are Men': Images of Work and Gender in Early Modern England," in *Women and Work in Pre-Industrial England*, ed. Lindsey Charles and Lorna Duffin (London: Croom Helm, 1985), p. 130.

¹²Merry Weisner, "Luther and Women: The Death of Two Marys," in *Disciplines of Faith: Studies in Religion, Politics and Patriarchy*, edited by Jim Obelkevich, Lyndal Roper, and Raphael Samuel (New York: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1987), pp. 295-309; Roberts, p. 131; Cahn, p. 65; and Douglass, p. 295.

control sexual impulses. François Rabelais, a physician and author, expressed ordinary medical belief when he wrote that the female body harbored "in a secret and intestinal place, a certain animal or member which is not in man, in which are engendered, frequently, certain humours"--the uterus.¹³ This was a common belief in Renaissance England.

The English female controversy was the last factor which contributed to the discussion of the nature of woman in the sixteenth century. This controversy found its voice in the cheap pamphlets of the public press. The controversy was a four-way debate on the nature of woman, which resulted from the growing awareness of ancient thought, and the spread of classical education. Ruth Kelso, in her *Doctrine for the Lady of the Renaissance*, suggested that the seeds of this debate were sown in the Middle Ages and came to full flower only in the sixteenth century.¹⁴ She also explained that "for some reason, in the sixteenth century more than before, men's eyes were more sharply focused on the differences between men and women--looks, moral character, capacities, power, position in society, obvious differences to be sure, whatever one may think of their actual significance."¹⁵ The result, then, was a wild debate conducted through the printing press in an attempt to determine woman's nature.

In spite of the fact that participants changed sides in mid-battle, and argued two sides at once, the sides themselves, are quite easily defined. In its most elementary

¹³Francois Rabelais as quoted in Vern L Bullough, Brenda Shelton and Sarah Slavin, *The Subordinated Sex: A History of Attitudes Toward Women*, rev. ed. (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 1988), pp. 193-94.

¹⁴Ruth Kelso, *Doctrine for the Lady of the Renaissance* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1956), p. 6.

¹⁵Kelso, pp. 9-10.

form, the controversy over woman's nature was divided into four opinions. The first view considered woman in a very negative light. She was judged to be a necessary evil at best. This argument was primarily drawn from the creation story found in the second chapter of Genesis. In brief, the nature of woman is "crooked" because she was from man's rib (itself curved). Her crookedness showed itself in her "cowardly disposition" and her badly mixed humors (cold and humid) accounted for her ungovernable passions and lack of reason.¹⁶ She was evil--a terrible animal--but unfortunately necessary for reproduction. Women were simply an evil to be endured.¹⁷

The literature from the second party in the debate depicted woman as good, but in a limited and humble manner. Her worth was derived from her temperament which was well suited to bearing and raising children, this being her central purpose in life (unlike man's higher and loftier pursuits).¹⁸

The third attitude toward woman was one of goodness and equality with man: the sexes were the same in both substance and soul, and possessed equal "capacities of every sort."¹⁹ This group explained woman's legal subjugation as a man-made thing, and because of man's free-will it was possible for their status in society to be improved.²⁰

¹⁶Kelso, p. 11.

¹⁷Edward Gosynhill, *Here Begynneth the Scole House of Women* (London: J. King, 1560), STC 12105, Sig. B4v.

¹⁸Kelso, p. 17.

¹⁹Kelso, p. 20.

²⁰Kelso, p. 20.

The fourth and final view was that women were superior to men. This view can be seen as a sweeping reaction against the volumes of misogynistic writings of the ages. A typical argument of this school stressed the softness and beauty of women, while underlining the hard muscular bodies of men, which were "naturally intended by nature to be slaves to others more inclined to prudence, contemplation, and command," proving that "men were born to be slaves and women to be their master."²¹

The sixteenth century controversy over women, while sometimes going to extremes, must be seen as the very real playing out of the uncertainties which existed in the changing English society of that period. Ultimately, the opinion that prevailed was that women were imperfect and therefore inferior to men, and that their subservient position in society was the natural and just reflection of their imperfection.

So far we have examined the theoretical side of the status of woman, based on the thought and opinions of those whose writings were a product of, or were known in, sixteenth century England. The question now is, how much of the theory was played out in English society? And if so, how? To answer these questions one must look at law, theology, marriage, and work. The result, then, will be an understanding of the position women actually held in sixteenth-century England.

Women's position under common law is the best place to begin an examination of their standing in society. English common law addressed nearly every conceivable aspect of a woman's life, and its enforceable nature went far to ensure that women remained where it placed them: under the control of their husband. Sixteenth-century England assumed that all women were "either married or to be married" and

²¹Kelso, p. 21.

consequently, most law was concerned with the married woman.²² Man's superiority and woman's inferiority was due to Eve's part in man's fall from paradise, as an anonymous book, entitled *The Lawes Resolution of Womens Rights*, explained:

Returne a little to Genesis, in the 3 Chap. whereof is declared on first parents transgression in eating the forbidden fruit. . . Eve because shee had helped to seduce her husband hath inflicted on her, an especiall bane . . . See here, the reason of that which I touched before, that Women . . . are understood either married or to be married and their desires are subject to their husband.²³

From this explanation we can clearly see the theoretical views which were repeated and imposed upon society. This time, they formed the foundation of woman's place under the English common law.

A symbolic explanation of the position of the married woman was made by the sixteenth-century English scholar Sir Thomas Smith. He used the example of a woman taking her husband's surname as the epitome of her husband's domination.²⁴ Further, a married woman had no ownership of goods or property.²⁵ Other aspects of a married woman's legal position included the inability to make a will without her husband's consent, or to enter into a legal contract.²⁶ Even as married women could not make a

²²E. T. *The Lawes Resolutions of Womens Rights* (London: J. More, 1632), STC 7437, p. 6. Although published in 1632, this book based its information on statute and case law dating from before and during the Tudor period. As a result, I feel its inclusion in this chapter is warranted.

²³*The Lawes*, p. 6.

²⁴Thomas Smith, *De Republica Anglorum* (London: 1584), STC 22857, p. 105.

²⁵*The Lawes*, p. 30.

²⁶Pearl Hogrefe, "Legal Rights of Tudor Women and Their Circumvention by Men and Women," *Sixteenth Century Journal* 3(1972), p. 100; Julia O'Faolain and Lauro Martines, eds., *Not in God's Image: Women in History from the Greeks to the Victorians* (New York: Harper and Row, 1973), p. 146.

binding contract without her husband's ratification, neither could she bring a legal action against him.²⁷ In addition, if a married woman were to have killed her husband the charge would not have been murder, but rather, treason.²⁸

But what of exceptional circumstances, or the status of the unmarried woman?

The Lawes Resolutions of Womens Rights provided us with the answer.

It is seldome, almost never that a married woman can have any action to use her writt onely in her owne name: her husband is her sterne her primus motor, without whom she cannot due much at home and lesse abroad: But if her Husband cammit felonie, take the Church and abjure the Realme, she is now in case a Widow inabled to make alienation of her owne land as a femme sole [single woman], or to bring a cui in vira for her lands aliened by her husband.²⁹

The law did allow some instances in which a married woman could act with the freedom of a widow or a *femme sole*, but even as it allowed exceptions, it stressed that in the vast majority of cases, a married woman could do little without her husband.

The above example hints at the greater freedom of widows and the *femmes soles*. Pearl Hogrefe, in her article "Legal Rights of Tudor Women and their Circumvention by Women and Men," neatly summarized the position of the widow and single woman. She wrote, "Private law, at least, in theory, gave a widow or an unmarried woman almost the same rights as men. She could inherit, 'hold land even by military tenure . . . own chattels, make a will, make a contract, sue and be sued . . . in person without the interposition of a guardian . . . plead with her own voice if she pleases."³⁰ The widow or *femme sole* functioned quite independently, free from a controlling male guardian.

²⁷*The Lawes*, p. 128.

²⁸25 Edward III as cited in *The Lawes*, p. 208.

²⁹*The Lawes*, p. 128.

³⁰Hogrefe, p. 98.

These rights nearly equaled those of sixteenth-century men. It is obvious that a *femme sole* or widow had a huge legal advantage over her married sister. However, one must keep firmly in mind that few women obtained this status, or in the case of the remarrying widow, kept it for long.

While in most cases the single woman had rights before the law, the poor single woman did not fare as well. She was subject to an Elizabethan statute, 5 Elizabeth ca. 4, which forced "any woman of the age of twelve yeres, and under 40 being unmarried, and out of service, to serve and bee retained by yeare, weeke, or day, in such sort and for such wages as they shall thinke meet, and if she refuse, they may commit her to prison, till she shall be bound to serve."³¹ The point is aptly made, even a single woman--at least a single poor woman--could be forced under the subjugation of a man.

The transition between theory and practice is clear. The view of woman as an inferior human was directly reflected in her position in sixteenth century English common law. Women were to be treated as children, protected by a guardian, and in most cases, protected from their own "irrational emotions."

However, common law was not the only institution which mandated the norms of a woman's life. The Protestant Reformers spoke directly to this issue. Of all the changes associated with the Reformation, the changes which affected women the most were those changes surrounding marriage and family. To Luther, Calvin, and other reformers, married life was the superior life.³² To this end, the reformers lobbied against the celibate life and in its stead offered marriage as the ideal and "the family as a

³¹*The Lawes*, p. 8.

³²Douglass, p. 295.

school of faith.³³ By making marriage and family life, not the monasteries and nunneries, the training ground of the holy, the Protestant reformers made marriage desirable for both the clergy and the laity. They also made it the only option for women.

While Luther may have spoken against the monastic life, his ideal Protestant family created a cloistered cell for the woman involved. An historian wrote,

nuns were chased out of their convents and released from their vows, but each Protestant home became a private convent in its own way and a woman was not encouraged to step out of it into the wider world. She was born to be and to remain throughout her life man's subordinate.³⁴

For the majority of English women, the Protestant Reformation narrowed the number of options available in their lives. The reformers' emphasis on clerical marriage did, however, create a new role for the small number of women willing to marry the reformed clergy, that of pastor's wife.³⁵ These women, especially the example-setting wives of the early reformers, often led lives as publicly busy as their husbands. They were noted for "works" in support of education, charity, and hospitality, and they published works in defense of their husbands.³⁶ However, women still did not have an alternative to marriage.

Clearly, the Protestant Reformation's greatest impact on the status of woman was in the realm of marriage. In this sphere women were to be married and their entire

³³Douglass, p. 299.

³⁴Riencourt, p. 258.

³⁵Mary Prior, "Reviled and Crucified Marriages: The Position of Tudor Bishop's Wives," in *Women in English Society 1500-1800*, ed. Mary Prior (New York: Methuen, 1985), pp. 118-148.

³⁶Prior, p. 306.

energy spent in support of their husband and the raising of his children. Even the "superwomen," who were the wives of clergy, were not excluded from their home responsibilities. Rather, it was the very fact that they accomplished so much in addition to their role of wives and mothers which made them truly exceptional. We can clearly see the playing-out of Protestant theology in the actual status of women in sixteenth-century England.

The last area of a woman's life examined by this chapter is women's work or employment. Women's employment opportunities decreased as the Middle Ages moved into the early modern period.³⁷ This decline in women's work status was a result of the move from a household economy to a market-based economy. What exactly did this shift mean for English women in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, apart from their obvious decline in status? The answer was a move away from an active role in family earnings, and toward strict confinement within the home as a housewife. This was the preferred role for women, especially after the Protestant Reformation. In fact, this became the ideal. The duties of an English housewife were divided between her responsibilities within and outside the home. Her inside work included cooking, preserving food, distilling, spinning and weaving, and providing minor medical care. Her duties outside the home consisted of gardening, animal husbandry, and occasional work in the orchard and fields.³⁸ This was the role assigned to English women throughout most of the sixteenth century, and this role was one of the clearest examples of woman's subordination to men.

³⁷Michael Kaufman, "Spare Ribs: The Conception of Woman in the Middle-Ages and Renaissance," *Soundings* 2 (Summer 1973), p. 160.

³⁸Housewifery will be discussed in detail in Chapter Three below.

There were, however, other groups of women who sought and found wage employment outside the home. The social status of the worker determined the type of employment she could seek in the job market. A poor woman would often find herself dispensing poor relief, or as caretaker of the ill, a nurse, or a teacher.³⁹ Other work for poor women would have included being charwomen, carters, street-cleaners, beggars, and prostitutes.⁴⁰ Poor women were also involved in "spinning, carding, sewing, weaving lace, ribbon and tape."⁴¹ These jobs were the most menial, and consequently the lowest paid.

Women of the middling sort and lower gentry fared even worse in the job market than their less wealthy sisters. The options available to young women at this level of society were, perhaps, to be a governess or a lady-in-waiting.⁴² Susan Wright, however, suggested that "girls from the middling ranks of society may, meanwhile, have received a rudimentary education although in common with their poorer fellows they too may well have faced a period of domestic service between leaving home and marriage."⁴³ Whether young women from the middling sorts or lower to middle gentry were domestic servants or ladies-in-waiting, their goal was the same: marriage and housewifery.

³⁹Diane Willen, "Women in the Public Sphere," p. 560.

⁴⁰Lawrence Stone, *The Family, Sex and Marriage in England 1500-1800*, abridged ed. (New York: Harper, 1979), p. 140.

⁴¹Roberts, p. 136.

⁴²Vann, p. 203.

⁴³Sue Wright, "Churmaids, Huswyfes, and Hucksters': The Employment of Women in Tudor and Stuart Salisbury," in *Women and Work in Pre-Industrial England*, ed. Lindsey Charles and Lorna Duffin (London: Croom Helm, 1985), p. 102.

The higher social strata, those of the nobility and upper gentry, may not have actually practiced housewifery skills, themselves. Instead, they may have overseen the running of the household and the managing of the estate. It was these women who later would be bred and educated to assume a leisured lifestyle.

Women's work in sixteenth-century England consistently placed women in a position inferior to that of men, and in a position which primarily centered on the home. In the cases where women did function in the wage economy, their jobs were menial, often manual, and were to be accomplished in addition to their own household responsibilities. Also, many of the jobs available to women could be done within the home (weaving and spinning, wet nursing, and laundering), or were jobs done within someone else's home (governess or domestic service). All typically female jobs were connected with their "natural" role as housewife, and used skills which were directly transferable between one's own home and another's.

The conclusion we must invariably draw regarding the sixteenth century view of women is one of consistency. The intellectuals, whatever their divergent reasons, recommended a position of subordination and restriction for women. They received, overall, exactly what they wanted. Women were confined in the home and placed under the authority of their husbands. In summary, "church, custom, and law place wives squarely under the husband's authority," and as we have learned, all women were destined to be wives.⁴⁴

⁴⁴Boxer and Quataert, p. 24.

CHAPTER III

THE IDEAL HOUSEWIFE

The ideal housewife, created in print by the male advice writers of the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, was a busy and multi-talented individual. Her sphere of activities took her outside the house, into the garden, the yard, and the field, but her primary focus was within the home.

As the home received most of the model housewife's attention, indoor housewifery skills constituted the bulk of the advice literature. Three sets of skills appear in this literature as the most important for the ideal housewife to possess. These were cooking, preserving foods, and providing medical care. Without question, according to her advisers, the housewife needed to gain mastery of all three.¹

Often, the first skill mentioned in housewifery guides, and certainly the most important, was cooking. The expectation that the housewife would be in charge of food and meals was prevalent throughout the printed guides. Of the thirty-five housewifery manuals, all but two contained information on the preparation of food. These instructions included general comments on the subject like Thomas Tusser's:

Have Millons at Michelmas, parsneps in lent:
in june, buttred beans, saveth fish to be spent.

¹See Appendix F for a discussion of the statistical methodology employed in the analysis of the contents of the advice literature.

With those and good pottage, inough having than:
thou winnest the heart, of the laboring man,²

as well as specific directions for preparing meat, fish, fowl, fruit, vegetables, cordial waters, pastes, and sauces. Baking, candying, and the common pottage also received attention from the advice writers. Clearly, feeding the household was the ideal housewife's most significant responsibility.

According to the advice books, the major staples of the gentry diet were meat, fish, fowl, and baked goods. There were few recipes for vegetables or fruit, although we will see later, when we examine the preservation of foods, that both appear in the gentry's cuisine. Superficially this diet might seem bare and plain, but a closer examination of the recipes soon corrects this impression. Of the three major sources of protein, meat recipes formed the majority.³ A sample of the meat recipes included

²Tusser, Thomas, *A Hundreth Good Pointes of Husbandrie, Maintaineth Good Household, with Huswifery* (London: R. Tottel, 1557), STC 24372, p. 130.

³Of the thirty-three advice books which address the housewife's indoor skills, twenty-two provide cooking information for meats. *This is the Boke of Cokery* (London: Richard Pynson, 1500), STC 3297; *A Propre New Booke of Cokery, Declaryng What Maner of Meates Bee Best in Ceason For All Tymes of Ye Yere . . . With a Newe Addicion* (London: R. Lant at R. Bankes, 1545), STC 3365.5; John Partridge, *The Tresurie of Commodious Conceits, and Hidden Secrets, and Maybe Called, the Huswives Closet, of Healthful Provision* (London: R. Jones, 1573), STC 19425.5; A. W., *A Booke of Cookry* (London: J. Allde, 1584), STC 24895; Thomas Dawson, *The Second Part of the Good Hus-Wifes Jewell* (London: J. Wolfe (?) for Edward White, 1585), STC 6394; John Partridge, *The Widowes Treasure*; Thomas Dawson, *The Good Huswives Jewell* (London: John Wolfe, 1587), STC 6391; *The Good Hous-Wives Tresurie* (London: E. Allde, 1588), STC 13854; *The Good Huswives Handmaid for Cookerie* (London: R. Jones, 1588?), STC 13853; *The Good Hufwives Handmaide for the Kitchin* (London: Richard Jones, 1599, STC 3298; *Epulario, or, The Italian Banquet: Wherein is Shewed the Maner How to Dresse and Prepare All Kind of Flesh, Foules or Fishes . . . translated out of Italian into English* (London: A. I[slip] for William Barley, 1598), STC 10433; Henry Buttes, *Dyets Dry Dinner* (London: Tho[mas] Creede for William Wood, 1599), STC 4207; *A Closet for Ladies and Gentlewomen*; Gervase Markham, *Country Contentments, in Two Bookes: The First, Containing the Whole Art of Riding Great Horses in Very Short Time, . . . The Second Intituled, the English Huswife: Containing the Inward and Outward Vertues Which Ought to be in a Compleate Woman: as her Phisicke, Cookery, Banqueting-Stuffe, Distillation, Perfumes, Wooll, Hemp, Flaxe, Dairies, Brewing, Baking, and*

instructions "to boyle a legge of mutton with a pudding," "to stew steakes between two dishes," or "to bake a fillet of beefe."⁴ The housewife was given a variety of ways to cook meat; for example, she could roast, stew, boil, bake and fry. Not only were there several styles of preparation, there were many different kinds of meat available. *The Booke of Cookerie*, an anonymous treatise published in 1620, provided an excellent example of the variety of meats available.⁵ This book suggested the preparation of chickens, lamb, mutton, brains, lamb's head, pig, veal, deer, tongue, hare, calves' feet, and marrow.⁶ The variation upon each theme was overwhelming, and monotony of diet was not a problem.

Like the meat dishes, a wide selection was available for fish recipes.⁷ The housewife could choose from "muskles" and various fish, such as carp and tench ("with a

All Other Things Belonging to a Houshold (London: I. B[eale] for R. Jackson, 1615), STC 17342; John Murrell, *A New Booke of Cookerie* (J. Browne, 1615), STC 18299; *A Booke of Cookerie* (London: E. Alde, 1620), STC 3300; John Murrell, *A Delightfull Daily Exercise for Ladies and Gentlewomen, Whereto is Added A Book of Cookery* (London: T. Dewe, 1621), STC 18302; Sir Hugh Platt, *Delights for Ladies*; Gervase Markham, *The English House-Wife*; John Murrell, *Murrells Two Bookes of Cookerie and Carving* (London: M. F[lesher] for John Marriot, 1631), STC 18302.5; *The Ladies Cabinet Opened* (London: M. P[arsons] for Richard Meighen, 1639), STC 15119; and Sir Hugh Platt, *The Accomplisht Ladys Delight in Preserving, Physick and Cookery* (N.p., n.d.), STC 19976.

⁴Dawson, *Good Huswifes Jewell*, p. 6v; *A Booke of Cookerie* (1620), pp. 19, 24.

⁵*A Booke of Cookerie* (1620), passim.

⁶*A Booke of Cookerie* (1620), pp. 4-55.

⁷Twenty of the thirty-three guide books which discussed the indoor skills contained recipes or information on fish preparation. *Boke of Cokery* (1500); *Propre New Booke of Cokery* (1545); Partidge, *Treasurie of Commodious Conceits*; A. W., *Booke of Cookry*; Dawson, *Second Part of the Good Hus-Wifes Jewell*; Partridge, *Widowes Treasure*; Dawson, *Good Huswifes Jewell*; *Good Hous-Wives Treasurie*; *Good Huswives Handmaid for Cookerie*; *Good Hufwives Handmaide for the Kitchin*; *Epulario*; Buttes, *Dyets Fry Dinner*; Markham, *Countray Contentment*; Murrell, *New Booke of Cookerie*; *Booke of Cookerie* (1620); Murrell, *Delightfull Daily Exercise*; Platt, *Delights for Ladies*; Markham, *The English House-Wife*; Murrell, *Murrells Two Books*; and Platt, *The Accomplisht Ladys Delight*.

pudding in his bellie").⁸ She could also choose from a variety of preparation styles, including roasting and baking.

While discussed slightly less often in the housewifery manuals than meat or fish, the consumption of fowl played an important role in the sixteenth and seventeenth century gentry diet, (certainly, a larger portion than in the twentieth century diet of the western world).⁹ *The Booke of Cookerie* provides an excellent illustration of the diverse selection of edible birds. Peacocks, chickens, and turkeys were all possibilities to be fried, stewed, boiled, roasted, and baked, as were pigeons, mallards, quail, capons, and larks.¹⁰ Among the recipes were directions for boiled "mallars with cabbedge," and "duck with turneps." Other recipes included "capon with sirrop, or orenge and lemmons," and pigeons in a white broth.¹¹ A recipe for a "cullesse (strong broth) of Capon, Feisant, Partridge, Kid, or Wild Pigion" directed the housewife as follows.

Take of these birds and make them very cleane, and if you would seeth a capon til it consume and make two dishes thereof, take a pipking that holdeth foure pints of water, and breaking all the capones bones, put it therein and set it on the fire, and withall seeth a piece of leane bacon with thirtie of forty grains of brused pepper, a little sinamon grosse beaten, a few cloves, three, five or sixe sage leaves broken in three pieces and some bayleaves, let it boile in a pipkin, untill it consume to the

⁸Dawson, *Good Huswifes Jewell*, pp. 10, 16.

⁹Of the thirty-three housewifery manuals which addressed indoor skills, seventeen mentioned the preparation of fowl. *Boke of Cokery* (1500); Partridge, *Treasurie of Commodious Conceits*; W. A., *A Booke of Cookry*; Dawson, *Second Part of the Good Huswifes Jewell*; Partridge, *Widowes Treasure*; Dawson, *Good Huswifes Jewell*; *Good Huswifes Handmaide for the Kitchin*; *Epulario*; Buttes, *Dyets Dry Dinner*; Markham, *Countray Contentments*; Murrell, *New Booke of Cookerie*; Murrell, *Delightfull Daily Exercise*; Platt, *Delights for Ladies*; Markham, *English House-Wife*; Murrell, *Murrell's Two Books*; *The Ladies Cabinet Opened* (London: M. P[arsons] for Richard Meighen, 1639), STC 15119; and Platt, *The Accomplisht Ladys Delight*.

¹⁰Murrell, *New Booke of Cookerie*, pp. 4-55.

¹¹Murrell, *New Booke of Cookerie*, pp. 6, 12, 13.

quantity of two or three dishes of broth, and lesse if you will have it good, but put no salt into it, and it bee for a sicke man, you must put no bacon to, onely a little spice, and this is good both for the sicke and whole.¹²

In addition to the amount of space devoted to the cooking of birds, the wide variety of types also indicates the significance fowl played in the gentry menu.

Another area of food preparation which figured heavily in the indoor skills of the English housewife was baking.¹³ Among the regular baking of cakes and custards, the English housewife excelled in tarts. Standards in her kitchen routine were strawberry, prune,¹⁴ cherry, quince, pear, rice, warden, and butter and egg tarts.¹⁵ The importance of baked goods--tarts, cakes, and breads--can further be seen in Gervase Markham's detailed instructions in his *The English House Wife*, especially with regard to the outfitting of the bake house.¹⁶ He wrote

then in your Bake-house you shall have a faire boulting house with large pipes to boulte meale in, faire troughes to lay leaven in, and sweet safes to receive your bran: you shall have boulders, searses, raunges and meale sives of all sorts both fine and course; you shall have faire tables to mould on, large ovens to brake in the coales . . . rather of one or two intire stones then of many bricke, and the mouth made narrow, square and

¹²*Epulario*, Sig. D4v; A pipkin is a small earthenware pan or pot, used chiefly in cookery; *OED*, p. 2184.

¹³*Propre New Booke of Cokery*; Thomas Tusser, *A Hundreth Good Pointes of Husbandry, Lately Married unto a Hundreth Good Poynts of Huswifery* (London: Richardi Tottylli, 1570), STC 24373; Partridge, *Treasurie of Commodious Conceits*; Dawson, *Second Part of the Good Hus-Wifes Jewell*; Partridge, *Widowes Treasure*; *Good Hous-Wives Treasurie*; *Good Huswives Handmaid for Cookerie*; *Good Hufwives Handmaide for the Kitchin*; Thomas Tusser, *Five Hundreth Points*; *Epulario*; *A Closet for Ladies and Gentlewomen*; Markham, *Countrie Contentments*; Murrell, *New Booke of Cookerie*; *Booke of Cookerie* (1620); Murrell, *Delightfull Daily Exercise*; Platt, *Delights for Ladies*; Markham, *English House-Wife*; *Ladies Cabinet Opened*; and Platt, *The Accomplisht Ladys Delight*.

¹⁴Dawson, *Good Huswives Jewell*, pp. 17, 18.

¹⁵*Booke of Cookerie* (1620), pp. 43-46. A warden is a type of baking pear. *OED*, 3685.

¹⁶Markham, *The English House-Wife*, p. 252.

ease to be close covered: as for your peeles, cole-rakes, maukins, and such like, though they be necessary yet they are of such generall use they neede no further relation.¹⁷

Baking accounted for a good deal of the ideal housewife's duties, and a properly designed bake house, at least according to Markham, was a key ingredient of success.

What is curious about the recommended baking skills of the ideal housewife is the manuals' failure to mention bread, the staple of life, as consistently as they mention the other baked goods. Only nine of the thirty-five housewifery book contain recipes, or make any allusion, to the baking of ordinary bread. Meanwhile there are numerous directions for biscuit breads and "fine" breads.¹⁸ A possible explanation for this deficiency is that this skill was considered elementary to all women, and consequently, instructions for it were unnecessary. It must have been assumed that all women already possessed this skill. Or possibly, bread was one of the few items the advice writers were willing to let the housewife purchase outside the home.¹⁹

But what of the books which mentioned the baking of bread? In what manner did they address the issue? Their contents ranged from merely listing bread baking as

¹⁷Markham, *The English House-Wife*, p. 252. Boulter is defined as "a flour-sieve, a boulder" and "to sift; to pass through a sieve or bolting-cloth." *OED*, p. 244.

¹⁸Bread is mentioned in the following books: *The Booke of Kerynge* (London: Wynkyn De Worde, 1508); Xenophon, *Treatise of Householde*; Partridge, *Treasurie of Commodious Conceits*; Partridge, *Widowes Treasure*; Torquato Tasso, *The Housholders Philosophie . . . Whereunto is Anexed a Dairie Booke for All Good Huswives*, trans. T. K[yd] (London: J. C. Thomas Hacket, 1588), STC 23703; *A Closet for Ladies and Gentlewomen*; Markham, *Countrey Contentements*; Murrell, *A Daily Exercise for Ladies and Gentlewomen* (London: The Widow Helme, 1617), STC 18301; and William Lawson, *A New Orchard and Garden, etc., With the Country Housewives Garden* (London: B. Alsop for R. Jackson, 1618), STC 20454. It is interesting to note that four books mention bread as the only form of baking: *The Booke of Kerynge*, Xenophon, *Treatise of Householde*; Tasso, *The Householders Philosophie*; and Murrell, *A Daily Exercise*.

¹⁹This issue will be addressed again in the later chapters of this thesis.

one of the housewife's duties, to a complete step-by-step guide to mixing and baking the household's finest bread, manchet.²⁰ Markham detailed its baking:

First your meale being ground upon the black stones, if it be possible, which make the whitest flower, and bouled through the finest boulding cloth, you shall put it into a cleane kinnell, and opening the flower hollow in the midst, put into it of the best ale-barme, the quantity of three pints to a bushell of meale, with some salt to season it with: then put in your liquor reasonable warme and kneade it very well together with both your hands and through the brake, or for want thereof, fold it in a cloth, and with your feete tread it a good space together, then letting it lie an houre or there about to swell, take it fourth and mold it into machets, round, and flat, scotch them about the waste to give it leave to rise, and prickle it with your knife in the top, and so put it into the oven, and bake it with gentle heate.²¹

With the basic principles of bread baking established, Markham continued to explain that "cheate" bread, or the daily variety, was also made of wheat, but of a courser boulder, and that brown bread was a "bread for your hinde-servants which is the coarsest bread for mans use."²²

The book containing the most practical information on baking bread is one of the latest volumes included in our study. Could it be that Gervase Markham was urging a return to the traditional self-sufficient household? Was this his attempt to return to a more thrifty era? Unfortunately, the answer lies outside the scope of this thesis. Yet, Markham's advice raises an interesting and critical question about the nature of the English housewife's self-sufficiency.

²⁰Xenophon, *Treatise of Householde*, pp. 23v-24; Markham, *The English House-Wife*, pp. 249-50. Manchet is "the finest kind of wheaten bread," according to the *OED*, p. 1712.

²¹Markham, *The English House-Wife*, pp. 249-50. A kinnell is a wooden tub, and barme is another word for yeast. Rosemary Milward, *The Glossary of Household, Farming and Trade Terms from Probate Inventories*, 3rd ed. (1986; reprint, Nottingham: Technical Print Services, Ltd. for the Devonshire Record Society, 1989), pp. 8, 33.

²²Markham, *The English House-Wife*, pp. 250, 251.

Additionally, the ideal housewife was expected to provide vegetables for her household's table, as well as sauces, and pastes to complement the main dishes.²³ The simple pottage, which Thomas Tusser assured his housewives would win the heart of her "laboring man," was only mentioned in three housewifery guides.²⁴ Apparently, the gentry did not find it as necessary as Tusser housewife.

The model gentry diet was completed by candied items.²⁵ *A Closet for Ladies and Gentlewomen, Or, The Art of Preserving, Conserving, and Candyng*, an anonymous work, was fairly typical in its candying recipes. It offered the ideal housewife instructions on how to prepare "roses as naturally as if they grew upon the tree," candied ginger, rock candy, and "manus christi."²⁶ A typical entry for candying flowers ran as follows.

To Candy all manner of flowers in their naturall colours. Take the flowers with the staulkes, and wash them over with a little Rose water, wherein Gum-arabeke is dissolved, then take fine searsed suger, and dust over them, and set them a drying on the bottome of a sive in an oven, and they will glister as if it were Suger-candy.²⁷

²³*Boke of Cokery* (1500), passim; A. W., *Booke of Cookry*, passim; Dawson, *Second Part of the Good Hus-Wifes Jewell*; ff. 24v, 33v; Partridge, *Widowes Treasure*, ff. F7-F8; Dawson, *Good Huswives Jewell*, ff. 24v, 33v; Markham, *Countrey Contentments*, pp. 39-42, 61-64; Murrell, *New Booke of Cookerie*, passim; *The Ladies Cabinet Opened*, pp. 1, 4, 5, 8, 35-36, 37, 39-40, 42, 52-57; and Platt, *The Accomplisht Ladys Delight*, pp. 106-107; *Boke of Kervynge*, p. 3; *Good Hous-Wives Treasurie*, Sig. A3-A5v, Bv; *Good Huswives Handmaide of Cookerie*, pp. 10-11; *Good Hufwives Handmaide for the Kitchin*, passim; *Epulario*, passim; Buttes, *Dyets Dry Dinner*, Sig. B2-B3, F1v-F4, O9v-P4; Murrell, *A Daily Exercise*, pp. 1-26; Murrell, *A Delightfull Daily Exercise*, pp. 11-13; *A Closet for Ladies and Gentlewomen*, pp. 24-28.

²⁴*Good Hous-Wives Treasurie*, pp. 10-11; *Good Hufwives Handmaide for the Kitchin*, Sig. A3-A5v; and Markham, *Countrey Contentments*, pp. 47-48.

²⁵Partridge, *Treasurie of Commodious Conceits*, Sig. D1; *A Closet for Ladies and Gentlewomen*, pp. 16-19; Murrell, *A Daily Exercise*, pp. 32-74; Platt, *Delights for Ladies*, Sig. A1v-D6; and *The Ladies Cabinet Opened*, pp. 48, 55.

²⁶Manus christi was refined sugar which had been boiled with rose water. *OED*, p. 1721.

²⁷*A Closet for ladies and Gentlewomen*, pp. 16-23.

Common flowers, like the violet and marigold, as well as roses and borage flowers, were suitable for candying.

The recipes and dishes discussed above represented the daily fare of the middling gentry. To assist the housewife in remembering all the details, the advice books often included complete menu plans for both meat days and fish days (Fridays, Saturdays, and some Wednesdays).²⁸

The English housewife, however, needed to be able to entertain on a grander scale. John Murrell, in his book, *Murrell's Two Bookes of Cookerie and Carving*, provided a three-course menu for a summer feast of fifty people for just such occasions. Among the delicacies were swan, gull, crab, prawns, green pease, and gooseberry tarts.²⁹ *A Closet for Ladies and Gentlewomen* also includes "fine christ all gelly," and "a walnut, that when you cracke it, you shall find biskets and carrawayes in it, or a prettie posey written," as banquet "conceits" necessary for any well spread table.³⁰

The overriding impression left by the advice literature is the importance that gentry society placed on food and hospitality.³¹ One is also repeatedly reminded that

²⁸Books containing meat recipes: *Boke of Cokery* (1500); *Boke of Kervynge; A Propre New Booke of Cokery*; A.W., *Booke of Cookry*; Dawson, *Good Huswifes Jewell*; *Good Huswives Handmaid for Cookerie*; *Good Hufwifes Handmaide for the Kitchin*; *Booke of Cookerie* (1620); and Platt, *The Accomplisht Ladys Delight*. Fish recipes: *The Good Huswives Handmaid for Cookerie*; *The Good Hufwifes Handmaide for the Kitchin*; and Platt, *The Accomplisht Ladys Delight*. Fish days: Christopher Dyer, *Standards of Living in the Later Middle Ages*, p. 58; John Bossy, *Christianity and the West 1400-1700* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), pp. 50-51.

²⁹See Appendix Three for menu. Carroll Camden, *The Elizabethan Woman*, pp. 138-39.

³⁰*A Closet for Ladies and Gentlewomen*, pp. 32-33.

³¹Hospitality is defined as "the act or practice of being hospitable; the reception and entertainment of guests, visitors, or strangers with liberality and goodwill." *OED*, p. 1336. For further discuss of hospitality in early modern England see Heal, "The Idea of Hospitality in Early Modern England," pp. 66-93.

the entire responsibility for the successful execution of cookery, whether elaborate or mundane, fell upon the housewife and her servants. There is little wonder, then, why the vast majority of the theoretical housewifery books were focused on food and cookery.

Before closing our discussion of the sixteenth and early seventeenth century housewife's cooking skills, it is necessary to draw attention to the thrift which these women were supposed to exercise in this area.³² Thomas Dawson, in his *Good Huswifes Jewell*, provided several recipes which illustrate the value placed on thrift. For example, Dawson's menu included instructions for baked and stewed calves' feet, as well as recipes for boiled brains, and boiled pigs' feet.³³ The nature of these dishes simply underlined Tusser's assertion that a housewife's thrift was a way to get and retain wealth:

The huswife is the, that to labour doth fal,
the labour of hir, I do huswiferie cal.
If thrift by that labour, be honestly go,
then it is good huswifery, else it is not.³⁴

The ideal housewife left little of the animal unused or wasted.

The second major obligation of the housewife, according to the advice literature, was the preserving and storing of food. The need to preserve fruit is made clear by the large number of housewifery books which either recommend it or provide instruction on

³²Thrift is defined as "the fact or condition of thriving, or prospering; savings, earnings, gain, profit; economical management, economy, sparing use or careful expenditure of means." *OED*, p. 3305.

³³Dawson, *The Good Huswifes Jewell*, pp. 8, 15, 15v, 17.

³⁴Tusser, *Five Hundreth Points*, pp. 123-24. See also Tusser, *Five Hundreth Points*, pp. 140-41 and Xenophon, *Treatise of Householde*, p. 25v.

how to do it.³⁵ It was common to find directions for the preserving of "pippins, apricocks, malacad onions, cherries, oranges, lymonds, quences, peachs, barbeeries, and goos-berries" in the majority of housewifery books.³⁶ An example from 1606 instructed the housewife in how "to keep cherries all the yeare to have them at christmasse:"

Take of your fairest cheries you can get, but be sure that they be not bruised, and take them, and rubb them with a linnen cloth, and put them into a barrell of hay, and lay them in ranks, first lying hay in the bottom, and then cheries, and then hay againe, and then stop up close that no ayre may come neare them, and lay them under a fetherbed where one yeth continually, for the warmer they are the better, yet neere no fire, and this doing, you may have cheries at any time of the yeare.³⁷

Similarly, the preservation of vegetables, nuts, wheat, and wine were discussed in the advice literature.³⁸

Recipes to preserve or "conserve" flowers were also found frequently in these books.³⁹ The intended use of such flowers was not ornamental; instead, they played a

³⁵Xenophon, *Treatise of Householde*; Partridge, *Treasurie of Commodious Conceits*; Dawson, *Second part of the Good Hus-Wifes Jewell*; Partridge, *Widowes Treasure*; *Good Hous-Wives Treasurie*; *The Good Huswives Handmaid for Cookerie*; Tasso, *The Householders Philosophie*; *The Good Hufwives Handmaide for the Kitchin*; *A Queens Delight: Or the Art of Preserving, Conserving, and Candyng* (1600) in *The Queens Closet Opened. Incomparable Secrets in Physick, Chyrurgery, Preserving and Candyng etc.* (London: Nath Brooke, 1659), Cambridge University Library; *A Closet for Ladies and Gentlewomen*; Murrell, *New Booke of Cookerie*; Murrell, *A Daily Exercise*; Lawson, *A New Orchard and Garden* (1618); *Booke of Cookerie* (1620); Murrell, *A Delightfull Daily Exercise*; Platt, *Delights for Ladies*; *The Ladies Cabinet Opened*; and Platt, *The Accomplisht Ladys Delight*.

³⁶*A Closet for Ladies and Gentlewomen*, pp. 2-11.

³⁷*A Closet for Ladies and Gentlewomen*, p. 65.

³⁸Dawson, *Second Part of the Good Hus-Wifes Jewell*, passim; *A Queen's Delight*, pp. 195-204; Murrell, *New Booke of Cookerie*, passim; Platt, *Delights for Ladies*, Sigs. C4, D10-11; *The Ladies Cabinet Opened*, pp. 36, 51; and Platt, *The Accomplisht Ladys Delight*, p. 6; Xenophon, *Treatise of Householde*, f. 31v; *Boke of Kervynge*, p. 4.

³⁹Partridge, *Treasurie of Commodious Conceits*; *A Queens Delight*; *A Closet for Ladies and Gentlewomen*; Platt, *Delights for Ladies*; and *The Ladies Cabinet Opened*.

large part in the diet and medicine of the day. The book, *A Closet for Ladies and Gentlewomen*, gave directions for conserving roses, violets, borage, rosemary, and bulosse flowers to be used later in the making of candied flowers.⁴⁰

The good housewife was also expected to preserve meat and fish in order to have those items through the winter months.⁴¹ One example of how to preserve meat ran as follows:

[C]over it close from the Sunne or ayre with Fearne, and laie it in a colde place, then washe it cleane, and let it lye in water halfe a daie, and then laie it on the flowre to drye, then set the water and salte together, and let it coole till it be leuke warme, and then washe the Venison therein, and let it lye in that pickle three daies and three nightes, then take it out and poulder it with drie Salte, and barrell and stoppe it fast.⁴²

The importance placed on conserving and preserving food is clear from its abundant mention in the advice literature. The issue was also addressed directly in the form of general advice. Xenophon directed the wife:

And that that is brought in/ ye must receive it. And that, whiche muste be spente of it, ye muste part and devide it. And that remaineth, ye muste ley it up and kepe it safe tyl tyme or nede. And beware/ that that/ which was apoynted to be spente in a twelve monthe, be not spente in a monthe.⁴³

Within this directive is an implied warning: make sure you save and preserve for the lean winter months. Sixteenth and early seventeenth century housewives were expected to see to the proper storage of food to last not only through the month, but through the year.

⁴⁰*A Closet for Ladies and Gentlewomen*, pp. 21-23, 54-56.

⁴¹Partridge, *Widowes Treasure*; Tasso, *The Householders Philosophie*; Buttes, *Dyets Dry Dinner*, and Platt, *Delights for Ladies*.

⁴²Partridge, *Widowes Treasure*, Sig. B4.

⁴³Xenophon, *Treatise of Householde*, f. 25v.

The last of the three main responsibilities of the ideal housewife, as indicated by the advice literature, was the practice of minor medicine.⁴⁴ This service was not limited to the good housewife's family, but included her household, as well. Vives maintained that the model housewife should always be concerned with this matter when he wrote,

I wolde she shuld knowe medycines and salves for suche diseases as be common land rainge almost daily: and have those medicines ever prepared redy in some closette/ wherwith she may helpe her husband/ her lyttell chyltren and her house holde meyne.⁴⁵

The size of households for which she could be expected to provide medical care varied greatly, ranging from twenty-five to fifty for the modest knight, to seventy-five to one hundred and forty servants for the nobility, and was considerably larger for the royal family.⁴⁶ The result, then, was that the woman of the gentry household was held responsible for the good health of a large number of people.

What illnesses was the housewife expected to treat? The number and range are impressive. She had recipes to treat headaches, backaches, toothaches, and nosebleeds.⁴⁷ In addition, the housewifery books included instructions "to draw an

⁴⁴Joannes Ludovicus Vives, *A Very Frutefull and Pleasant Boke Called the Instruction of a Christen Woman* (London: Thomas Berthelet, 1529(?)), STC 24856; Tusser, *A Hundreth Good Pointes* (1570); Partridge, *Treasurie of Commodious Conceits*; Partridge, *Widowes Treasure*; Dawson, *The Good Huswifes Jewell*; *Good Hous-Wives Treasure*; *Good Huswives Handmaid for Cookerie*; *Good Hufwives Handmaide for the Kitchin*; Tusser, *Five Hundreth Points*; Buttes, *Dyets Dry Dinner*; *A Closet for Ladies and Gentlewomen*; Murrell, *A Delightfull Daily Exercise*; Lawson, *A New Orchard and Garden* (1618); *Booke of Cookerie* (1620); *The Ladies Cabinet Opened*; and Platt, *The Accomplisht Ladys Delight*.

⁴⁵Vives, *Instruction of a Christen Woman*, Sig. K3v. For a detailed discussion of Vives' inclusion among the advice writers of the middling and gentry women, see Introduction.

⁴⁶Barbara Harris, "Property, Power, and Personal Relations: Elite Mothers and Sons in Yorkist and Early Tudor England," *Signs* 15 (Spring 1990): p. 611.

⁴⁷Dawson, *Good Huswifes Jewell*, p. 39; *A Closet for Ladies and Gentlewomen*, pp. 79, 129, 133.

arrow head or other yron out of a wound," and "a very good remendy for a wound with a sword, staffe, stone, or suclike."⁴⁸ These last two afflictions represented the extreme in household surgery, but these books provided information on all types of treatments and illnesses ranging from headaches and arrow wounds, and including instructions for making antidotes for poisons, stanching the flow of blood, treating the ague, knowing "whether a child hath the worms, or no," and "for the canker in the mouthe or the rote, or to washe your teath that be hollowe and stinketh."⁴⁹ The last recipe suggested

Take a quantitie of redd Sage, and ripe croppes of rosemarie, and Honeysoccles, and wilde Dasies, and Stinkesoyll, boyle them all in a pinte of aire water till it be sooden the halfe pinte, and then take a little Roche Allome and burne it to powder, and then take halfe a sponefull of Honey, then put them into a faire cloath and straine it, and when it is could put it into little glasses.⁵⁰

The above list is only a small sample of the medical knowledge the housewife was expected to master. Vives offered a unique suggestion to the medically-minded wife. He urged her to keep her own cures and recipes written down in a special little book, rather than "in the great volumes of phisyceke." In this way she was assured of always having the answers handy.⁵¹

Medicine, its preparation and practice, fell squarely within the obligations of the ideal housewife. She was expected to provide these services to her family and to her household. Yet, some writers felt compelled to remind their readers that, though they, the housewives, were often the local medical practitioners, their skills could never be as

⁴⁸*A Closet for Ladies and Gentlewomen*, pp. 147, 149.

⁴⁹*Booke of Cookerie* (1620), pp. 79, 87; *A Closet for Ladies and Gentlewomen*, pp. 79, 114.

⁵⁰Partridge, *Widowes Treasure*, Sig. C6.

⁵¹Vives, *Instruction of a Christen Woman*, Sig. K3.

great as a man's. In 1597, Tusser, in a description of the housewife's medical responsibilities, wrote:

Aske Medicus counsel, yer medicine ye make,
and honour that man for necessities sake.
Though thousands hate physicke, because of
the cost,
yet thousand sit helpeth, that else should be
loss.⁵²

To Tusser, the male professional was clearly the source of superior knowledge and care. Markham, less than twenty years later, made the same point, only much clearer. He explained,

Indeed we must confese that the depth and secrets of this most excellent art of physicke, is farre beyond the capacitie of the most skilfull weomen [sic], as lodging, only in the brest of the learned Professors, yet that our hous-wife may from them receive some ordinary rules and medicines which may availle for the benefit of her family.⁵³

This idea of male medical supremacy was not only an extension of society's general belief in the inferiority of women. It also reflected the changes in the medical world, itself. During the sixteenth century the Royal College of Physicians increased its authority, and solidified its position, particularly at the expense of female midwives and practitioners of medicine.

The advice books for the women devoted many pages to discussing the three essential realms of theoretical housewifery. These areas, however, were not the sum total of the housewife's responsibilities. She was also expected to manage all the details of day-to-day living, and to oversee their successful completion.

⁵²Tusser, *Five Hundreth Points*, p. 139.

⁵³Markham, *Coutrey Contentments*, p. 4.

Spinning, and the related skills of carding, weaving, making yarn, and dyeing were additional responsibilities mentioned regularly in the housewifery manuals.⁵⁴ Of these skills, spinning was traditionally considered women's work, and was one of the few specifically female wage-earning occupations at this time.⁵⁵ Spinning for profit was usually confined to the spinning of wool. Spinning for home use, however, involved a much broader range of materials, including flax and hemp. Tusser reminded the ideal housewife that she must plan ahead to have flax and hemp to spin:

For flax, and for hemp, for to have of her
 owne:
 the wife must in May, take good hede it be
 sowne,
 and trimme it and kepe it, it serve at need
 the femble to spin, and the karle for the
 sede.⁵⁶

Markham, in his *The English House-Wife*, gave a series of much more detailed spinning instructions. For example: "After your teare is thus drest, you shall spinne it either upon wheele or rocke, but the wheele is the swifter way, and the rocke maketh the finer third."⁵⁷ Markham went on to make a curious addition. He explained that if the housewife were "not able to spinne her owne teare in her owne house," the goods should be sent to the best spinner in the area. (He advised the woman to weigh the goods

⁵⁴Xenophon, *Treatise of Householde*; Partridge, *Treasurie of Commodious Conceits*; Partridge, *Widowes Treasure*; Tusser, *Five Hundreth Points*; Tusser, *A Hundreth Good Pointes* (1570); Vives, *Instruction of a Christen Woman*; Tasso, *The Householders Philosophie*; Markham, *Countray Contentments*; Markham, *The English House-Wife; Booke of Cookerie* (1620); *Epulario*.

⁵⁵Susan Cahn, *Industry of Devotion*, p. 54.

⁵⁶Tusser, *A Hundreth Good Pointes* (1557), Sig. Cii.

⁵⁷Markham, *The English House-Wife*, p. 100.

before and after sending them out, and to only allow "an ounce and a halfe for wast at the most.")⁵⁸

Markham's advice to women who were unable to do their own spinning is unique among the housewifery guides, and therefore, raises some questions. For example, why was Markham's housewife in 1631 "not able" to spin her own thread? Did she not have the skill? Did she not have the space? Was her time and effort best spent in other areas? Does this illustrate a shift in housewifery ideals away from the totally self-sufficient to a more leisure-oriented woman? Or, is this a result of increased commercial cloth production? These questions, for the moment, must remain unanswered. What is clear, is that the majority of advice writers expected the model housewife to do her own spinning.

After the material was spun, it needed to be woven into cloth. Again, it was Markham who allowed for a housewifery alternative, this time that of sending the spun yarn to a professional weaver. He wrote, "Now after your cloth is thus warped and delivered up into the hands of the weaver; the Hus-wife hath finisht her labour."⁵⁹ He, however, was again alone in this opinion; the rest actively promoted weaving as a housewifery skill.⁶⁰ An English translation of Tasso even recommended that the ideal housewife sell or trade the surplus, and retain the profit for herself.⁶¹

⁵⁸Markham, *The English House-Wife*, p. 100.

⁵⁹Markham, *The English House-Wife*, p. 90.

⁶⁰Xenophon, *Treatise of Householde*; Tasso, *The Householders Philosophie*; and William Lawson, *The Countrie Housewives Garden. Containing Rules of Herbes of Common Use. Together with the Husbandry of Bees, Published with Secrets, Very Necessary for Every Housewife. Together with Divers New Knots for Gardens* (London: Bar Alsop for Roger Jackson, 1617), STC 20454.

⁶¹Tasso, *The Householders Philosophie*, pp. 21-22.

Markham also expected her to finish the entire process by making clothes for the household.⁶² Having allowed for the spinning and weaving to be performed outside the household, he placed this skill as the ideal housewife's third most important. He explained,

Our English hous-wife after her knowledge of preserving and feeding the family, must learne also how out of her endeavors she aut to cloath them outwardly and inwardly; outwardly for defence from the colde and comelinesse to the person: and inwardly, for cleanlinesse and neatness of the skinne, wherby it may be kept from the filth of sweat or vermine, the first consisting of woollen cloth, the latter linnen.⁶³

Though theoretically a good deal of clothing was made at home, it was not necessarily dull and monotonous in color. The housewifery guides included sections on dyeing and re-dyeing cloth and garments, and the colors ranged from black, to red, to blue, to "a bright haire colour."⁶⁴ The care and cleanliness of clothing was also within the sphere of the good housewife.⁶⁵ However, the major part of that process was freshening or perfuming clothing with dried violets and other flowers, rather than actually cleaning it.⁶⁶

⁶²Markham, *Countrey Contentments*, p. 3, 82-83; Markham, *The English House-Wife*, p. 4; and Tusser, *Five Hundreth Points*, p. 134.

⁶³Markham, *Countrey Contentments*, p. 83.

⁶⁴Markham, *Countrey Contentments*, pp. 8-86; Markham, *The English House-Wife*, p. 164; Partridge, *Widowes Treasure*, Sig. B4v; and Partridge, *Treasurie of Commodious Conceits*, Sig. E4.

⁶⁵Tusser, *A Hundreth Good Pointes* (1570); Partridge, *Treasurie of Commodious Conceits*; Partridge, *Widowes Treasure*; Tusser, *Five Hundreth Points*; Platt, *Delights for Ladies*; Markham, *The English House-Wife*; *Ladies Cabinet Opened*; and Platt, *The Accomplisht Ladys Delight*.

⁶⁶*A Queens Delight*, p. 208.

Distilling, brewing, and malting were additional responsibilities cited in a number of advice books.⁶⁷ References to this craft were evenly spread throughout our time period, and were primarily concerned with the manufacture of beers and ales, and the layout of the brew-house, "seated in so convenient a part of the house, that the smoke may not annoy your other more private rooms."⁶⁸ Typical brews of the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries included "strong beere," "ordinary beere," ("which is that where with either Nobleman, Gentleman, Yeoman, or Husband shall maintaine his family the whole yeere"), "marche beere," (which was brewed in March or April from "half best malt, well ground, pecke of pease, one pecke of wheate, one half pecke of oates, and grind them all very well together, and then mixe them with your malt"), "strong ale," "Bottled ale," and "cyder, used in the west parts."⁶⁹

The desirability of distilling wine and cordial waters was recognized most prominently in Hugh Platt's *Delights for Ladies*.⁷⁰ While the housewifery guides suggest that home manufacture of beers, wines, ales, and waters formed a portion of the housewife's duties, we do not know whether these skills were routinely employed, or if the major portion of the household supply of beer and wine was purchased

⁶⁷Tusser, *A Hundreth Pointes* (1570); Tusser, *Five Hundreth Points*; Platt, *Delights for Ladies*; and Markham, *The English House-Wife*.

⁶⁸Markham, *Countrey Contentments*, pp. 120-24, 128; and Markham, *The English House-Wife*, pp. 244-46, 251.

⁶⁹Markham, *The English House-Wife*, pp. 244-48. (Note that page 248 is actually numbered 238.)

⁷⁰Platt, *Delights for Ladies*, Sig. E1. In addition, recipes for cordial waters appear in eleven of the thirty-five advice books: Partridge, *Treasure of Commodious Conceits*; Partridge, *Widowes Treasure*; Dawson, *Good Huswifes Jewell*; *A Queens Delight*; *A Closet for Ladies and Gentlewomen*; Markham, *Countrey Contentments*; Murrell, *A Daily Exercise*; *Booke of Cookerie* (1620); Markham, *The English House-Wife*; *The Ladies Cabinet Opened*; and Platt, *The Accomplisht Ladys Delight*.

commercially. The last could very well have been the case, for Thomas Tusser was quick to remind his ideal housewife that brewing her own beverage was much better than buying it.⁷¹ His displeased tone suggests the possibility of a growing number of women who bought their beer, rather than making it. Consequently, Tusser's comments could easily be read as a negative commentary on the state of English housewifery.

Analysis of the advice books' ideal housewife brings to light two additional curious gaps between our expectations and the books' actual contents. The first, and most significant, was the relatively infrequent mention of child-rearing as a desirable housewifery skill. Of the thirty-five books sampled, only eight addressed child-care.⁷² If these eight, one section was directed to men: "For men a perfect warning, How child should come by learning."⁷³ Considering the Protestant theology of calling, which firmly placed the woman within the home as caretaker of the child, the lack of instruction in the housewifery guides is indeed surprising.

What we do learn from the housewifery guides does, however, confirm the Protestant ideology of the later Early Modern Period. The housewife was instructed to "teach child to aske blessing, serve God, and to church, then blesse as a mother, else blesse him with burch."⁷⁴ Apart from this type of general instruction, the housewifery literature was not the principal source of this information. Barbara Harris, in her

⁷¹Tusser, *Five Hundreth Points*, p. 130.

⁷²Vives, *Instruction of a Christen Woman*; Xenophon, *Treatise of Householde*; Sir Thomas Elyot, *The Defence of Good Women* (London: T. Bertheleti, 1540), STC 7657.5; Tusser, *A Hundreth Good Pointes* (1570); Tasso, *The Householders Philosophie*; Tusser, *Five Hundreth Points*; *The Ladies Cabinet Opened*; and Platt, *The Accomplisht Ladys Delight*.

⁷³Tusser, *Five Hundreth Points*, p. 141.

⁷⁴Tusser, *Five Hundreth Points*, pp. 139-40.

"Property, Power, and Personal Relations: Elite Mothers and Sons in Yorkist and Early Tudor England," offers an explanation for the small amount of information on this topic found in the housewifery guides. She explains that women of the gentry level and above were simply not involved in the daily child-care routine, and instead, a respectable woman was hired to supervise the child's upbringing.⁷⁵

The second gap between our expectations, and the actual contents of the advice books is in regard to servants. As mentioned earlier, these guides were aimed at gentry women who had servants within their households. A logical assumption would be that servant management would be a frequent topic of these books, but in fact this subject was usually omitted.⁷⁶ The question is, why was it omitted, especially when the intended readers of the advice literature all employed servants? Could this be another self-evident skill, thereby making its discussion a waste of time?

The housewifery manuals did teach the mistress that servants must be watched, yet cared for.⁷⁷ Vives suggested that, if the good wife loved cats and dogs raised in the

⁷⁵Barbara Harris, "Property, Power, and Personal Relations," p. 612. Secondary works which discuss child rearing: Phillippe Aries, *Centuries of Childhood* (New York: Penguin, 1973); Walter Arnstein, "Reflection on the History of Childhood," in *Research about Nineteenth Century Children and Books*, ed. Selma K. Richardson (Chicago: University of Illinois, 1980); B. M. Berry, "The First English Pediatricians and Tudor attitudes towards Children," *Journal of the History of Ideas* (1974); Alan Macfarlane, *The Family Life of Ralph Josselin: A Seventeenth-Century Clergyman* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1970); Rosemary O'Day, *Education and Society*; and Lawrence Stone, *The Family, Sex and Marriage*.

⁷⁶Vives, *Instruction of a Christen Woman*; Xenophon, *Treatise of Householde*; Elyot, *The Defence of Good Women*; Tusser, *A Hundreth Good Pointes* (1557); Tusser, *A Hundreth Good Pointes* (1570); Tasso, *The Householders Philosophie*; Tusser, *Five Hundreth Points*; and Markham, *Countrie Contentments*.

⁷⁷Tusser, *A Hundreth Good Pointes* (1557), Sig. Cii; Elyot, *The Defence of Good Women*, p. 34; Xenophon, *Treatise of Householde*, ff. 26-26v; Vives, *Instruction of a Christen Woman*, Sig. I4; Markham, *Countrie Contentments*, p. 2.

house, she ought to do the same for her servants.⁷⁸ Xenophon added that the mistress should treat her servants especially kindly when they were sick, so as to make them grateful and thus even more faithful:

But one thyng specially above all other there is, that ye muste be carefull fore, and that shall gette you great favour and love, that is, if any of your servantes, happe to falle sicke, that ye endeavour your selfe the beste that ye can/ not onely to cherysse them, but also to helpe that they may have their helthe agayne.⁷⁹

The manuals further advised the model housewife to provide religious instruction to her servants, both for their own sakes, and to improve the quality of their work. Markham explained,

That the more carefull the master and mistris are to bring up their servants in the daily exercises of Religion toward God, the more faithfull they shall find them in all their businesss towards men, and procure Gods favour the more plentifully on all the householde: and therefore a smal time morning and evening bestowed in praiers, and other exercises of religion will prove no lost line at the weeks end.⁸⁰

Servants, whether mentioned repeatedly in the housewifery manuals or not, were an important and vital part of the functioning of the gentry household, and as such, needed both supervision and care.

Like baking bread, we have a few hints of other household skills which were seldom mentioned in the printed literature, but may very well have been a constant part of the housewife's routine. Such skills included such commonplace things as saving feathers, washing dishes, saving the fire, making ink, storing valuables, locking the house,

⁷⁸Vives, *Instruction of a Christen Woman*, Sig. I4.

⁷⁹Xenophon, *Treatise of Householde*, p. 26; Tusser, *Five Hundreth Points*, pp. 134, 135.

⁸⁰Markham, *Countray Contentment*, p. 2.

making candles, and carving meat.⁸¹ All of these chores seem plausible, even necessary ones, for the sixteenth and early seventeenth century housewife. Yet they were rarely mentioned in the advice books.

The maintenance of the household, as well as the cleaning of garments, was also considered one of the housewife's responsibilities, although few advice writers mentioned it. Of the thirty-five housewifery manuals only two singled out cleaning.⁸² Tasso stressed the importance of household cleanliness; Tusser did not want too much time wasted on it: "thought scowring be needful, yet too much, is pride without profit, and robbeth thine hutch."⁸³ The question we are left with is whether this relative lack of mention was representative of sixteenth and seventeenth century attitudes toward cleanliness, or was a result of assumed knowledge, similar to bread baking. The answer may very well lie somewhere in the middle, and can only be answered later, through an examination of the lives of actual housewives.

The ideal English housewife of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries cared for her family by providing clothing, meals, food preservation, medical attention, and a wide assortment of other services. While the housewifery guides emphasized three major areas of responsibility, they also hinted at other skills which were a part of the housewife's routine. Thomas Tusser's outline of the ideal housewife's day provides an

⁸¹Tusser, *Five Hundreth Points*, p. 134, 136; Tusser, *A Hundreth Good Pointes* (1570), p. 124, 134; Partridge, *Widowes Treasure*, Sigs. B5v-B7v; Xenophon, *Treatise of Householde*, f. 31v; Platt, *Delights for Ladies*, Sigs. G6v-G7; Platt, *The Accomplisht Ladys Delight*, pp. 154-56; *The Boke of Kerynge*, passim.

⁸²Tasso, *The Householders Philosophie*, p. 16; and Tusser, *Five Hundreth Points*, p. 131.

⁸³Tusser, *Five Hundreth Points*, p. 131.

excellent picture of how the good woman was to interweave both the major and minor skills into a single day.

According to Tusser, she was up as 5:00 a.m. and in bed by 9:00 p.m. in the winter, while in the summer she rose at 4:00 a.m. and retired at 10:00 p.m. The good housewife would get up before the others of the household, and immediately begin carding and spinning, or she might check the meat for unpleasant odors and signs of spoilage. She would then send servants out to tend the cattle, while those indoors would begin grinding grain for the next brewing. When the day star had been sighted, the servants would be called to breakfast, where Tusser suggested the husband would carve the meat and the wife would serve the hot pottage. After all had eaten, the servants would be sent out to "serve" the cattle, and the mistress would direct her maids to begin their day's chores.

After breakfast the model housewife would brew, bake, cook, scour, wash, malt, and tend the dairy--tasks Tusser believed would all have been completed by dinner. He warned the wife to have dinner ready before calling the servants, and then to feed them neither too much nor too little. Too much dinner would make them lazy, and too little would make them weak. After the meal the servants were to be sent to their plows, while the husband and wife ate. Tusser wrote, "At dinner, at supper, at morning, at night, give thanks unto God, for his gifts in sight. Good husband and wife, will sometimes alone, make shift with a morsel, and picke of a bone."

After dinner the housewife was to check on and comfort ill servants. She was reminded to save the chicken drippings from dinner to make cattle medicine later. Then she was either to make or mend clothing. After these chores had been completed, Tusser had the mistress saving feathers, presumably from the chicken at dinner, and

making candles to save money. According to Thomas Tusser, these jobs should fill an afternoon, thus leaving the evening free for other chores.

When the hens began to roost, the model woman would dress the meat, "serve" the hogs, and milk the cows. Meanwhile, she would have had a young male servant bring in firewood for the evening. And finally, after the cattle were tended, the ideal housewife would begin supper.

During supper the husband and wife were warned not to fight in front of the servants. Instead, the servants were to be watched closely to make sure that no one ate more than his share, which would have left the less fortunate without enough food. At this time, the wife was encouraged to address the servants, and give them an idea of the next day's chores.

After supper, Tusser instructed the housewife to "remember those children, whose parents be poore, which hunger, yet have not crave at they doore. They handog [sic] that serveth for divers mishaps, forget not to give him, thy bones and thy scraps." With all responsibilities of the household finally attended to, the good housewife could then retire to sleep; but only after the doors were locked and all the candles were extinguished.⁸⁴ The daily schedule of Tusser's ideal housewife was certainly exhausting by twentieth century standards but, incredibly, a few advice books added even one more area for her to master, and that was her personal appearance.

A small number of advice books, starting in 1587 with *The Good Housewives Jewell*, added recipes on health and beauty aids to the traditional contents.⁸⁵ Indeed,

⁸⁴Tusser, *Five Hundreth Points*, pp. 125-37.

⁸⁵Murrell, *Daily Exercise*; Platt, *The Accomplisht Ladys Delight*; Dawson, *The Good Huswifes Jewell*.

the undated book, *The Accomplisht Ladies Delight*, included an entire section, "Beautifying Water, Oyls, Oyntments and Pounders, to adorn and add loveliness to the face and body," devoted to the subject.⁸⁶ This last work included a wider range of recipes and treatments than the others, whose main concerns were limited to removing "red pimples" from the face, and anointing the face to make it white.⁸⁷ Another provocative set of recipes, addressed themselves to weight loss and have suggestive titles such as "for to make one slender:"

Take fennell, and seeth it in water, a very good quantitie, and wring out the juyce therof when it is sod, and drinke it first and laste, and it shall swage either him or her.⁸⁸

I find this very suggestive in light of the twentieth century phenomenon of anorexia nervosa and two historical studies, Rudolph Bell's *Holy Anorexia*, and Caroline Walker Bynum's *Holy Feast and Holy Fast*, which discuss women and eating disorders in an historical context.⁸⁹ Further exploration in this area, I believe, would yield interesting and important results regarding women, their concern with food, and their preoccupation with body size.

When looking at feminine beauty through the lens of the advice literature, a question of chronology arises. In other words, was beauty considered to be a more important attribute the later we look in our time period? If this were the case, it would certainly give additional credence to Susan Cahn's thesis that the importance of

⁸⁶Platt, *The Accomplisht Ladys Delight*, pp. 80-98.

⁸⁷*A Closet for Ladies and Gentlewomen*, p. 189.

⁸⁸Dawson, *The Good Huswifes Jewell*, Sig. G5.

⁸⁹Rudolph M. Bell, *Holy Anorexia* (1985; reprint, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987); and Caroline Walker Bynum, *Holy Feast and Holy Fast: The Religious Significance of Food to Medieval Women* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987).

housewifery declined sometime in the sixteenth century, and as it did, beauty and ornamental accomplishments replaced it as desirable qualities in women.⁹⁰

Unfortunately for our study, a survey of the advice literature does not shed light on this thesis. The book which placed the greatest emphasis on a woman's beauty, *The Accomplisht Ladys Delights*, is undated, and therefore can not be factored into a change-over-time analysis. However, if we were to learn that *The Accomplisht Ladys Delight* had been published late in our period, we would be able to establish a convincing pattern in favor of the Cahn thesis. Unfortunately, at this time all we can do is speculate about this point.

The advice books reveal much about the sixteenth and seventeenth century model housewife's indoor responsibilities. But this was not the sum total of her domestic obligations. The housewifery ideal included work which took the woman outside the home's narrow confines, into the yard and field. It did not, however, allow her any greater degree of actual freedom; the ideal did not allow her past her husband's property line.

In theory, the English housewife was expected to perform two major outdoor tasks: the first was managing the dairy; the second, tending the garden. In addition, the advice writers had the good housewife looking after both sick and healthy livestock, keeping bees, pruning trees in the orchard, and preparing hemp, wool, and flax for cloth manufacture.

⁹⁰Cahn, *Industry of Devotion*, p. 99.

According to the housewifery guides, the single most important outdoor skill was cheese making, and the dairy in general.⁹¹ The making of cheese, wrote Thomas Tusser in 1557, was best left to the housewife's own hands, lest she run the risk of a servant ruining the product. He wrote,

But huswives, that learne not to make their
 owne cheese:
 with trusting of others, have this for their
 feese.
 Their milke slapt in corners, then creame al
 to soft:
 their milk pannes so feolte their cheese
 be lost.⁹²

Cheese making called for the right type of meal and the correct seasonings and salt, and a little saffron to color it yellow.⁹³ Cheese products could be quite diverse. Markham provided recipes for "milke cheese," "neltle cheese," "floten milke cheese," as well as cheese of one or two meals.⁹⁴

The dairy, itself, was regularly mentioned by the advice book writers.⁹⁵ Gervase Markham, with his characteristic thoroughness, detailed the management and

⁹¹Of the nineteen advice books which address women's outdoor work, eleven discuss cheese and cheese manufacture: Dawson, *The Good Huswives Jewell*; *Good Huswives Handmaid for Cokerie*; Tusser, *Five Hundreth Points*; Buttes, *Dyets Dry Dinner*; *A Closet for Ladies and Gentlewomen*; Lawson, *Countrie Housewives Garden*; *Booke of Cookerie* (1620); Platt, *Delights for Ladies*; Markham, *English House-wife*; and Murrell, *Murrells Two Books*.

⁹²Tusser, *Hundreth Good Pointes* (1557), Sig. Cii.

⁹³Markham, *Countrie Contentments*, pp. 118-20; Dawson, *The Good Huswives Jewell*, p. 45.

⁹⁴Markham, *Countrie Contentments*, pp. 116-18.

⁹⁵Tusser, *A Hundreth Good Pointes* (1557); Tasso, *The Householders Philosophie*; Tusser, *Five Hundreth Points*; Buttes, *Dyets Dry Dinner*; Markham, *Countrie Contentments*; and Markham, *English House-Wife*.

arrangement of the housewife's dairy from the type of cow to "the ordering of milke vessels."⁹⁶ However, within the dairy the real emphasis was on milk,⁹⁷ because it was considered a way a housewife could make money.⁹⁸ Susan Cahn pointed out that once dairying became known as a profitable enterprise, it was, like textile manufacture later, taken over by men.⁹⁹

Markham stressed the importance of proper milking times, "betwixt five and six in the morning, and five and seven a clocke in the evening," as well as proper milking techniques. He reiterated the need to watch the pail at all times in case a saving catch was needed.¹⁰⁰

Markham also reminded the housewife to be sure the milkmaids moved cautiously around the cows: "The milke-mayd whilst she is in milking shal do nothing rashly or sodainly about the cowe which may affright or amage her, but as she came gently so with all gentleness she shall depart." However, a worse fault Markham added, was for the housewife to leave a cow only partially milked.¹⁰¹

The ideal housewife's involvement with the dairy and with cheese production was consistent with her indoor responsibilities. The dairy clearly contributed to provisioning the household's table, and the making of cheese was a part of the expectation to preserve food.

⁹⁶Markham, *Countrey Contentments*, p. 114.

⁹⁷Tusser, *A Hundreth Good Pointes* (1557); Markham, *English House-Wife*.

⁹⁸Markham, *Countrey Contentments*, p. 106.

⁹⁹Cahn, *Industry of Devotion*, p. 48.

¹⁰⁰Markham, *Countrey Contentments*, p. 108.

¹⁰¹Markham, *Countrey Contentments*, pp. 108-09.

The other significant outdoor responsibility projected by the advice book writers was the tending of the general, or kitchen, garden.¹⁰² This garden was used for both food and beauty. Tusser explained,

In Marche and in Aprill, from morning to
 night:
 in sowing and setting, good huswives delight.
 To have in their garden or some other plot,
 to trim up their house, and to furnish their
 pot.¹⁰³

The housewife and her maids were expected to manage the entire affair, from designing the garden, to sowing the seed, to spreading the dung, to weeding the plot.¹⁰⁴

The first step for any gardener was to lay out the design or "form" of the plot. The housewifery books were fairly specific in this regard.¹⁰⁵ William Lawson provided several pages of patterns in his *New Orchard and Garden*. He wrote,

The number of formes, Mazes, and Knots is so great, and men are so diversly delighted that I leave every housewife to her selfe, especially seeing to let downe many, had been but to fill much paper; yet lest I

¹⁰²Tusser, *A Hundreth Good Pointes* (1557); Markham, *Countray Contentments*; Lawson, *Countrie Housewives Garden*; Lawson, *New Orchard and Garden* (1618); Markham, *English House-Wife*; Thomas Harris, *The Lady's Diversion in Her Garden* (Stockwell, Surrey: Gardner, n.d.), STC 19976. Other books discussed aspects of gardening, but not the garden as a whole: Dawson, *Good Huswives Jewell*, pp. 45, 48; *Booke of Cookerie* (1620), pp. 100-02; Partridge, *Treasure of Commodious Conceits*, Sigs. D6v-F1v; Buttes, *Dyets Dry Dinner*, Sigs. F2v-H8.

¹⁰³Tusser, *A Hundreth Good Pointes* (1557), Sig. Civ.

¹⁰⁴Lawson, *Countrie Housewife Garden*, pp. 10, 17, 18; Markham *The English House-Wife*, pp. 37-38, 91; Dawson, *Good Huswives Jewell*, p. 48; Tusser, *A Hundreth Good Pointes* (1557), Sig. Ciii; Lawson, *New Orchard and Garden* (1618), p. 11; *Booke of Cookerie* (1620), pp. 100-02.

¹⁰⁵Lawson, *Countrie Housewife Garden*, pp. 3-9; Lawson, *New Orchard and Garden* (1618), p. 2; and Platt, *The Accomplisht Ladys Delight*, p. 161.

deprive her of all delight and direction, let her view these few, choice, new formes, and note this generally, that all plots are square.¹⁰⁶

Lawson also added that gardens were to be "bordered about with Fruit, Rasens, Seaberries, Roses, Thorne, Rosemarie, Bee Flowers, Aspo, Sage, and such like."¹⁰⁷

The plants in the kitchen garden were very diverse. They included flowers like those listed in *The Lady's Diversion*: roses, tulips, quilliflowers, lillies, primroses, cowslips, flower de luse, wall flowers, sweet williams, auriculaes, and saffron.¹⁰⁸ They also contained "endive, sucory, leeks, redish, beets, parsnips, skirts, parsly, sorrel, bugloss, burrage, chervile, . . . lettuce, onions, garlick, purslain, turnips, pease, carrots, cabbages, cresses, fennel, and marjoram," to name but a few.¹⁰⁹ Once planted, the seedlings needed attention to survive. Dung was to be placed about the plants, but never during an increasing moon, lest it result in additional weeds.¹¹⁰

Weeding, indeed, appears to have been an ongoing concern of the ideal housewife.¹¹¹ Tusser instructed her, "in june get wede hoke, they knife and thy glove," for if she did she would get her reward in additional corn.¹¹² The importance of constant and accurate weeding was emphasized by William Lawson, who wrote,

¹⁰⁶Lawson, *New Orchard and Garden* (1618), p. 2.

¹⁰⁷Lawson, *Countrie Housewifes Garden*, p. 3.

¹⁰⁸Harris, *The Lady's Diversion*, pp. 163-64.

¹⁰⁹Harris, *The Lady's Diversion*, p. 170.

¹¹⁰*Booke of Cookerie* (1620), pp. 100, 102; Lawson, *Countrie Housewifes Garden*, pp. 18-19; and Dawson, *Good Huswifes Jewell*, p. 45.

¹¹¹Tusser, *A Hundreth Good Pointes* (1557), Sig. Ciii; Lawson, *Countrie Housewifes Garden* (1618), p. 1; Lawson, *New Orchard and Garden*, p. 17; *Booke of Cookerie* (1620), pp. 100-02; and Markham, *The English House-Wife*, p. 91.

¹¹²Tusser, *A Hundreth Good Pointes* (1557), Sig. Ciii.

The skill and paines of weeding the Garden the weeding knives or fingers, I referre to themselves, and their maid's, willing them to take the opportunitie after a showre or raine: withall advise the mistresse, either to be present her selfe, or to teach her maids to know hearbs from weeds.¹¹³

Weeding was not the sole manner in which the housewife was expected to care for the plants; she was also expected to diagnose their diseases and cure them. Some common causes of trouble were "earth-worms, canker, gum, robines, femmets, green fleas, garden-mice, laires, ear-wiggs, caterpillars, snails, etc."¹¹⁴

To assist the good housewife in the proper care of her garden, *The Ladies Diversion* set out each month's activities.¹¹⁵ To detail every month's exertions here would be both lengthy and repetitious. Instead, the model housewife's garden responsibilities for the month of September--neither a particularly onerous nor leisurely month--will serve as an example:

Gather your ripe Winter-fruit sure in dry weather. You may yet sow lettece, Raddish, Spinage, etc. and Winter herbs. Transplant most part of eating and physical herbs, Artichoacks, and Asparagus roots, and Strawberries, etc. As the weather directs, about Michaelmas, in fair Weather, be sure avoid a foggy day, retiare your choice greens, and rarest Plants (being dry) into the conservatory, as Oranges, Lemons, Indian and Spanish Jasmynes, Oleanders, Barba jovis, Amomum Plinii, citisus Lingtus, Chamalaelea Tricolcus, C'stus ledan clusii, Dates, Aloes, sedums, etc. ordering them with fresh mould as taught in May, to nourish them all the winter, leaving as yet the doors and windows open, giving them much air, so the wind is not sharp nor the weather foggy, till the weather's more cold and sharp: and as that increases the more enclose them, till wholly shut up, as the weather gives occasion: mirtus will endure abroad near a month longer. The cold coming on, set such plants as will not endure the house, into the Earth, the pots 2 or 3 inches lower that the surface of the Earth, under a southern exposure, covering them with glasses, cloathed with sweet and dry moss; but upon all fair days, and in sunny and sweet

¹¹³Lawson, *New Orchard and Garden* (1618), p. 17.

¹¹⁴Harris, *Lady's Diversion*, p. 162.

¹¹⁵Harris, *Lady's Diversion*, p. 169-70.

showers, take them off. Thus preserve your Marum syriacum, cystus's, gergnicum, nocte olens, flos carding, maracoes, seeding Arburus, choice ranuculus and anonomies, and thus covering them til April. Plant Tulips, and all bulbous Roots, but your choice of each defer till the latter end of the next Month. Sow Auricula's Crocos, Primrose and cowslip seeds, Frittany, and Tulip seeds, etc.¹¹⁶

This routine covered one month only, and was in addition to the housewife's indoor chores.

Perhaps the greatest good which came from the housewife's garden was her supply of herbs.¹¹⁷ The guidance manuals instructed the housewife in the careful "husbandry" of the plants, as well as in their medical uses.¹¹⁸ They also provided information of the heights of the plants, so that they could be planted so that they would not shade one another.¹¹⁹ Lawson instructed the model woman to "gather for the pot, and medicines, hearbes tender and greene, the sap being in the top, but in winter the root is best."¹²⁰ She was expected to dry and store these herbs for use throughout the year.¹²¹ The garden, with its medicinal and nourishing plants, was fundamentally a mere extension of the housewife's indoor skills in the overseeing of her household's good health and survival.

¹¹⁶Harris, *Lady's Diversion*, p. 174.

¹¹⁷Partridge, *Treasurie of Commodious Conceits*; Buttes, *Dyets Dry Dinner*; Markham, *Countrie Contentments*; Lawson, *Countrie Housewives Garden*; Lawson, *New Orchard and Garden* (1618); and Markham, *The English House-Wife*.

¹¹⁸Lawson, *Countrie Housewives Garden*, pp. 12-18; Buttes, *Dyets Dry Dinner*, Sigs. F2v-H8.

¹¹⁹Lawson, *Countrie Housewives Garden*, p. 11.

¹²⁰Lawson, *Countrie Housewives Garden*, p. 18.

¹²¹Lawson, *New Orchard and Garden* (1618), p. 17.

The housewife's garden, acknowledged the advice writers, had one other function, and that was to beautify the house. The book, *The Ladies Diversion*, presented the woman of the house with ways of using her garden to adorn the home, in a section entitled, "Directions for adorning Balconies, Turrets, and Windows with flowers and greens al the year round."¹²² If the flowers were not candied, they then found a purpose on a balcony or ledge.

The kitchen garden, in theory, had many uses. It provided food for the table, and medicine for the hutch. It also grew flowers for both food and decoration. But still, with all its positive attributes, the male writers of advice books felt that it was not as important as the traditionally male-supervised orchard. Lawson commented, "It is to be granted, that the kitchin garden doth yeeld rich gaines by Berries, Rotes, Cabbages, etc. yet these are no way comparable to the fruites of a Rich Orchard."¹²³

The housewife's involvement with the orchard was primarily focussed on maintaining a healthy stock.¹²⁴ She was expected to know how to graft limbs, and treat trees with worms in the fruit: "Pierce the trees through with an auger, as neare the roote as they may, to the end that the humor wherof the wormes doe breed, may distill out of the tree."¹²⁵ The bulk of orchard upkeep, clearly, did not fall upon the ideal housewife.

¹²²Harris, *Lady's Diversion*, p. 166.

¹²³Lawson, *Countrie Housewifes Garden*, p. 9.

¹²⁴Dawson, *Good Huswifes Jewell*; Lawson, *New Orchard and Garden* (1618); *Booke of Cookerie* (1620); and Harris, *Lady's Diversion*.

¹²⁵Lawson, *New Orchard and Garden* (1618), p. 1; *Booke of Cookerie* (1620), p. 102.

There were, however, other outdoor chores which belonged within the sphere of the model housewife. The keeping of bees was one such female open-air duty.¹²⁶ It was so important that Lawson would "not account her any of my good housewives, that wanteth either Bees or skilfulness about them."¹²⁷ Fortunately for the good housewife, one of his earlier books, *The Countrie Housewives Garden*, went into great detail over "bee husbandry." In that publication, Lawson described the "warme dryie" bee house, the hives, and how to "hive" a bee. He also described how to catch and cluster bees, as well as how to tell the different types of bees apart, and even what sort of vessel to use to store honey. (He preferred wood over the usual clay container. Wooden containers did not break as often, and thus lasted longer.)¹²⁸ Bees and their products, wax and honey, were clearly important ingredients of a well-stocked household.

Beekeeping made up only a part of what the ideal housewife was expected to know about animal husbandry.¹²⁹ Her knowledge in this area theoretically fell into two categories: picking healthy animals, and tending sick ones. Oxen, pigs, horses, and cows were all animals whose health a good housewife was expected to be able to discern.¹³⁰ A good working ox, for example, was to be,

¹²⁶Tusser, *A Hundreth Good Pointes* (1557), Sig. Ciiiv; Lawson, *Countrie Housewives Garden*, pp. 19-25; and Lawson, *New Orchard and Garden* (1618), p. 17.

¹²⁷Lawson, *New Orchard and Garden* (1618), p. 17.

¹²⁸Lawson, *Countrie Housewives Garden* (1618), pp. 19-25.

¹²⁹Tusser, *A Hundreth Good Pointes* (1557); Dawson, *Good Huswives Jewell; Booke of Cookerie* (1620); Platt, *The Accomplisht Ladys Delight*; Tusser, *Five Hundreth Points*; and Partridge, *Widowes Treasure*.

¹³⁰Dawson, *Good Huswives Jewell*, ff. 41v-42v; Markham, *The English House-Wife*, pp. 104-08.

ready and quicke at the voyce, he moveth quickly: he is short and large, great eares, the hornes lively and of meane bignesse and black, the head short, the breast large, a great panche, the tayle long touching the ground with a tuffe at the ende, the haire curled, the backe straight, . . . the houffe short, and large, the best colour is blacke and red, and next unto that the bay and the pyed, the white is the worst, the greye and the fallowe or yellowe is of lesse value.¹³¹

Boars were to have a "head short and large," while the sow was to have "hanging bellies, with great tettes, deeper ribbed, a little head, and short legges."¹³² With the criteria set out before her, the good housewife's choice of animals was fairly straightforward. The next part of her job was to keep the chosen animals healthy.¹³³ For the pig a quick test of wellness was to pull a hair out of his back, and if "he be bloudie or foule," the pig was sick.¹³⁴ The housewife was also expected to be able to treat a horse if he swallowed a feather, if he swallowed hen dung in his hay, or if he could not urinate.¹³⁵ The ox could expect treatment for general weakness by being kept from drinking for four or five days, then by being fed "walnuttes and hard cheese, tempered in thicke wine, and for the buttermilk remedie, they let him bleed in the middes of the fore head."¹³⁶ The ox could also expect "oyle of scorpion" to be anointed to counteract the effects of a "venimons dogge" bite.¹³⁷

¹³¹Dawson, *Good Huswifes Jewell*, ff. 41v-42.

¹³²Dawson, *Good Huswifes Jewell*, f. 44v.

¹³³*Booke of Cookerie* (1620), pp. 94-100; and Partridge, *Widowes Treasure*, Sigs. F4-G7.

¹³⁴Dawson, *Good Huswifes Jewell*, f. 44v.

¹³⁵Partridge, *Widowes Treasure*, Sigs. G2-G2v.

¹³⁶Dawson, *Good Huswifes Jewell*, ff. 42v-43.

¹³⁷Dawson, *Good Huswifes Jewell*, f. 43.

Housewifery, in theory, was expected to cover a large number of general husbandry skills as Thomas Tusser summarized in 1557: "For huswifes must husbände, as wel as the man."¹³⁸ Again, we see an extension of the traditional indoor housewifery skills, this time those pertaining to the knowledge and practice of medicine, being moved outdoors. The housewife was expected to tend the sick, be they man or beast.

The last, and least mentioned, of the ideal housewife's outdoor responsibilities was her participation in the field.¹³⁹ The few advice writers who expected the English housewife to do this type of work, limited their discussion to things of the most general nature: the soil needed tilling, seeds required planting, and weeds needed pulling.¹⁴⁰ These writers certainly did not go into much detail in discussing this area of responsibility, and combined with the very limited number of references to it, we must conclude that this was not an important responsibility of the model housewife.

The theoretical English housewife of the sixteenth and early seventeenth century was not expected to be very involved in activities outside her house. The exceptions to this rule were in areas which complimented or extended directly from her indoor responsibilities. The garden and the dairy were two excellent examples of this. Even the model housewife's less important outdoor duties, beekeeping and animal husbandry, reflected the idealized role of the housewife as provider of food and care-giver to the ill. The nature of the model housewife's outdoor work is significant in reinforcing the image of the housewife as a caretaker.

¹³⁸Tusser, *A Hundreth Good Pointes* (1557), Sig. Civ.

¹³⁹Xenophon, *Treatise of Householde*; Tusser, *A Hundreth Good Pointes* (1557); Markham, *Countrie Contentments*; Markham, *The English House-Wife*; and Lawson, *New Orchard and Garden*.

¹⁴⁰Markham, *The English House-Wife*, pp. 90-91.

The image we have drawn from the housewifery advice books published between 1500 and 1640 is of the female head of the household, the housewife, as a woman who provided for the household members' bodily needs--their nourishment, their clothing, and their health. She seldom left the walls of her home, and even then stayed within the confines of her husband's gardens, yard, and fields.

CHAPTER IV

THE MIDDLE SORT AND LOWER GENTRY

The ideal housewife was the fountain from which all food and sustenance sprang. This woman took care of all members of her household, as well as a good many four-footed members outside of the house proper. The advice books insisted that the good housewife should work from dawn to dusk, being the first to rise in the morning and the last to bed at night. These same books also confined the woman solely within her home and surrounding yard. She clearly did not have time to stray beyond her walls and gate.

Yet, could a real woman, a housewife of flesh and blood, truly be and do all those things demanded by the male advice writers? Was the sixteenth and early seventeenth century housewife as self-sufficient as the popular ideal?

The most direct way to answer these questions is to examine the extant personal evidence from actual English housewives. The documents which reflect the lives of such women fall into three categories: account books, wills and probate inventories, and personal writings such as diaries, memoirs, and correspondence. From these sources we can determine general behavioral trends among actual housewives, while learning that the degree, type, and nature of their activities were as individual as their separate personalities.

Women of the lower gentry and middling sorts responded to the problem of feeding, clothing, and caring for their household in ways which varied from their more elevated counterparts. Their actions more closely matched the published housewifery

ideal than did that of the other women in this study. They are the focus of this chapter.

This chapter looks at the middling sort and lower gentry women through three types of sources: an account book, wills, and probate inventories. Criteria used to place these women in this lower ranked group were the employment of a relatively small number of servants, the size of their land holdings (in the case of wills and inventories), and the nature of their possessions, all of which reflected a simpler lifestyle.¹

The source which most directly reveals a housewife's self-sufficiency is her account book. This document was, in essence, her check register. It recorded all the monies received, and also itemized how all funds were spent. The historian is, therefore, able to see if the housewife bought items which the advice writers wanted her to produce at home.

This thesis examines two account books which are separated by one hundred years, and fall roughly at the beginning and end of our period of study. They also represent two different social ranks. The account book which is analyzed in this chapter belonged to a member of the lower gentry, Joyce Jeffries.² This document itemizes her household expenditures through the years of 1638 through 1648. The earlier account book belonged to Margaret Long, who at the time of that document was a member of the upper gentry and who only later became the Countess of Bath.³ This document

¹Landownership and class correlations are as follows, according to M. A. Havinden: 80 plus acres was a gentleman or wealthy yeoman; 20 - 80 acres was a husbandman or middling sort; 20 or less acres was a tenant farmer. Havinden, p. 13. See also Chapter One, pp. 7-11.

²Joyce Jeffries of Hereford, Domestic Diary, April 1638 - April 1648, British Library (hereafter BL) Egerton MS 3054.

³Margaret Long's Household Account Book, Cambridge University Library Hengrave MS 82/1. I would like to thank Dr. Ann Weikel for the use of her microfilm of this account book, purchased with funds from a Portland State University Research and Publications

details her household expenditures between 1541 and 1546 when she was the wife of Sir Richard Long. For the purposes of this study, however, only the first two years of each these account books have been analyzed. The one-hundred-year separation between these two accounts will provide us with the opportunity to look for changes over time within the nature of English housewifery, as well as differences due to social rank.

Little is known of the author of the later account book, Joyce Jeffries. We know she was the daughter of Henry Jeffreys of Ham Castle, Clifton-on-Teme.⁴ We also know that she was unmarried and considered quite wealthy, for a member of the lower gentry. Her usual residence, until 1643, was in Hereford, in a rented house on Widemarsh street and next to several buildings which she owned.⁵ In 1643 she fled Hereford in fear of the parliamentary forces. Her house and buildings were used to quarter troops and were later ordered destroyed or sold because of this, despite her royalist sympathies. During that time she lived in the country with cousins, and afterwards she returned to the country, this time to her own property at Ham Castle. Her account book has several annotations, one which is dated 1652, written by a niece or nephew. A fact which suggests that she was dead by that date.⁶

The advice literature called upon the good English housewife not only to prepare and preserve her household's food, but to produce it, as well. Joyce Jeffries, between

Grant.

⁴*Index of Manuscripts in the British Library*, vol. V. (Cambridge: Chadwyck-Healey, 1985), p. 528.

⁵This was where she was living during the period of her account book used for this study.

⁶David N. Klausner, ed., *Herefordshire, Worcestershire: Records of Early English Drama* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990), pp. 34-35.

1638 and 1640, asserted her self-reliance in the area of food production. In fact, in this area she was nearly self-sufficient. Ginger was her only food-related purchase.⁷

Mistress Jeffries did not buy bread, and this is immediately noticed because home bread baking was seldom in the housewifery advice manuals. Its absence in those printed guides does not stem from an assumed common knowledge of bread baking amongst all women. Rather, common practice dictated that the household's needs were to be met through purchases. Barbara Hanawalt, in the *Ties that Bound*, points to this same practice earlier, in fourteenth century England.⁸ Baking her own bread, then, was an anomaly within the housewifery ideal, and can, perhaps, be attributed to Jeffries lower gentry status and its less leisure-oriented lifestyle.

Joyce Jeffries also appears to have been equally self-reliant in the practice of medicine, as she was in the other areas of housewifery. The account book recorded two payments for medical services, both in April of 1638, and neither were payments for goods, but rather for services only. On 20 April 1638 Jeffries paid Margit Ailway, nurse, to attend a John Wulsh.⁹ Three days later, on the twenty-third of the month, the midwife, Margery Driver, was given 20 shillings.¹⁰ Joyce Jeffries, it must be noted, purchased no medicines. The evidence instead suggests that she supplied her own needs in this regard as well. The point, however, is clear. Joyce Jeffries' household met all its drug and medicinal needs through their own efforts, and met most of their medical

⁷Ginger was purchased in April, 1638. Jeffries, f. 25.

⁸Barbara Hanawalt, *Ties that Bound: Peasant Families in Medieval England*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), p. 146.

⁹Jeffries, f. 25.

¹⁰Jeffries, f. 25.

services, as well. The very close proximity in date between the two payments for medical services suggests that the person who usually saw to these needs was unavailable at that time, and perhaps she, herself, was being attended to by the midwife. Medicine and medical services provided by the Jeffries household were certainly consistent with the published housewifery standards of medicine.

The model housewife, according to the advice books, was to manufacture her own cloth, and then manufacture her own clothes. Joyce Jeffries was close, but not identical, to the printed ideal. She spent little of her household funds on the purchase of clothing.¹¹ However, she did tend to purchase raw cloth and goods, rather than finished products. She purchased bone, silk, and silver lace, in addition to thread in various colors.¹² She also purchased large quantities of cloth onto which these trimmings could be fashioned. She purchased Brie cloth to make a red robe, and chambray to line it.¹³ Additional chambray was purchased, as was fares and silk.¹⁴ Welsh yarn cloth, grograin, stamill, fustian, lawn cloth, and serge, plus buckram and calico were all part of Joyce Jeffries yardage purchases, as well.¹⁵ From her account

¹¹Jeffries, ff. 25-26.

¹²Jeffries, ff. 25-26.

¹³Jeffries, f. 25v. Brie cloth could be a form of baie cloth which was "originally a fine, light material, introduced to England in the sixteenth century by fugitives from France and the Netherlands. Later it became a coarse woollen stuff with a long nap, used mainly for curtains, coverings, etc." Milward, p. 7.

¹⁴Jeffries, ff. 25-26.

¹⁵Jeffries, ff. 25-26. Grograin, or program is defined as "a coarse fabric of silk, or mohair and wool, or of these mixed with silk; often stiffened with gum." *OED*, p. 1211. Fustian is defined as "a coarse cloth of cotton or flax." Milward, p. 25. Lawn is a "kind of fine linen, resembling cambric." *OED*, p. 1583. Buckram is defined as "fine linen or cotton fabric, at this time un-stiffened with gum or past. Milward, p. 12.

book we also learn that she purchased miles of green flannel, in lots of 15 and 32 yards, in order to make window curtains.¹⁶ Two additional lots of green cloth were purchased for coverlets and an elle of cloth for an ash cloth.¹⁷ Joyce Jeffries was much closer to the printed housewifery ideal in regard to clothing and related goods manufacture than the housewives of the other ranks will prove to be. Though Joyce Jeffries purchased the raw materials and did not produce them herself, her household did meet most of their clothing needs through their own labor, and not through reliance upon professional sewing services.

Outdoors Joyce Jeffries was equally able to meet the published housewifery standards. The advice writers such as Thomas Tusser and Gervase Markham urged the model housewife to plant and maintain a kitchen garden.¹⁸ We know that Mistress Jeffries had such a garden and also a field, because she recorded payments to those who labored in each. For example, we have evidence of her field from her payment on 4 May 1638 for "weeding one aker of whole graine land," and eight days later, on the 12th of May, for additional labor on five acres of grain land.¹⁹ Her garden, likewise, received the same close attention as her fields. The record shows that one shilling was paid "to Fanny ye gardener for ii daies work and diet."²⁰

¹⁶Jeffries, ff. 25-25v.

¹⁷Jeffries, ff. 25-25v.

¹⁸Tusser, *A Hundreth Good Pointes* (1557), passim; Markham, *Country Contentments*, passim; and Markham, *English House-Wife*, passim.

¹⁹Jeffries, f. 25v.

²⁰Jeffries, f.25.

In fact, Joyce Jeffries' garden flourished in the manner advocated by the advice literature. Her garden met her household's needs, and provided surplus for the thrifty housewife to offer for sale. The account book noted the sale of "garden seeds," as well as of saffron.²¹ On 30 May 1639, for example, Joyce Jeffries "rece of Mr Phillpotts and of Mr. Robert Kerssell 20s for :2: ozs of English safern growing in my garden."²² Jeffries gave every indication of having been as thrifty as the best model housewives. Considering the bounty provided by her kitchen garden, it is not unreasonable to suppose that she directly met her herbal and medical needs through this plot of ground.

Joyce Jeffries apparently raised her household's meat, as well, and sold the by-products of its slaughter, especially the hides. Her account book recorded the sale of mutton skins, lamb skins, and kid skins, all of which demonstrated the existence of a herd of sheep.²³ This herd was large enough to allow the sale of extra mutton as well.²⁴

Sheep mixed successfully with cows on the estate of Joyce Jeffries. This document recorded the sale of cow hides, bullock hides, and the most frequent item of sale, "herfer hides."²⁵ Further, her cows contributed more than their skins to the household. Joyce Jeffries "winter cow" contributed her share, and then some, allowing for the sale of her surplus milk--in June.²⁶

²¹Jeffries, ff. 3v, 6, 7.

²²Jeffries, f. 6.

²³Jeffries, ff. 4, 6.

²⁴Jeffries, f. 46.

²⁵Jeffries, ff. 2v, 3v, 5, 6v, 7, 8.

²⁶Jeffries, f. 6v.

Income was generated in other ways as well. Land was sold on two occasions in 1639, once in April and again in May.²⁷ In addition, her geese provided "licker" which was sold for profit.²⁸ Joyce Jeffries also sold livestock from her prosperous herds. These animals included two bay coach mares, a "suckinge coulte," a gray mare, and a "fat sheep."²⁹ Jeffries enterprisingly sold animal "waste" on two different occasions.³⁰ Jeffries was particularly thrifty in this regard. Following a careful examination of all accounts it is evident that Joyce Jeffries' outdoor housewifery skills were every bit as sharp and thrifty as those recommended within the printed guides.

One issue raised in the housewifery guides which is left unanswered in this account book is the area of servant management. A related question is also raised as to the degree of actual labor supplied by the lower gentry housewife, versus the degree of servant management. This account book provides only a few clues in answer to those questions. We know that Joyce Jeffries paid someone to tend the garden and the field, and we do know that she employed servants. However, Joyce Jeffries account is silent concerning regular servants wages.³¹ With this source, we can not determine with a high degree of certainty to what extent Joyce Jeffries did the work herself, or to what extent she hired others to work under her supervision. It is quite possible, given the

²⁷Jeffries, ff. 3v, 6.

²⁸Jeffries, ff. 2, 3v, 6. Licker was "the water in which meat has been boiled; broth, sauce; the fat in which bacon, fish, or the like has been fried. *OED*, p. 1636.

²⁹Jeffries, ff. 3v, 6v, 7v.

³⁰Jeffries, ff. 1v, 7v.

³¹We know that Jeffries did employ some servants as their names appear in the account book. These included Anne Godall, John Harris, and Anne Spencer. Jeffries, f. 25v.

small number of servants in her employ, that Joyce Jeffries' participation in many of the housewifery tasks was an important aspect of her household's successful operation.

However, even Joyce Jeffries, or those she directed, did not meet every detail of the standard of the ideal housewife. They did not produce enough wax or ink to meet their own demands.³² However, the relative amount of each purchase was small and does suggest that they were used only to fill-out the household's existing provisions. Both items were considered, by the advice writers, as important by-products of good and thrifty housekeeping.

While it is true that we do not know whether Joyce Jeffries or a servant actually performed these tasks, we do know that Joyce Jeffries was in charge of a very orderly, thrifty, and self-sufficient household and estate. In all but a few minor ways it was run in accordance with the printed housewifery ideal: to meet the food, clothing, and medical needs of one's entire family and household.

The next group of documents, women's wills and probate inventories, have also tended in our case to illuminate the lifestyles of lower gentry and middling women.³³ These types of documents, like the account books, can not tell us the specific activities of household members. They can, however, confirm the existence of various tools and goods which were required for certain activities; for example, the presence of a churn implied the ability to make butter.

³²Jeffries, f. 25.

³³The aristocracy, gentry, and merchants groups tended to have the Prerogative Court of Canterbury grant the probate of their wills for reasons of prestige. Havinden, p.3; W. B. Stephens, *Sources for English Local History*, rev. ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973), p. 64. Because I live in the Pacific Northwest, I have had to rely upon wills published by local record societies. Consequently, the gentry wills found in these publications are often of the lower segment of that social group and are relatively few in number. Havinden, p.8

Wills are by far the more available of these two documents and are, unfortunately, the least valuable for our study. Women's wills tended to bequeath only the most personal of possessions. Isabel Fitz-James' will of 21 February 1526 is typical of published wills.

To my daughter Elizabeth fitzJames the yonger a gowne of chanlet purfilled with crymson velvet. To my sonne Hugh Mallet of Corripole a goblet berring armes of the liberlts [leopard] hed. To my daughter Isabell Mallett a nut gilt, with a cover to the same, a marymaudelyn box gilt, with a cover to the same. To my daughter Isabell Mallet a blak gowne of chamlet funyd with martryns, my tryangle of gold. To my son Thomas Michell a basyn and an ewer of silver parcell gilt, a stonding goblet with a cover bering armys of the liberlts' hed, 2 fether bedds with two bolsters, 4 downe pillowes marked with A.B., a paire of fustians, a paire of blanketts, two counterpoynts oon with the Ymage of Our Lady and the other with diverse Ymagery werke, a taull cloth of diaper 6 yards in length, and 3 yards in brede, another borde cloth of diaper of the same weke, 6 napkins of like werke, 18 diaper napkins, two wassing towells and a cupbord cloth of diaper, 3 carpetts, a cupborde, a cofer of korvid wek made in Burton, a coffer of sprewis, a ship coffer standing by the bedside, 6 quysshens with redde harts hedds, 2 long quysshens for the chamber, one of weke of batkyn and another of damaske werke. To my daughter Joane Michell wife of the said Thomas Michell my gowne of chamlet furred with shanke, another tawny chamlet gowne purfilled with blak velvet and my best beads with a broch of golde. My will is the residue of all my gownes be distributed amongst my kynnesfolks by the discrecion of my overseer.³⁴

The remainder of the will bequeathed gifts to servants, religious, and religious houses.

Clearly, we can learn of the existence of many items, including clothing, furniture, and kitchen utensils, but not whether such items like the "tawny chamlet gowne" was the product of thrifty housekeeping, or the product of paid labor. Sometimes, especially among the laboring classes, more useful items and tools were willed like "my great pan,

³⁴F. W. Weaver, ed., *Somerset Medieval Wills, 1501-1530* (London: Harrison and Sons for the Somersetshire Archeological and Natural History Society, 1903), pp. 249-250.

all my plough and plough harness, with ij [2] steers, all my corn, and the mare with the colt."³⁵

Wills do confirm, however, the existence of servants through their mistress' bequests. Isabel Fitz-James continued her will by bequeathing a feather bed and related items to "Richard, my servant,"³⁶ as well as bequeathing items to Anne Kaylway, Maude Mede, and Joan Patche.³⁷ This evidence of servants within the lower gentry and middling households further suggests that the actual role of the good housewife may have been more supervisory in nature, than physical, even at this level of society.

Probate inventories are an area-by-area, room-by-room listing contents of the deceased's holdings, including the house, out-buildings or shop, and possibly land. These have often been published separately, as in the Yorkshire Archaeological Society's *Yorkshire Probate Inventories, 1542-1689*, or published in conjunction with wills.³⁸ Inventories proved to be an excellent resource for this study, because housewifery tools

³⁵Isabell Androw of Maperton, dated 8 May 1544. Dorothy O. Shilton and Richard Holworthy, eds., *Medieval Wills from Wells: 1543 to 1546 and 1554 to 1556* (London: Butler and Tanner Ltd for the Somerset Record Society, 1925), p. 21. Similar wills: Agnes Golloster, dated 6 January 1544/5. *Medieval Wills from Wells*, p. 53; Isabel Frye of Wynnescombe, dated 16 April 1545. *Medieval Wills from Wells*, p. 120; Johan Poppull of Perryton, Widow, dated 18 March 1554/5. *Medieval Wills from Wells*, p. 177; Joan Cole of Harday dated 27 September 1630. Hartley Thwaite, ed., *Abstracts of Abbotside Wills; 1552-1688*, Record Series, vol. 130 for the year 1967 (Wakefield: West Yorkshire Printing Co. for the Yorkshire Archaeological Society, 1968), p. 53; Elizabeth Thwaite, dated 16 October 1557. *Abbotside Wills*, p. 5; Anne Pratte of Shaw Cote, date 8 July 1611. *Abbotside Wills*, p. 36.

³⁶*Somerset Wills*, p. 250.

³⁷Fitz-James, 1525. *Somerset Medieval Wills*, p. 252.

³⁸Peter C. D. Brears, *Yorkshire Probate Inventories, 1542-1689*, Record Series, vol. 134, for the year 1972 (Kendal, Yorkshire: Titus Wilson and Son, Ltd. for the Yorkshire Archaeological Society, 1972). Thwaite, *Abbotside Wills*.

and products were neatly itemized and appraised just after the owners death, by a panel of local men.

Judging from the number and variety of animals listed in the probate inventories, many of these housewives were actively engaged in animal husbandry. Animals were raised for both their nutritional value and their muscle power. Horses, bulls, and oxen were raised as frequently as sheep and cows.³⁹ In addition, poultry and swine were equally popular animals.⁴⁰ The presence of these animals speaks to the practice of some of those outdoor housewifery skills advocated in the advice literature.

Evidence of other outdoor activities is found in the list of farm equipment found on these women's estates. The widow, Anne Vavator of Spaldington, whose inventory was proved on 6 February 1570 contained the most complete listing of farm equipment. At the time of her death she owned farm wagons, yokes, foot shackles, harrows, iron forks, muck forks, spades, shovels, and hay spades. She also owned a plow, irons, saws, sythes, hatchets, and dung carts.⁴¹ It is highly unlikely that Anne Vavator ran the farm herself. Most likely, she supervised the work of others. There are several individuals to whom she owed money upon her death. A number of these were probably people within her employ.⁴²

The probate inventories have confirmed the existence of general outdoor responsibilities. They also highlighted the existence of the more traditional areas of

³⁹*Abbotside Wills*, pp. 53, 55; *Yorkshire Inventories*, pp. 37, 38, 55.

⁴⁰*Abbotside Wills*, pp. 52, 53; *Yorkshire Inventories*, pp. 38, 55, 65.

⁴¹*Yorkshire Inventories*, p. 37.

⁴²*Yorkshire Inventories*, p. 41.

housewifery. Within these lower gentry or upper middling homes we find the tools they needed to produce their own milk, butter, and cheese.⁴³ Special devices like a "pounderyng tube" which was used to salt and pickle meat, were found among Elizabeth Sly's goods on 21 March 1574/5.⁴⁴ Evidence of candle making was found as well. Among Elizabeth Thornhill's goods on 26 January 1585 were a quantity of tallow and a number of tallow candles.⁴⁵ Another inventory listed candle wicks among other housewifery supplies.⁴⁶

The upper middling or lower gentry household, it seems, was also more inclined to do its own baking, than to purchase such goods from others. A number of items, for example, a grindstone, a kneading trough, and boulting tubes, were found among Anne Vavator's goods.⁴⁷ The extent to which these items were used is unfortunately beyond the scope of our sources. Their existence does, however, speak to a knowledge of baking, and such knowledge is consistent with those skills promoted within the housewifery guides.

Evidence of other indoor housewifery skills can be found in probate inventories. "Lombes," or looms, were found in a number of households.⁴⁸ A spinning wheel, ripple cane, wool combs, and heckles were found listed within the goods of the well-stocked

⁴³*Yorkshire Inventories*, pp. 39, 65.

⁴⁴Havinden, p. 65.

⁴⁵*Yorkshire Inventories*, p. 56.

⁴⁶Vavator, 1570; *Yorkshire Inventories*, p. 40.

⁴⁷*Yorkshire Inventories*, p. 38.

⁴⁸*Yorkshire Inventories*, p. 71; Havinden, p. 65.

and active Anne Vavasor.⁴⁹ The Widow Vavasor was equipped to brew, as well. The "Kilne" room contained a kilne hare, six bushels of malt, two "mask fattes," a "woort troughe", and 2 "gylefattes."⁵⁰ The same room also contained a "stepefatte" which was a steeping vat used for brewing. This also doubled as a vat for washing or dyeing clothes.⁵¹ A number of households had malt, and Joan Cole of Harday had "3 barrells, 4 tubbes, 3 skeeles, 20ty bowles and dishes and a brewing vesell."⁵² A good number of the skills urged by the male advice writers such as brewing were, in fact, apparently present among the lower gentry and upper middling women.

Wills and probate inventories are used by historians in ways for which they were never designed. Consequently, they can not tell us all the things we wish to know. They can, in our case, be used to confirm the existence of certain housewifery equipment and the probable performance of certain chores. They can not identify aspects of housewifery which required no special tools. An embroidered cushion listed in an inventory tells us only that it existed, not whether it was made by someone in the household, or purchased elsewhere. Likewise, wills and inventories can not tell us who

⁴⁹*Yorkshire Inventories*, pp. 39 - 40. Ripple cane is probably a device used to separating flax and hemp from their seeds. Milward, p. 46. A wool comb is the same as a wool card which was a "toothed instrument used for separating and combing out the fibres of wool. Milward, p. 61. Heckles are a "comb-like implement for dressing tow or flax, so that the fibres are straight and smooth." Milward, p. 29.

⁵⁰*Yorkshire Inventories*, pp. 37-38. A kilne hare was also known as a hair cloth and was a "coarse open fabric made from horse hair, and used for drying malt over a kiln." Milward, p. 28. A mask fatte was a "vat in which an infusion of malt and boiling water was made in the first stage of brewing." Milward, p. 37. A woort troughe "trough for the infusion of malt, which, after fermentation, becomes beer." Milward, p. 61. A gylefatte is a "wort tub in which liquor ferments." Milward, p. 27.

⁵¹*Yorkshire Inventories*, p. 37; Milward, p. 52.

⁵²*Yorkshire Inventories*, pp. 37, 56, 66; *Abbotside Wills*, p. 54.

performed those chores which the documents themselves confirm. The reader is left with a verification of the existence of certain housewifery skills which were deemed necessary and important by advice writers. Inventories and wills, thus, contribute an additional piece of the puzzle concerning actual housewives' performance--in this case of the lower gentry and upper middling ranks--in light of the requirements of the model housewife.

The picture which has formed of the middling or lower gentry housewife is one of relative self-sufficiency. The account book of Joyce Jeffries recorded relatively few purchases, and those items which she did buy were often purchased to supplement an already existing supply. The wills and probate inventories confirm the image of an amply, yet simply, supplied household. They also strongly suggest the practice of a number of housewifery skills which were recommended by the advice writers and ignored by the middle and upper gentry women. Baking bread and brewing beer are two excellent examples of items purchased by the other gentry women, but produced at home by the lower gentry and middling housewife.

The practice of housewifery in sixteenth and early seventeenth century England took at least two distinct forms, depending upon social rank. Further, it appears, from both the Jeffries account book and the wills, that even at this level of society servants probably performed many, if not most, of the actual housewifery chores. In this regard, the difference in the nature of housewifery within different social strata may prove to be one of degree.

CHAPTER V

THE UPPER GENTRY

The final and most revealing piece to this puzzle of the true picture of the early modern English housewife comes from an examination of the lives of upper gentry women. The nature of these lives is best gathered through an examination of personal writings: their diaries, memoirs, and correspondence. Account books can be particularly helpful, at this social level, as was the case for the lower gentry. In most cases, writings by women were selected because such documents naturally throw more light upon the role of women. However, writings by men proved useful because of their often off-handed, yet revealing, comments about the women in their lives.¹

The diaries, correspondence, and memoirs used in this portion of the study are as varied in content, as their writers were as people. Some writings proved more useful than others. The diary of Margaret Hoby (1599-1605), the Oxinden letters (1607-1642), the printed excerpts from the unpublished diary of Lady Mildmay (1570-1617), the letters and papers of the Verney Family (1306-1639), and the account book of Margaret Long

¹One of the most interesting diaries was "The Diary of Bulkeley of Drownwy, Anglesey, 1630-1636," which was written by a Welsh man. This gentleman farmer tells us much about his wife, Bess. He recorded purchases he made for his wife: cloth, food, and clothing. Much of the diary, however, was devoted to those things Bess gave him, like the six pence for doing the plowing. The vast majority of Bess's gifts, however, were loans. Though her husband kept the books, Bess was seemed to be a housewife along the lines of the published ideal. Hugh Owen, "The Diary of Bulkeley of Drownwy, Anglesey, 1630-1635," *Transactions of Anglesey Antiquarian Society and Field Club* (Liverpool: Wood and Sloane, 1936), pp. 26-172.

(1541-1543) were the most useful for this analysis.² The diary of Anthony Winthrop (1592-1610), the letters of the Hatton Family (1601-1704), and Anne Lady Halkett's autobiography were all useful in various degrees.³ On the other hand, the memoirs of Lady Ann Fanshawe (1600-1672) and the correspondence of the Holles Family (1493-1650) were of little use.⁴ The diary of Anne Lady Clifford (1603-1619) was added to the study at some points in the discussion, to underscore the difference between housewives of the gentry class, and wives of the nobility, of which Lady Clifford was a member.⁵ While the personal papers of these women and men have illuminated the lives of the sixteenth and early seventeenth English housewife most clearly, the published accounts often deliberately edited out most references to the domestic sphere. John Bruce, the editor of the *Letters and Papers of the Verney Family* quite proudly revealed his nineteenth century sensibilities when he indicated that he had "passed lightly over much

²*Diary of Lady Margaret Hoby, 1599-1605*, ed. Dorothy M. Meads (London: George Routledge and Sons, Ltd, 1930); *The Oxinden Letters, 1607-1642*, ed. Dorothy Gardiner (London: Constable and Co., Ltd, 1933); Rachel Weigall, "An Elizabethan Gentlewoman: The Journal of Lady Mildmay, circa 1570-1617 (unpublished)" *The Quarterly Review* 215 (July and October, 1911): 119-138; *Letters and Papers of the Verney Family Down to the End of the Year 1639*, ed. John Bruce (London: John Bowyer Nichols and Sons for the Camden Society, 1853); Ann Weikel, "Margaret Long, Countess of Bath, d. 1561," presented at the Pacific Northwest Regional Meeting of the Conference of British Studies, Walla Walla, Washington, November 1990, unpaginated; Margaret Long's Household Account Book.

³*Diary of A. Winthrop 1592-1610*, BL Additional MS. 37,419; *Correspondence of the Family of Hatton, A. D. 1601-1704*, Camden Society, new ser., vol. 22, ed. Edward Maunde Thompson (London: 1878); *Barrington Family Letters, 1628-1632*, Camden Society, fourth ser., vol. 28, ed. Arthur Searle (London: Offices of the Royal Historical Society, 1983); *The Autobiography of Anne Lady Halkett*, Camden Society, new ser., vol. 13, ed. John Gough Nichols (London: 1875).

⁴*The Memoirs of Ann Lady Fanshawe 1600-1672* (London: John Lane, 1907); Gervase Holles, ed., *Memorials of the Holles Family, 1493-1650*, Camden Society 3rd ser., vol. 55 (London: 1937).

⁵*The Diary of the Lady Anne Clifford*, ed. V. Sackville-West (New York: George H. Doran, 1923).

that appertains to domestic management and is unconnected with public affairs."⁶ The missing entries from this edition become particularly regrettable when we realize that this family's personal correspondence has proved to be one of the most rewarding sources for this study. Cases like this one truly underline the changing nature of historical writings, in that what was important to one generation of historians is not meaningful to the next, as the Verney family papers regrettably make clear.

It will be useful to have a general understanding of the families and individuals whose records provided the bulk of the examples in this chapter. Margaret Long holds a distinct place in this group of gentry housewives for a number of reasons. First, the document which reveals her life is unique in this chapter. Margaret Long is known to us through her account book, and not a diary or letter as are the others discussed here. Second, her background was different from the other gentry women, because of her urban and merchant origins. She was originally from a substantial London merchant family, a rank she shared with her first husband, Thomas Kitson. He was a successful merchant who eventually was knighted, and subsequently established himself in the country, building Hengrave Hall. Shortly thereafter he died, leaving Margaret with five children. She later married Sir Richard Long, a gentleman with an estate in Cambridgeshire and concerns at court. It was while she was married to Sir Richard that Margaret kept the account book analyzed here. Richard Long died in 1546 and Margaret was married a third time, during the reign of Edward VI, to the Earl of Bath.⁷

Lady Grace Mildmay had a much more conventional background for a member of the upper gentry ranks. She was born around 1552, the second of three daughters

⁶Verney, p. 1.

⁷Ann Weikel, "Margaret Long, Countess of Bath, d. 1561," *passim*.

and heiresses of Sir Henry Sherrinton of Wiltshire. After being raised in a "stern and hard" manner which "did not spare the rod," at age fifteen she quietly accepted her parents choice of spouse, Anthony Mildmay, and married into a prominent Puritan household. Her father-in-law, Sir Walter Mildmay, a well-connected and prominent man at court during Elizabeth's reign, at one time held the office of Chancellor of the Exchequer. His son, Grace's husband Anthony, was also drawn to court, especially to the social aspects and gaieties. Anthony spent significant sums of money maintaining his London lifestyle which seems to have caused difficulties between Grace and him. Anthony's long absences from his country estate did not appear to have troubled Grace, possibly because of the tensions between the two. They died within three years of the other, 1617 and 1620, time having smoothed out their differences.⁸

The Oxinden's were well established in Kent, dating from the fourteenth century. By the sixteenth century they were unquestionably of upper gentry status. Sir Henry Oxinden was the family head, and was married to Elizabeth Brooker, an heiress. Their son Sir James, married Margaret Nevinson and their grandson, Colonel Henry Oxinden, was the husband of Elizabeth Meredith. The Oxindens seemed to spend their lives hunting with spaniels and horses, visiting friends and relations, and rebuilding the family home in the Elizabethan style.⁹ They took full advantage of the leisure available to their rank.

The Verney family, like the Oxinden's, was long established in their county. They had been in the county of Buckinghamshire since the thirteenth century. The family head at the beginning of the sixteenth century was Sir Ralph who was married to

⁸Weigall, pp. 119-138.

⁹Oxinden, pp.xi-xxxvi.

Eleanor Pole. Eleanor was a lady-in-waiting for Queen Elizabeth of York, and was related to the royal family through her grandmother, Margaret Beauchamp. This marriage elevated Sir Ralph into a similar relationship with the royal family. He held the office of Chamberlain to Henry VII's daughters, Princesses Margaret and Mary. His brother, Sir John, carried on the family line with five children, including another Ralph Verney (the second). This Ralph Verney was drawn to court under the influence of his uncle. Sir Ralph (the second) had a grandson Ralph (the third) who likewise was knighted. The third Ralph Verney found favor with King Henry VIII, and was present at the christening of Prince Edward, and at the arrival of Anne of Cleves. His son, Edmund, (the second son by that name) was knighted, and served as Sheriff of two counties. Sir Edmund died in 1600, and his nephew and heir, Edmund became the head of the family. This Sir Edmund continued the family's strong support of the monarchy and served in Royalist forces during the Civil war. The Verney family was closely connected to the Royal family and its concerns through-out all of our time period.

Lady Margaret Hoby of Yorkshire, like the others in this chapter, was a member of the upper gentry. A devout Puritan, she had spent part of her youth in the Puritan household of Catherine, Countess of Huntingdon, which influenced her beliefs. Her first husband, Walter Devereux, was the second son of Walter, the Earl of Essex, and after his mother's remarriage, the step-son of Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester. The Hackness estate in Yorkshire, where this diary was written, was purchased by Walter. Her second husband, Thomas Sydney, tied her closely to the Earl of Bedford. Her third and final husband, Sir Thomas Hoby was the son of Lady Russell and nephew of Lord Burghley. Margaret and Sir Thomas were married in 1596, and three years later

Margaret began her diary. Thomas died in 1640, seven years after the death of Margaret.¹⁰

The upper gentry were clearly more connected with the court, and more closely related to those in power than were the lower gentry. Most of our sample were raised as members of this group and later married into the same rank. Margaret Long was truly an exception.

The advice books for women, published between 1500 and 1640, promoted certain activities and skills which they believed to be necessary in a good gentry housewife. An examination of wills and probate inventories, as well as an account book, has produced a bare-bones image of the actual housewives of the lower gentry and middling sort. A close reading of personal documents, such as another account book, diaries and letters, will fill out this picture by including the upper gentry housewives, and will create a multi-dimensional image of the English gentry housewife.

As the advice manuals urged, the gentry housewife's life was divided between her indoor and outdoor spheres. However, the gentlewomen of these surviving documents were less involved with food than was depicted in the published ideal. Food was mentioned infrequently in the personal papers, and cooking was ignored even more often. In fact, Margaret Hoby is almost the only woman who referred to the cooking process, although Lady Clifford made two references to the making of small dainties as an amusing activity. "We made rosemary cakes," Lady Clifford wrote on 24 March 1617. Nearly five years later, she recorded that on that "day I made pancakes with my women

¹⁰Hoby, pp. 1-61.

in the great Chamber."¹¹ Both of these incidents were viewed and treated as a special, and certainly infrequent, break in the noble woman's routine.

Margaret Hoby's involvement in the kitchen was considerably more mundane than her noble counterpart's. She made repeated references to being in the kitchen.¹² "I went into the kitchine," she wrote on 30 July 1600, "and did help gett some of our meat redie upon occasion."¹³ And, on another occasion, Margaret Hoby "helped dress a litle meate that was in my chamber."¹⁴ Cooking, or helping in the kitchen, could very well be what kept Mistress Hoby busy there. There were also three days on which Lady Hoby mentioned that she fixed a meal.¹⁵ On one of those days she wrote that she made "dinner for some of our neighbours: and my mother, w^t Mr Mills and his wiffe, was there likewise."¹⁶ It is clear that Margaret Hoby could prepare a meal, and that upon occasion she was even so inclined. However, it is equally clear that her assistance in the kitchen was not necessary.

While the diaries give some indication of the amount of time upper gentry housewives spent with food preparation, they tell us very little about the type of food eaten in their households. Margaret Long's account book is particularly useful, however, in this regard.

¹¹Clifford, pp. 60, 87.

¹²Hoby, pp. 135, 145, 81, 101, 109, 91, 166, 168, 173.

¹³Hoby, p. 135.

¹⁴Hoby, p. 153.

¹⁵Hoby, p. 160, 180, 194

¹⁶Hoby, p. 194

The account book of Margaret Long's household, written by a servant, is a very thorough, day-by-day, detailing of that household's fiscal activities. It records all purchases made during a particular day, and housewifery-related items appear for nearly every day. There are 6,513 single purchases which are clearly identifiable as pertaining to the housewifery arts. Of this number 5,034, or 77.3 per cent, were purchases of food.¹⁷ The historian is immediately struck by this upper gentry household's basic failure to conform to the housewifery model of self-sufficiency. Most foodstuffs were purchased, rather than being produced by the household.

We can, however, look more closely at the types of edible goods purchased by the Long household, and see if the emphasis there matches the advice books' ideal. Based on the evidence from her account book, Margaret Long fed her household on a protein-rich diet.¹⁸ The bulk of their diet--nearly one-third--was fish and seafood. They ate fresh fish, sun-dried fish, and salted fish at least twice a week: Wednesday and Fridays, as part of their religious diet. They also ate fish and/or seafood randomly on other days of the week. Gentry families in the mid-sixteenth century ate a wide variety of creatures from the sea. The most popular single specie was flounder.¹⁹ This household made 152 separate purchases of flounder in a two year period. In other words, they purchased a number of flounders, (a load, a barrel, an unspecified amount), once every 4.8 days. This was just one example of the great number of fish and seafood species eaten. The next most popular purchased fish was stockfish, with 118 different

¹⁷See Appendix H.

¹⁸See Appendix I.

¹⁹See Appendix J.

entries. Stockfish was a preserved cod fish., which could be stored for a length of time.²⁰ The third most popular item was whiting, (83 purchases), a cod-like fish. Apart from stockfish, preserved fish do not appear to have contributed significantly to the Long household's diet. It is curious that most fish were purchased fresh during their season.

Meat (mutton, veal, rabbits, etc.), along with herbs and spices, at 13 percent of each, of the total purchased food, made up the next largest segment of the upper gentry diet after fish and shellfish. Other food groups available in the Margaret Long household were fowl (9%), dairy products (7%), grains and vegetables (6% each), fruit (5%), eggs (4%), pre-baked bread (3%), wine, beer and ale (3%), and finally flowers and baked treats (1% each).

The purchase of beer and ale from outside sources is particularly interesting in light of Thomas Tusser's cry to return to home brewing. This need had traditionally been met from outside the home, and such purchases were in full swing by the fourteenth century, even among the poor who would seem to have been the most likely to have done their own brewing. Judith Bennett in her article, "The Village Ale-Wife: Women and Brewing in Fourteenth Century England" explained that while many needs of the fourteenth century household were met through "direct production, dependence upon the purchase of bread and ale was common."²¹ Bennett asserted that it was more economical for a few to do the brewing for many, because the ale-making process was labor-intensive and required extensive equipment and supplies:

²⁰The fish was split open, and sun-dried without salt until hard. *OED*, p. 3062.

²¹Bennett, Judith, "The Village Ale-Wife: Women and Brewing in Fourteenth Century England," in *Women and Work in Preindustrial Europe*, ed. Barbara Hanawalt (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986), p. 20.

The necessary supplies were extensive, but available in most households; large pots, vats, ladles, and straining cloths were found in the principalia of even the poorest households. But although the capacity to produce ale was present in many households, the process was so time-consuming and the final product soured so quickly that most families simply could not meet their needs by domestic production alone.²²

Margaret Long's purchases of beer and ale, like her buying of bread, was part of a long tradition within English household provisioning.²³

The question of who was responsible for cooking all this food in the Long household must be answered at this point. Was it Margaret Long, herself? Was it even another woman in the household, a housekeeper, perhaps? The answer is a cook, a professional, wage-earning, male cook. Records of his quarterly wages appear seven times in two years.²⁴ This good gentry housewife was certainly not directly responsible for food preparation. Instead, the account book seems to indicate that, since there is no mention of a housekeeper, Margaret Long acted as the overseer of the kitchen, possibly planning the menus, but certainly not actually performing the tasks.

Lady Hoby, similarly maintained a close watch over the activities in the kitchen, especially as they pertained to the two main meals of the day, dinner and supper. On a nearly daily basis Margaret Hoby "took order" of the affairs of her household, including the main meals.²⁵ Sometimes the kitchen was a place not of supervision and instruction, but of friendly conversation. "Then into the Kitchine," she wrote, "wher

²²Bennett, "The Village Ale-Wife," p. 21.

²³"Because baking must have exceeded the production capacities of most households, bread was probably more frequently purchased than ale. . . ." Bennett, "The Village Ale-Wife," p. 31n.

²⁴Long, ff. 54, 70v, 73v, 135, 138v, 147.

²⁵Hoby, *passim*.

beinge and with good talke spent the time tell :10: a clock."²⁶ Thus, she exercised thorough management of her staff and the kitchen, and oversaw the preparation of the meals for which she was traditionally, and ultimately, responsible.

The diaries and other papers also confirmed that the contents of the gentry diet included other items which were suggested in menus included in the housewifery guides. Even the less frequently mentioned food types like venison, rabbit, partridges, and live lobsters were each noted in at least one diary or letter.²⁷ The recipes also called for mutton, beef, chicken, lamb, veal, pig, deer, tongue, hare, calves' feet, muscles, carp, pigeon, mallard, quail, capon, pheasant, and lark. All of these items were purchased repeatedly and regularly by Margaret Long's household throughout the first two years of her account book.²⁸

Lady Hoby, Lady Mildmay, and Lady Long were fairly representative of the women in their class in terms of the foods their households consumed. Therefore Lady Mildmay's housekeeping list for Christmas week, 1594, is of particular interest as it detailed the amount of food consumed by her household during this festive time.

Wheaten bread, 16 dozen loaves [each loaf weighing 40 oz.]; brown bread, 28 dozen loaves; beere, 8 hogsheads [one hogs head is brewed of 12 pecks of malt]; beef, 50 stone; mutton, 6 carcasses, 1 joint; pork, 27 joints 8 pigges; blackbirds, 6 dozen; larks, 8 dozen; rabbits, 50; also geese, hennes, and wild game; flour 9 pottles; candles 36 lbs; butter (fresh), 15 lbs, butter (salt), 35 lbs.²⁹

²⁶Hoby, p. 92.

²⁷Holles, p. 135; Oxinden, p. 21, 130, 136; Verney, p. 259; Winthrop, p. 14v.

²⁸Long, *passim*.

²⁹Mildmay, p. 134.

Admittedly, Christmas week was a time of high feasting and not representative of the weekly menu. Yet, that fact merely underlines the size and nature of the housewife's responsibilities.

In contrast to other food preparation, baking, especially daintier foods, was an acceptable occupation for upper gentry housewives. Both Lady Hoby and Lady Mildmay engaged in this activity.³⁰ In fact, Lady Mildmay's dinner for King James I in 1603 was

sumptuously furnished. The tables were newly furnished with costly banquets, wherein everything that was most delicate for the taste proved more delicate by the art that made it beautiful to the eye, the Lady of the house being one of the most excellent confectioners.³¹

Clearly, Lady Mildmay was very practiced in the art of fine baking if she was willing to bake for the king.

Baking in the upper gentry household, however, apparently did not include the baking of ordinary bread. The records of all the households included in this study are silent regarding this task. Its purchase by Lady Long is immediately noticed because bread was mentioned so infrequently in the housewifery advice manuals. Its near total absence from those printed guides obviously did not stem from an assumed common knowledge of bread baking amongst all women. Rather, common practice dictated that the household's needs were to be met through purchases.³² Thus, Margaret Long's expenditures for bread were not in violation of England's housewifery ideal.

According to the advice writers, the second-most important housewifery activity was food preservation. However, most upper gentry housewives, while accepting

³⁰Hoby, 178; Mildmay, 133

³¹Mildmay, p. 133.

³²This same practice also existed earlier, in fourteenth century England. Barbara Hanawalt, *Ties that Bound*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), p. 146.

responsibility for providing the household with an adequate supply of preserved foods, did not do the work themselves. Lady Hoby, however, appears to have been an exception. She was apparently well-practiced in preserving food. She made note of preserving quinces, and "damsons."³³ She also preserved sweetmeats on a number of occasions.³⁴ General comments like, "after dinner I was busie presarving" also appear in her diary frequently.³⁵ It is clear from her account that Lady Hoby, herself, actually did the preserving at these times. It is equally clear as well from the overall infrequency of her comments, that she was not the sole source of preserved food in her household.³⁶

According to the personal documents of the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, food--both its preparation and its preservation--were clearly the responsibility of the gentry housewife. Though she may have helped with the process, or at times done it herself, she was not the chief source of the housewifery labor. Her life, as we shall see, was too full of other activities, and her actual participation in the kitchen much too infrequent for her to have been more than a supervisor of, or an occasional helper in, these tasks and chores. However, it is also clear, and will become even more so, that

³³Hoby, pp. 76, 187.

³⁴Hoby, pp. 77, 137, 140.

³⁵Hoby, p. 99. For additional references see Hoby, pp. 107, 138, 206.

³⁶The evidence from Margaret Long's account book indicates that her household probably preserved food. They purchased large quantities of fresh fish, meat, fruits and vegetables, as well as many pounds of salt, (the most common preservative). However, there is no indication of who was responsible for doing the actual preserving. Long, *passim*.

the upper gentry housewife was responsible for the proper running of her household, and was the ultimate source by which others' needs were met.³⁷

Meanwhile, medicine, and the gentlewoman's practice of it, was a much closer fit with the printed housewifery ideal than her actual involvement in the kitchen. Some advice books, like *The Good Huswives Handmaid for Cookerie*, *The Huswives Handmaide for the Kitchen*, and John Partridge's *The Widowes Treasure* all devoted themselves primarily to medical and food recipes. However, medical knowledge was not solely concentrated in these three books. Instead, it was spread throughout 19 of the 35 published advice books. The hands-on practice of medicine was a significant part of most upper gentry women's lives, be it dressing a hatchet wound or removing a corn from a toe.³⁸

Vives wrote that the good housewife should read from the great books of "physick," and copy out into a small, pocket-size volume those recipes and directions she had the greatest need to know. Then she should add useful recipes and cures of their own to this small book, according to Vives.³⁹ Lady Mildmay seemed to follow Vives' advice to the letter. Among her papers, Lady Mildmay left several volumes of prescriptions and treatments, entitled "For the Workhouse," which included "A medicine

³⁷Thomas Verney wrote his father in 1638 requesting thing necessary for life as a gentleman. He also wrote his mother and asked for her assistance in furnishing their household supplies. He went on to add that he was "unwilling to trouble his father about a business which 'did not belong to him,' and the 'parells,' he proceeds, 'I need not name, but will leave them wholly to your discretion.'" To Thomas Verney there were distinct spheres between men and women, and housewifery supplies, consequently, were not his father's concern. Clearly, the gentry housewife and mother, though usually not directly responsible for the actual production, was the source of the materials which met such household needs. Verney, pp. 196-97.

³⁸Hoby, p. 168; Mildmay, p. 131.

³⁹Vives, Sig. K3.

for the falling sickness taught by Mrs Stacey," a recipe "to take awaie a corne of the toe, taught by Mr Clarke," "a very good receipt against the jaunders, taught by olde Mistress Bush," and "a treatment for a blurred eye."⁴⁰ She also had written a "list of flowers, roots and herbs to be grown in her garden or for the making and distilling of medicines."⁴¹ Lady Mildmay also included advice to others who treated the ill.

They who minister Phisick must take care and consideration of all parts and humours that will truely cure anyone. And as they are tyed thereunto by the behavior of Nature, so are they tyed to the observation on infinite accidents which will arise in the administration. And inasmuch as order or dyet much furthereth or hindereth the operation of phisick, the generall directions in that behalf shall goe before the particular practices.⁴²

The medical treatment of others was an important aspect of Lady Mildmay's life, and one to which she devoted time and thought.

Lady Mildmay's diary reveals that she had been educated in the practice of medicine, and that she continued to refresh and increase her knowledge in this area. A gentlewoman who was her governess, (her father's niece), had a "good knowledge in phisick and surgerie."⁴³ She also had Lady Mildmay read "Dr Turner's Herball" as part of her education.⁴⁴ She carried this practice on into adulthood; as she noted, "alsoe everyday I spent some time in the Hervall and books of phisick, and in ministering to

⁴⁰While there existed many treatments for minor eye problems, the primitive state of surgery at this time precluded many treatments available today, and consequently, most serious eye problems were considered untreatable. Mildmay, pp. 131-132.

⁴¹Mildmay, p. 130.

⁴²Mildmay, pp. 130-31.

⁴³Mildmay, p. 120.

⁴⁴Mildmay, p. 120.

one or other by the directions of the best phisitions of myne acquaintance; and ever God gave a blessing thereunto."⁴⁵

Lady Hoby shared the same practice of frequently reading an herbal, and of tending the hurt and ill as well.⁴⁶ The entry of 17 September 1599 is typical of Margaret Hoby's medical activities:

Avter privat praier I saw a mans legg dressed, took order for thinges in the house, and wrought till dinner time: after dinner I went about the house, and read of the arball.⁴⁷

Lady Hoby, like Lady Mildmay, practiced and studied medical remedies.

The housewife faced a wide variety of ailments. The small pox, a broken arm, a purge, and a blurred eye were all within the grasp of our housewife practitioner.⁴⁸

Salves were an important medical treatment at this time. Lady Hoby recorded applying one to a sore breast, and giving another to a "poor woman."⁴⁹ Powders were another weapon in the housewife's medical arsenal. Sir Edmund Verney wrote to his wife in 1638 to ask her to send a powder to treat his gout.⁵⁰ The gentry housewife tended the needs of her family at home, and abroad.

Gentry housewives had to treat themselves as well. Lady Hoby suffered from toothaches and other ailments which she treated with "phisickes," medicines, a glister,

⁴⁵Mildmay, p. 125.

⁴⁶Hoby, pp. 72, 78, and 100.

⁴⁷Hoby, p. 72.

⁴⁸Hoby, p. 131, 215; Mildmay, p. 133; Oxinden, p. 94.

⁴⁹Hoby, p. 145, 168.

⁵⁰Verney, p. 212.

and blood-letting.⁵¹ Occasionally, she also saw Doctor Lister who would provide her with a glister and let her blood.⁵² However, for most ailments Lady Hoby went to her own medicine cupboard.

Housewives in upper gentry families were also responsible for travelling to tend sick neighbors and kinsmen.⁵³ In addition, they went abroad to assist with child-birth, and to tend women still in child-bed.⁵⁴ Lady Hoby, for example, entered one such visit into her diary:

I went to a wiffe in travill of child about whom I was busey tell :I a Cloke, about which time, she bing deliuered and I hauinge praised god returned home and betook my selfe to priuat praier.⁵⁵

While these gentry women attended the birth of children, the births of their own children appear to have been in the hands of paid midwives, and then they paid wet nurses for their infants early days.⁵⁶

Cough medicines, oils, ointments, and cordial waters were, like salves, powders, and midwifery, part of the gentry woman's medical repertoire. Margaret, Lady Oxinden, sent a water and instructions for its use to her "sister Oxinden." To Henry Oxinden, in 1640, she wrote:

⁵¹Hoby, pp. 59, 114, 115, 146, 149, 152, 161, 171.

⁵²Hoby, pp. 114-115, 161.

⁵³Hoby, p. 86, 105, 171, 210, 222.

⁵⁴Hoby, pp. 63, 117, 191-2, 195, 212, 218.

⁵⁵Hoby, p. 63.

⁵⁶Long, f. 67; Oxinden, p. 24, 112-113. The nobility, apparently, carried this notion of paid child-care even further. Anne Clifford chronicles her daughter's long illness in detail, but never nursed the child herself. The child was tended by a doctor and nurses. Clifford, pp. 51-63, 79-82.

I am exceeding sorry my sister Oxinden is so ill. I will not fayell to visit her so sone as I can posible; in the mene time I have sent a water for wind that I have found very excellent effects of. I desire her to take it with Shugar, a spoonfull of the water filled full of shuger and so rather cay it than drink it. i send her allso a powder which I wold have her take in a litel beer or posit, which if she likes best, as much as will ly apon 3d. will be enuf at a time, that of the water may be taken at any tim when she is ill. She may take this water with heat as other hot water is taken, so wishing her health and you all hapiness I rest your affectionat frend and Ant.⁵⁷

Of all the medical situations in which the upper gentry housewife found herself, "dressing" her patients was the most common.⁵⁸ Forty-one times in six years Lady Hoby noted in her diary that she dressed her patients. There were no details, and no elaborations; she simply left terse notations like "dressed my patientes."⁵⁹ On other occasions she specified dressing a finger once, a foot five times, a leg three times, sores four times, and hands six times.⁶⁰ She not only treated her family, like Mr. Hoby's broken arm, and her household, like Jurden's hand, but she also treated the poor, and neighbors who sought her help.⁶¹ On 30 January 1599, a neighboring child was brought to her for medical attention.

After I had praied priuately I dressed apoore boies legge that Came to me, and then brake my fast wth Mr Hoby: after, I dressed the hand of one of our seruants that was verie sore cutt . . . after that I dressed one of the mens handes that was hurt.⁶²

⁵⁷Oxinden, pp. 191-192.

⁵⁸Hoby, pp. 101-109, 111-112, 116-117, 126, 136.

⁵⁹Hoby, p. 104.

⁶⁰Hoby, pp. 72, 100-01, 168-170, 171, 186.

⁶¹Hoby, pp. 100, 102, 169, 184, 215.

⁶²Hoby, p. 100.

Lady Hoby's medical attention and knowledge clearly benefitted her household and community alike.

Sometimes the good gentlewoman was sought in cases where her skills were of no use. Such was the case faced by Lady Oxinden in 1640. Her niece was ill and Margaret Oxinden was "perswayd it is not in the por of any phisition to alter," though she did send her niece an ointment, and a cordial.⁶³

Lady Hoby was also presented with a hopeless situation.

I had had a child brought to se that was borne at Silpho, one Taillour sonne, who had no fundement, and had no passage for excrements but att the Mouth: I was earnestly intreated to cutt the place to se if any passhage could be made, but, althought I cutt deepe and searched, there was none to be found.⁶⁴

Her skills and knowledge were totally inadequate for the task placed before her.

In Margaret Long's accounts medical expenditures were mentioned only twelve times in two years.⁶⁵ This group of entries included references to both paid services, such as, "paid to katherine the sustar of the hospitall for xx weeks," and "paid to the parson, ye clerk, to the midwife and the nurses,"⁶⁶ as well as to the purchase of such items as manus christi, penny royal, and savine,⁶⁷ which are all known to have been

⁶³Oxinden, p. 179.

⁶⁴Hoby, p. 184.

⁶⁵Margaret Long's medical skills, in sharp contrast to Lady Mildmay's and even Lady Hoby's, appear to have been marginally adequate for her position as an upper gentry housewife.

⁶⁶Long, ff. 67, 141, 162, 165v.

⁶⁷Long, ff. 76v, 91v, 94, 108, 134v, 161v. Manus christi is refined sugar boiled with rose water, or that of violets or cinnamon, a cordial for very weak persons. *OED*, p. 1721. Penny royal is a species of mint with small leaves, esteemed for its medicinal value. *OED*, p. 2122. Savine is a small bushy evergreen shrub, the dried tops of which are used as a

used medicinally, or as a drug. Thus, some medical services were purchased by Lady Long, while other medical needs--probably the more minor ones--were met within the home. Savine, and penny royal were purchased items which require additional preparation before use. This indicates that Margaret Long, or some other member of her household, possessed some medical knowledge. However, the account book, unlike some diaries and letters, does not give us the entire picture.⁶⁸

Most upper gentry housewives, however, certainly appear to have measured up to the model housewife's skill and knowledge of medicine. Evidence suggests that these women created their own recipe books, studied the "great books of phisicke," and shared their knowledge and treatments throughout the community.⁶⁹

Unlike the practice of medicine, the upper gentry housewife rarely concerned herself with the manufacture of cloth. In fact, Lady Hoby and Lady Long are the only two of the upper gentry housewives who mentioned anything associated with cloth production. Margaret Hoby wound yarn, and dyed wool and cloth.⁷⁰ On 22 November 1601, she even bought a "little spinning whell" which she would later use occasionally.⁷¹ But these activities were never frequent; nor did she write about them with the same air of importance she attached to preserving food. They seemed more like a leisure-time

drug. *OED*, p. 2647.

⁶⁸Judging from her account book, Lady Long was much less involved in the practice of medicine than other housewives of the same social level. She spent only 2% of her budget on medical goods and services. Long, *passim*.

⁶⁹Dorothy M. Meads, the editor of Lady Hoby's journal, remarked that this was "the benevolent duty of the lady of the manor," and that the "whole district depended upon her ministrations," which was more than even the advice books called for. Hoby, p. 244n.

⁷⁰Hoby, pp. 65, 81, 106, 111, 118, 170, 171.

⁷¹Hoby, pp. 154-155.

activity than a household necessity. Margaret Long recorded the purchase of banberry, whose bark produces a bright yellow dye, and tentter hooks, which secure cloth to a framework to ensure that it stretches and dries evenly after milling.⁷²

The Long account book presents a mixed image with regard to cloth. It recorded both the purchase of whole cloth, and the existence of items connected with cloth production at home. Margaret Long purchased canvas, chamlet, cloth, damask, French ribbon cloth, fustian, Holland, linen, lockram, calico, silk, tabby, taffeta, and velvet, and paid mercers.⁷³ In addition, she purchased "cruell" or "crewel" which is a "thin worsted yarn of two threads, used for tapestry and embroidery."⁷⁴ Margaret Long both bought and produced only a small amount of cloth, as compared to the purchases of other gentry housewives. The other members of the upper gentry purchased a fair amount of finished cloth, and related trimmings, and clothes and other items of apparel were made at home.⁷⁵

The advice writer, Gervase Markham, presented an image of the perfect housewife which was consistent with the lives of upper gentry women. He was alone in writing that weaving and related aspects of cloth manufacture should be done by a professional outside the home.⁷⁶ Perhaps Markham's lone voice among advice writers was the voice of reality, and the others were a chorus of idealists and theorists, who were attempting to change the nature of English housewifery.

⁷²Long, ff. 61v, 63v, 69v, 74v, 76v, 80v, 94v, 95v; *OED*, p. 167; Milward, p. 54.

⁷³Long, *passim*.

⁷⁴Long, ff. 65v, 133v, 134; *OED*, p. 603.

⁷⁵Oxinden, pp. 116-17.

⁷⁶Markham, *The English House-Wife*, p. 100.

The Oxinden family appears to have been representative of both actual housewifery practices, and the advice of Gervase Markham. Their cloth was professionally woven. Henry Oxinden wrote to his mother on 6 February 1631 that "the weaver hath brought home your cloath."⁷⁷ Ribbons and trimmings were purchased, as well, and added to finished fabric to provide the necessary finishing touches to complete a garment.⁷⁸

The diaries' near silence on the production of cloth, combined with a brief, yet significant, mention of the practice of paying a weaver, all suggest that Gervase Markham's ideas were fairly close to the truth for upper gentry women, and that the housewifery ideal of home manufacture of cloth was inaccurate, and did not reflect their actual lives.

More frequently mentioned in the diaries than the making of apparel from purchased cloth was the upper gentry housewife's purchase of clothes. These women purchased everything from hosen to hats, from sable muffs to skirts, and from gloves to an entire suit.⁷⁹ A mourning peake, petticoats, waistcoats, and doublets were also purchased.⁸⁰ The basic assumption that gentry housewives purchased their clothing was revealed in Lady Mildmay's unhappiness with the amount of money her father-in-law

⁷⁷Oxinden, p. 134, 180; Winthrop, f. 15v.

⁷⁸Among the garments made at home, our diaries made three references to men's suits: for Sir Edmund Verney, Anthony Winthrop, and Christopher Hatton. Further, it is not surprising to learn that Lady Hoby, (who seems to have done a little of everything), also mentioned mending clothes. Oxinden, p. 180; Winthrop, f. 14v, 15v; Verney, p. 255-56; Hatton, p. 3; Hoby, p. 96.

⁷⁹Oxinden, p. 169, 180; Hatton, pp. 11-13, 159; Verney pp. 171, 261.

⁸⁰Oxinden, p. 131, 169; Verney, p. 261.

allocated for her household expenditures. "No more maintenance," she complained, "the 130 £ by yeare bare pention, to paye our servants' wage and to apparell ourselves."⁸¹

An examination of the amount of clothing purchased, or mending ordered, by Lady Long makes it easy to understand why her household only manufactured or purchased a limited amount of cloth. Clothing was the second biggest group of purchases, 8.2% of the total. Margaret Long did not need to purchase or manufacture much whole cloth, unlike the other upper gentry housewives, because most of her household's clothing needs were met professionally outside the household. All categories of clothing were purchased: from fifty-eight pairs of hosen to 15 pairs of velvet shoes; from canvas doublets to a satin gown; and even a knit cap and a lace hat.⁸² Shoes, however, accounted for 22% of all apparel purchases, the single largest category.⁸³ Margaret Long's household also kept a seamstress or tailor busy "mending" many items of apparel. Shoes were mended twenty times in two years. Shirts, doublets, coats, gowns, hoods, jerkins, and hosen were all repaired professionally, as were purses and petticoats, as well.⁸⁴ Margaret Long, characteristically, purchased both clothing and mending in her effort to meet her household's clothing needs.

Lady Hoby, likewise, acted characteristically by doing some of the mending herself. Her diary recorded that she was "busie all day about mending and sorting

⁸¹Mildmay, p. 124.

⁸²Long, *passim*.

⁸³Long, *passim*.

⁸⁴Long, *passim*.

linan."⁸⁵ In this instance, there was a great deal of variation within the actual practice of upper gentry women.

What is clear is that, regardless of how these women procured it, upper gentry housewives were undeniably responsible for dispensing and maintaining clothing. As Thomas Verney turned to his mother for household supplies, so other men looked to their wives and mothers for clothing. James Oxinden wrote to Henry Oxinden in 1629, "I pray you to pray my mother to send me a payre of stockinges and a cupple of caps."⁸⁶ James again wrote to Henry asking for "some bands and cuffs and hanchechers."⁸⁷ Katherine Oxinden responded to such requests when she wrote and confirmed that she had sent two new suits, and a cloak.⁸⁸ Upper gentry housewives between 1500 and 1640 were their households' sources of clothing and other apparel. While these women did not meet the housewifery standard set by the male advice writers, they did reflect the nature or essential aspects of that standard, through their role as distributor of that supply.

If the upper gentry housewife did not make her household's clothing, what need did she have of the miles of thread, dozens of needles, and miles of cloth that she purchased? Margaret Long's account book recorded eight separate purchases of needles, and thirty-three purchases of thread, as well as the above mentioned "cruell." One possibility is that a large percentage of those items were used by servants within the

⁸⁵Hoby, p. 96.

⁸⁶Oxinden. p. 48.

⁸⁷Oxinden, p. 73.

⁸⁸Oxinden, p. 117.

household to construct additional items of apparel, cloth furnishings, and other items for use within the home.

However, the wide variety of items purchased, as well as the large percentage of expenses devoted to professionally made clothes, suggests that needlework was the intended use of Margaret Long's needles and thread. Evidence from the diaries shows that daily needlework sessions were, in fact, a fairly common occupation for housewives of the upper gentry. Lady Mildmay spent time nearly every day in "works of myne owne invention, without sample or pattern before me for the carpett or cusion worke."⁸⁹ This skill she reported learning from her kinswoman and governess.⁹⁰ Katherine Oxinden, likewise, was skilled with a needle.⁹¹ Lady Hoby's detailed, often day-by-day, diary clearly shows the large amount of time some gentlewomen spent on needlework. During the six years covered by her account, 1599-1605, Lady Hoby "wrought" on one hundred and seventy-eight different occasions, and as her entry for Friday, 14 September 1599 shows, she often "wrought" several times a day.

After order taken for the house, and privat praers, I writt notes into my testement and then brak my fast: After, I wrought, and kept Mr Hoby compene tell allmost diner time: Then I praied and, after dimer, I walked a whill and went to church wth Mr Hoby, and when I cam home wrought tell 6: Then I examened my selfe and praied, walked tell supper time: Then I hard the lector, and after wrought a whill, and so went to bed:⁹²

⁸⁹Mildmay, p. 125.

⁹⁰Mildmay, p. 121. Samples of Lady Mildmay's needlework, and that of her daughters, still remain. Mildmay, p. 36.

⁹¹Oxinden, p. 23.

⁹²Hoby, p. 71.

Lady Hoby referred to her time spent at needlework in other entries in her diary, such as her statement, "I did work awhile," and another, "After privat praers I did make an ende of my work."⁹³ Ornamental needlework, as Lady Hoby made apparent, was a large part of the gentlewoman's routine, whereas the sewing of the household's apparel was not.

Upper gentry housewives clearly did not live up to the housewifery ideal with regard to the manufacture of clothing. However, with regard to cleaning and cleanliness, they created their own model where the advice writers had provided none. Purchases of cleaning goods and services accounted for 171 entries, or 2.6%, of Margaret Long's total expenditures. While it is true that perfume and lavender were purchased, (most likely to "freshen" clothes), a good deal of hard scrubbing did take place.⁹⁴ There were eighty individual purchases of soap, fifteen purchases of sand, and several purchases of both coarse and stiff brushes to aid them in this work.⁹⁵ Scouring paste and oil were also purchased, and there were specific charges for the scouring of the carpets and lanterns, plus whatever fell under the general rubric of "scouring."⁹⁶ Places were cleaned, as well

⁹³Hoby, pp. 89, 105. The phrase, "at work," appeared 63 times in the six years covered by the diary. It is also interesting to note that Lady Anne Clifford often spent time at work, listening to a reader, and making "an end of my cushion of Irish stitch which Coz. C. Neville began when she went with me to the Bath, it being my chief help to pass away the time at work." Clifford, pp. 41, 42, 51, 56, 57, 66, 67, 71, 72, 104.

⁹⁴Long, ff. 63, 71v, 72, 74, 75, 167v.

⁹⁵Long, *passim*.

⁹⁶Long, ff. 64, 66, 66v, 81, 81v, 113, 118v, 123v, 126v, 131, 137, 146v.

as things. The gate was cleaned, as was the loft.⁹⁷ In addition, twenty-five brooms were literally pushed into service.⁹⁸ Once someone was paid simply to "clean."⁹⁹

Clothes, too, received more than a shot of perfume, or a sprinkle of lavender. While in Greenwich, "Myle's wife" was paid for washing, as was a "launderer." Sheets and napery were both washed and whitened, while general "washing" was also an account entry.¹⁰⁰ One of the most fascinating proofs that clothing received a good washing, in addition to its dusting of lavender, was the purchase of a bucking stool.¹⁰¹ This was a stool which was used when bucking, which was "the operation of steeping or boiling yarn, cloth, or clothes in a lye or wood ashes, etc., in the old process of bleaching, or in buck-washing."¹⁰² It is highly probable that Margaret Long's household used their bucking stool for washing clothes. Thus, it appears that upper gentry housewives spent more time, money, and energy on cleaning their house and their apparel than the advice books led us to expect. Washing clothing, cushions, and other household items, however, was outside our housewives' personal routines. Margaret Long's account books suggested laundering was a task for hired help, instead.¹⁰³

Lady Hoby, on one occasion, did wash some linen, but hastened to add that it was only because her maid could not. "I helped my mother" she wrote on 11 November

⁹⁷Long, ff. 93, 149v.

⁹⁸Long, passim.

⁹⁹Long, f. 164v.

¹⁰⁰Long, ff. 50v, 51v, 53v, 59, 63v, 84, 101v, 126v, 138, 152v.

¹⁰¹Long, f. 69v.

¹⁰²OED, p. 288.

¹⁰³Long, passim.

1600, "to washe some fine linan, my maide France being not able."¹⁰⁴ Clearly, this was not a regular part of Lady Hoby's day. Neither was personal cleanliness.

Personal hygiene is seldom mentioned in the housewifery manuals, and it appears infrequently in the personal documents, as well. The other gentlewomen did not mention personal cleanliness at all. Margaret Long's account book, however, did record payments for soap and the "natting" of servants heads.¹⁰⁵ Furthermore, bathing seems to have been slightly more frequent among the nobility. Lady Clifford recorded such an event only once in her diary. On 3 June 1617 she wrote, "This night I went into a bath."¹⁰⁶ It is hard to imagine that one's personal hygiene was the responsibility of a paid servant. Therefore, one must conclude that bathing occurred infrequently, and that the recipes for perfumes and powders found in the advice books were indeed put to use.

In conjunction with these recipes, the advice books also included directions for the distilling of perfumes, and cordial waters. The process of distilling waters and spirits was, on the other hand, a fairly high priority for the model housewife. Books like Gervase Markham's devoted entire sections to "distillation," and the Margaret Long household seems to have anticipated this advice to some degree. Fortunately, some repair work had been done on the "stillatory" or still, of the Long estate, or else we would have been entirely ignorant of its presence.¹⁰⁷ The diaries, however, mentioned

¹⁰⁴Hoby, pp. 152-53.

¹⁰⁵Long, ff. 87v, 88v, 102v, 108, 132v, 133, 166v, 172. The frequency with which "natting" occurs in the record is an indication of the degree of concern for personal hygiene in this period.

¹⁰⁶Clifford, p. 70.

¹⁰⁷Long, f. 100; Milward, p. 59.

this task only once. Lady Hoby "went about" her "distilling" on August 9, 1600.¹⁰⁸ Yet, the fact that she referred to it as "my stilling" implies that it was a more regular part of her routine than a single diary entry would suggest.

Just as the housewifery manuals discussed the good housewife's need to distill waters and perfumes, a few books also discussed how the model housewife was to manage her servants. She was instructed to watch them and take care of them, especially when they were ill. The diary of Lady Hoby provides the best view into the mistress/servant relationship of upper gentry society. Much of Lady Hoby's behavior in this regard seems to have been drawn directly from the advice books, themselves. She spent large amounts of time talking with her servants and maids about various matters and business.¹⁰⁹ Typical entries consisted of comments like, "I talked with one of my maids," or "I wend downe (to the servants quarters) upon occasion of busenes."¹¹⁰ She also supervised their work, both inside and outside the house.¹¹¹ Lady Hoby "went about the house and did oversee the doinge of sundrie thinges," and also would "talk with some of the serventes of houshold mattres."¹¹² She even went to the garden to check on the work being done there.¹¹³ In addition to the supervision of her own servants, Lady Hoby also went into the field to oversee the work of her husband's

¹⁰⁸Hoby, p. 137.

¹⁰⁹Hoby, pp. 65-66, 85, 87, 89, 96, 98, 99, 109, 116, 117, 123, 125, 130, 140, 142, 188, 189.

¹¹⁰Hoby, pp. 99, 125.

¹¹¹Hoby, pp. 62, 63, 65, 67, 74, 76, 78, 95, 96, 98, 104, 132, 175.

¹¹²Hoby, pp. 67, 98.

¹¹³Hoby, p. 96.

laborers.¹¹⁴

Lady Hoby's interactions with her household servants included their hiring and their wages. The Hoby household was sought out as a household in which to place daughters for training in housewifery. On 4 March 1605 "come good wiffe Danfield to me," wrote Lady Hoby, "to intreat of her daughters coming to me who was desirous to serve me."¹¹⁵ A similar occasion arose in 1603 when her "cossine Grates brought his daughter lane, being of the age of 13 yeares auld, to me, who as he saied, he freely gave me."¹¹⁶ We do not know whether these young women were ever taken into the Hoby household, but we do know that maids and workmen left the household, under the actual order of the master, Mr. Hoby. On 25 May 1605 Lady Hoby noted that "Mr Hoby discharged Henrie Turner."¹¹⁷ An equally brief entry recorded that "this day (1 July 1604) at Night My Hoby discharged Anne France his service."¹¹⁸ It is interesting to note that while Lady Hoby was considered the source of placement within the household, it was Mr. Hoby who was in charge of relieving servants of their employment.

Lady Hoby not only oversaw their work; she oversaw the paying of her servants, which she recorded on a number of occasions.¹¹⁹ Typically, her entries read, "at night

¹¹⁴Hoby, pp. 78, 81, 96, 97, 105, 108, 123, 124, 129, 190.

¹¹⁵Hoby, p. 217.

¹¹⁶Hoby, p. 202.

¹¹⁷Hoby, p. 221.

¹¹⁸Hoby, p. 206, 213.

¹¹⁹Hoby, pp. 77, 110, 178, 189.

paid the sarvantes their wages, and workmens bills," or simply, "paied sarvantes wages."¹²⁰

The complete supervision of her servants' activities was indeed a large part of Lady Hoby's routine, more so than one would expect from reading the printed housewifery guides. Her diary also recorded a vast number of trips through the house, for which the exact purpose was not always recorded. She generally recorded such trips by just saying she "went about the house." There were 214 such forays though her house and gardens, recorded in her diary. While she did not always label their immediate focus, there are enough such entries whose purpose we know to assume that such trips were to supervise her servants. For example, Lady Hoby wrote on 21 January 1599, "After privat praier I went about the house and did oversee the doinge of sundrie thinges."¹²¹ A similar entry reads, "I went about the house and oversawe some besenes."¹²² Another general phrase which Lady Hoby used to describe her household activities was "busie," which occurred 99 times in six years. She would write that she was "busuie in the kitchine and about the house tell 6:," or that she was "busie tell diner time."¹²³ Lady Hoby clearly monitored the workings of her household, and the activities of her servants.

Lady Hoby was not alone in this regard. Lady Mildmay, too, personally supervised the running of her household. There is an extant letter, which unfortunately

¹²⁰Hoby, pp. 77, 189.

¹²¹Hoby, p. 89.

¹²²Hoby, p. 104.

¹²³Hoby, pp. 77, 112.

the editor of Lady Mildmay's diary does not quote in full, which speaks to her supervision of her household. The letter, wrote the editor, V. Slackville-West, was,

written when she was away from home to "my good Besse, my housekeeper," giving minute directions for the work to be done each day, and the household books still preserved are all carefully written out by her own hand and show that, though the establishment was on a large scale, there was little waste.¹²⁴

Upper gentry housewives were very much aware and in charge of their households' activities.

For instance, Lady Mildmay's writings addressed the correct division of labor within a well-run household of ten servants, three of which were to be women.

Of the three maids one is to save for cooke, one for tending of poultrie, making butter and cheese and necessaries, the third for a chamber maid or otherwise at your pleasure; of the seven men servants, one to bare and hewe, one to tend your grounde and make your provision of beefe and mutton and to serve as cator [caterer]. Two to attend on yourself, one of them to serve in the buttery, and in his absence one of the maids or the brewer. One to keep the horse. A warrenor to serve as a cator when your other servant shall be abroad for making other provisions. Lastly, the footboy.¹²⁵

Two points are immediately apparent. One, Lady Mildmay was the supervisor or manager of these affairs, and not involved in the actual processes. And two, the division of labor which we today would call "traditional" did not exist in her household. Men and women performed activities which have since been identified with one sex or the other, and all the activities in question fall under the general heading of housewifery.

A number of housewifery guides directed the gentry housewife not only to care for the physical well-being of their servants, but to care for their religious health, as well. Lady Hoby's Puritan position insured her adherence to such practices, and additionally

¹²⁴Mildmay, p. 134.

¹²⁵Mildmay, pp. 134-35.

reinforced her responsibility for her servants' spiritual well-being.¹²⁶ Often when she wrought, and listened to someone read religious books aloud, she was accompanied by her maids.¹²⁷ Thus, they too benefited from the religious discourse. Lady Hoby, however, did not leave such an important matter as religious education solely to this casual approach. The servants were taken to hear various preachers. For instance, in September 1603 "Mr Hoby, my mother, and my selfe, w^t our saruants, went to Thorphasilt wher we hard Mr Phileps preach."¹²⁸ Seven days later, on the 25th the entire family and staff travelled to hear Mr Phileps preach again.¹²⁹ She also instructed her servants on a one-on-one basis. On one occasion Lady Hoby sang a "psalme with some of the sarvants."¹³⁰ But more often she talked with her staff about a sermon or other religious topic.¹³¹ On July 4, 1600 she said "[I sat] a whill with my wemen talking of some princeples vnto then," and a typical Sunday had her coming home to talk with "some of the house of the sarmin."¹³²

Lady Hoby's role as religious instructor extended to the papist and ignorant alike. On one occasion, she read and talked about religion with a Catholic maid.¹³³ The

¹²⁶Lady Hoby's personal habits of regular Bible reading, private prayer, and emphasis on sermons are a clear indication of her Puritan beliefs.

¹²⁷Hoby, pp. 166, 167, 175, 182, 190.

¹²⁸Hoby, p. 205.

¹²⁹Hoby, p. 205.

¹³⁰Hoby, p. 139.

¹³¹Hoby, pp. 85, 109, 130, 140, 184.

¹³²Hoby, p. 109.

¹³³Hoby, p. 105.

kitchen, however, was a place in particular need of help. Lady Hoby wrote in 1599 of going into the kitchen, "when Mr Rhodes and my selfe had som speach with the poore an ignrant of the princeples of religion."¹³⁴ Lady Hoby clearly took her responsibilities towards the religious well-being of her servants as seriously as the advice books said she ought.

Lady Hoby took both her role as religious instructor, and her role as leader within the county seriously. And in doing so she used both functions to extend her religious influence over the women of her community. She accomplished this in her typically direct fashion, by talking and reading.¹³⁵ She wrote in August of 1600 that after she had gone to church she "talked of the sarmon, and reed to the good wiues that was with me."¹³⁶ Servants and social inferiors, both, fell under Lady Hoby's canopy of responsibility.

With the religious instruction of the household and neighborhood firmly under the sharp eye of the upper gentry housewife, who then was responsible for the care and education of her children? The few housewifery guides which addressed the issue explicitly placed the child's early religious training under the guidance of the housewife, as well.¹³⁷ Lady Mildmay clearly agreed. She wrote in the preface of her journal that religion and scripture were the "best course to sett ourselves in from the beginning vnto the end of our lives."¹³⁸ She continued,

¹³⁴Hoby, pp. 65-66.

¹³⁵Hoby, pp. 67, 136, 140.

¹³⁶Hoby, p. 140.

¹³⁷Tusser, *Five Hundreth Points*, pp.139-140.

¹³⁸Mildmay, p. 128.

Wherefore it is a matter of great importance to bring up children unto God, and to cause them to forsake the vanities and follies of this short and momentary life to preforme the work and life of grace: and in the exercise of the teaching, we teach and instruct ourselves unto the same end, which is life everlasting.¹³⁹

The religious instruction of both child and servant, and of both the household and the neighborhood, was clearly carried out by the upper gentry housewife, just as the advice books suggested.

The advice books, however, made no mention of the other aspects of a child's education. Barbara Harris suggested that impoverished gentlewomen worked within these upper gentry homes educating the young.¹⁴⁰ Lady Mildmay's kinswoman-governess was certainly within this tradition. Other gentry sent their children away to school, or brought "masters" into the home for this purpose. Payments for the children's education were recorded in the Long account book. There were specific payments for the instruction of Mistress Anne, Mistress Dorothy, and of Mistresses Anne and Francis, as well as one general entry of "teaching the children."¹⁴¹ Henry Oxinden, likewise, wrote to Katherine Oxinden in May of 1639 that two daughters of a Mr. Swan, of whom she was in charge, were "to go to schoole at Ashford," and receive their education there.¹⁴²

Lady Halkett, who was born in 1622, wrote about her early education and training:

¹³⁹Mildmay, p. 128.

¹⁴⁰Harris, "Property, Power, and Personal Relations," p. 612.

¹⁴¹Master Thomas, the youngest of Margaret Long's children at this time, was apparently not ready for specific tutoring. Long, ff. 56v, 70v, 90, 95, 159v.

¹⁴²Oxinden, p. 149.

That care was whole left (next to God's providence) to my mother--my father dying when we were all very young--who spared noe expence in educating all her children in the most suitable way to improve them . . . , who paid masters for teaching my sister and mee to write, speake French, play on the lute and virginals, and dance, and kept a gentlewoman to teach us all kinds of needlworke, which shews I was not brought up in an idle life.¹⁴³

While Lady Halkett's mother hired masters to teach certain subjects, she also retained a gentlewoman to teach needlework, and perhaps additional housewifery skills. Lady Halkett's mother made a clear distinction between the two areas of instruction. Gentlewomen, in her eyes, were not to be responsible for teaching reading and French, but were instead in charge of teaching skills--housewifery skills--which would allow a woman to contribute to the household and not be confined to "an idle life."

Chance references in the Long account book indicate that early childhood education was the responsibility of a paid nurse, and not the mother. Margaret Long paid for the services of a nurse in conjunction with those of a mid-wife.¹⁴⁴ The infant was probably put out to nurse for a period of time and then returned to Lady Long.

The amusement of children is not mentioned in the housewifery guides; however, the Long account book gives the reader a glimpse of some of the possibilities. Master Thomas, we know, had a horn, because a "tassle and ribbon" were purchased for it.¹⁴⁵ Likewise, we also know he had a bow and arrows, because of related purchases, such as "arrows and strings for Thomas Kitson," and "buying and feathering arrows for Master

¹⁴³Halkett, p. 2. Born 4 January 1622, Lady Halkett's father, Thomas Murray, was secretary to Prince Charles, afterward King Charles I. Anne Halkett, herself, was known for her religious writings published in 1701. Halkett, pp. i-xxi.

¹⁴⁴Long, f. 67.

¹⁴⁵Long, f. 170v.

Thomas," to name a few.¹⁴⁶ In addition, the account book records the purchases of balls and "babees" (which were dolls or puppets).¹⁴⁷ Thus, the amusement and education of children gains a sense of definitiveness or actuality, which is all but totally lacking from the housewifery manuals. This could very well be a result of the non-participation in these activities by the housewife or mother, if this duty fell on the shoulders of a paid outsider, as Barbara Harris suggested.

Scattered throughout the advice books in obscure places, and in remarks made in passing, are a group of incidental housewifery tasks which were also intended to be included within the model housewife's routine. Such infrequently mentioned chores included making candles and ink, washing dishes, securing the house, and bringing in firewood. Like the housewifery guides, the diaries themselves make only passing reference to these chores. Due to the very detailed nature of Lady Hoby's diary, many of these household chores were mentioned here, and not in the other accounts, but even in her diary they were mentioned infrequently. For example, Lady Hoby "went about and sawe some provision of wood laied in" only once during the six year period of her account.¹⁴⁸ Likewise, she recorded making candles on only three occasions.¹⁴⁹ Similarly, saving feathers and making candles were both advocated by Thomas Tusser, but those items were purchased by Margaret Long.¹⁵⁰ However, Margaret Long does conform to Tusser's priorities with respect to the importance of the good housewife's

¹⁴⁶Long, ff. 92, 103, 107v, 130v.

¹⁴⁷*OED*, p. 152; Long, ff. 55v, 68, 86, 162.

¹⁴⁸Hoby, p. 151.

¹⁴⁹Hoby, pp. 86, 145, 182.

¹⁵⁰Tusser, *Five Hundreth Points*, pp. 125-137; Long, *passim*.

keeping things under lock and key.¹⁵¹ She purchased a basket and chest with locks, and individual locks were purchased, as was a padlock.¹⁵² Locks were added to, or mended on, the buttery door, the stable door, the barn door, and the cellar door.¹⁵³ Also, new keys were made and unspecified locks were hung and mended.¹⁵⁴ Clearly, the advice books emphasis on the tightly locked door, and secured goods conforms to reality, at least within the Margaret Long household.

Like the modern housewife, Lady Hoby had bills to pay, and accounts to keep.¹⁵⁵ In addition, on large estates like the Hoby's these tasks included receiving rents.¹⁵⁶ While these responsibilities were not mandated by the published housewifery guides, they were, nevertheless, essential to the successful management of the household.

While the advice books indicated that the only way to a well-run home was through extreme thrift, self-sufficiency, and actual physical labor, Margaret Long's account book, and the diaries of actual upper gentry housewives present a slightly different picture. The actual housewives were all knowledgeable in the indoor housewifery skills. However, their hands-on involvement in such tasks, except for the practice of medicine, was not necessary, or even expected. The successful upper gentry housewife supervised her servants closely, and kept a sharp eye on her household expenditures. The picture of the housewife indoors, drawn from the personal documents

¹⁵¹Tusser, *Five Hundreth Points*, pp. 125-137.

¹⁵²Long, ff. 126, 168, 176.

¹⁵³Long, ff. 75v, 100, 138, 159v, 166.

¹⁵⁴Long, ff. 96, 85v, 178, 159v, 170.

¹⁵⁵Hoby, pp. 85, 87, 100, 104, 109, 110, 111.

¹⁵⁶Hoby, pp. 77, 148.

of upper gentry women from between 1500 and 1640, is one which retains the essence of the model housewife, while not actually adhering to every dictate of the advice books.

The advice books not only promoted an indoor ideal for gentlewomen to strive toward. They also discussed the merits and standards of the perfect housewife outdoors. The account books, diaries and memoirs of these gentlewomen have provided a wide and colorful image of the housewife indoors. They, however, contain little regarding housewifery outside the house. The good upper gentry housewife seems to have spent little time involved in those outdoor skills recommended by the male advice writers. However, the time she did spend was spread through a wide and varied list of tasks.

The kitchen garden, of course, received a good deal of attention from the upper gentry housewife. Lady Hoby recorded trips to her kitchen garden for a number of reasons.¹⁵⁷ Once she spent the day sowing seed,¹⁵⁸ and on another day she planted trees a Mr Sittington had sent her.¹⁵⁹ On 1 November 1603 Lady Hoby recorded, "at this time we had in our gardens Rasberes faire sett againe, and allmost euerie Hearbe and flower."¹⁶⁰ Her garden also contained "Hartecokes," "Whitt Rosses," "Read Rosses," and a "musk rose."¹⁶¹ All of these items were considered essential elements of a housewife's kitchen garden. Lady Hoby even produced enough herbs to send extras home with the "good wife of Erley."¹⁶² Given Lady Hoby's medical knowledge, and the

¹⁵⁷Hoby, pp. 105, 110, 117, 122, 133, 167, 168, 170, 190, 196, 206, 208, 217.

¹⁵⁸Hoby, p. 167.

¹⁵⁹Hoby, p. 190.

¹⁶⁰Hoby, p. 208.

¹⁶¹Hoby, p. 208.

¹⁶²Hoby, p. 170.

size of the area she served, it is not in the least surprising to find a well-stocked and flourishing garden worthy of praise even from the advice writers.

The ideal of the kitchen garden was not completely acted out within the reality of Margaret Long's estate. A garden did, however, exist. We know that, because a gardener was paid for work on a number of occasions, as was the "gardeners maid."¹⁶³ Additional activities in the garden, such as weeding and hauling "earth" out, were also performed by others and duly recorded in the accounts.¹⁶⁴ However, the garden did not produce all that the printed manuals suggested it ought. Endive, parsnips, parsley, and fennel, as well as saffron, lettuce, and onions, were all specifically mentioned by the housewifery guides as products of the kitchen garden.¹⁶⁵ They were all items purchased by Margaret Long over the two year period of this study. In fact, 12% of all food purchases were herbs, which, according to the printed advice, should have been the product of the housewife's garden. Clearly, Lady Long's kitchen garden did not meet the expectations of the male advice writers. And once again, Lady Long's purchases set her slightly apart from other upper gentry housewives.

The kitchen garden was well within the sphere of most sixteenth and early seventeenth century women, but the actual farming of the estate, at least among the upper gentry, was overseen by others, and the small role that the housewife played was purely as an assistant. For example, Anne Oxinden merely carried out her husband's instructions when she responded to the following request:

¹⁶³Long, ff. 91v, 108, 148, 155.

¹⁶⁴Long, f. 98.

¹⁶⁵Long, *passim*.

Pray send me up a sample of my fatte pease and certifie me what they would give for them at Feversham and let the barley in Jones barne bee thressed out and sold at the best rate wheresoever it be carried.¹⁶⁶

She served merely as her husband's agent.

Other housewives played different, but equally minor roles, in the farming process. Lady Hoby "was bused about setting some wheat," and then only reported that five pecks of rye had been sown, and that the hay had been brought in, implying she was not involved with the field work which produced these crops.¹⁶⁷ On the other hand, corn received more of Lady Hoby's attention than the other crops. She spent all of 1 October 1601 "setting corne."¹⁶⁸ However, most of the energy was spent on the corn after it had been harvested. She was busy "seeinge some roomes mad hansome for corne," and then she spent time receiving corn, and giving out corn. Finally, Lady Hoby "measured some Corne to know what provision we had."¹⁶⁹ Likewise, on four separate occasions she was employed in the "granirie," and one of those trips was definitely spent receiving corn.¹⁷⁰ Clearly, the advice literature does not accurately reflect the lives of upper gentry housewives outside the house. These women rarely even assisted in the farming of the estate. They were busy enough simply preparing to receive, store and determine the quantity of the harvest.

Both beekeeping and dairying, unlike working in the fields, were certainly within the theoretical sphere of the upper gentry housewife. However, Margaret Long's

¹⁶⁶Oxinden, p. 130.

¹⁶⁷Hoby, p. 131, 188.

¹⁶⁸Hoby, p. 188.

¹⁶⁹Hoby, pp. 75, 76, 82, 135, 182.

¹⁷⁰Hoby, pp. 63, 71, 76, 94.

household seems to have produced little cheese, and no milk, let alone sold the excess as recommended in some housewifery manuals.¹⁷¹ In two years this household purchased cheese five times, while in the same time period it purchased milk once every four and a half days. Clearly, this was no where near the housewifery model, either in act or in intent. Beekeeping was also completely missing from the Long household. Its probable absence from the estate is underscored by the repeated purchase of wax and candles, both by-products of an operating apiary. Some other upper gentry housewives, however, were involved in at least one of those two areas. Lady Hoby's diary shows that she kept and tended honey bees, but we have no evidence of her participation in dairying.¹⁷² Of the housewives whose diaries we have examined, only two appear to have run a dairy: Lady Mildmay, whose division of labor scheme specifically included a dairy maid; and Anthony Winthrop's wife, whose husband recorded the purchase of milk pails in April of 1596.¹⁷³

The orchard was another outdoor area where the housewifery guides encouraged their housewives to work. Quite possibly real gentlewomen did help to gather the harvest from the orchard. In fact, even Lady Clifford, a noble woman, "gathered cherries from the garden."¹⁷⁴ Lady Hoby, likewise, collected apples from her trees.¹⁷⁵ Unfortunately, the diaries shed little additional light on this area. The orchard of the housewifery guides, unlike the kitchen garden, does not even appear to have existed on

¹⁷¹Long, *passim*.

¹⁷²Hoby, pp. 68, 69.

¹⁷³Mildmay, p. 134; Winthrop, p. 18.

¹⁷⁴Clifford, p. 72.

¹⁷⁵Hoby, p. 67.

the physical premises of the Long estate. The account book recorded purchases of all products traditionally associated with orchards. Apples, prunes, and pears were all purchased, as were cherries, peaches, plums, and walnuts.¹⁷⁶

Animal husbandry is cited as another of the many skills the model housewife should possess. The Long account does not even hint at the household's direct involvement in meeting this need. Instead, Margaret Long's household even bought special pre-made horse bread, meat, and drink.¹⁷⁷ In addition, she hired someone to draw a horse's blood, paid the smith to dress a mare, and paid for the horses to be shod.¹⁷⁸ In fact, the care of animals was so completely in the hands of outsiders, Margaret Long even paid to have the stables cleaned and the dung removed.¹⁷⁹ Once again, the reader can not be certain that no type of animal husbandry was performed by a member of the household. However, unlike human medical needs, there were no purchases of goods requiring additional preparation before use, which would have implied unrecorded activities. In addition, the basic for animal survival--food--was purchased in a prepared state, indicating that most animal husbandry needs were answered from outside the household. Animal husbandry was certainly not a part of the upper gentry housewife's outdoor activities.

¹⁷⁶Long, *passim*.

¹⁷⁷In addition, special meat and bread were purchased for the dogs. Long, ff. 56, 75v, 91, 92v, 120v, 122, 125v, 126v, 129v, 133, 135v, 142, 149, 150v, 153, 163, 163v, 164v, 165, 166v, 168v, 172, 174.

¹⁷⁸The term, "dressing" occurs frequently with regard to tending the sick. There are thirty-five references in the two year period which refer to the care of horses. Long, *passim*.

¹⁷⁹Long, ff. 61v, 71v, 77, 88v, 95, 105, 133, 142, 150v, 158.

Between 1500 and 1640 actual upper gentry women, according to their account books, diaries and memoirs, were not very involved outside the house, except in the kitchen garden. Even in the other area traditionally associated with good housekeeping, dairying, there is little evidence of active participation. The advice books placed the vast bulk of their emphasis on the housewifery work within the home, and while they do address certain outdoor skills, they placed much less importance on the outdoor housewifery skills. Again, the essence of this model was maintained by the actual housewives. The bulk of their time and energy were spent within the house, with just a fraction of their time spent in the garden and field.

This analysis of the personal diaries, accounts, and other writings of actual upper gentry housewives has produced an understanding of how these women held onto the essentials of the model housewife by prudent management of both servants and provisions, and not by their own physical labor. This study has also revealed a part of these women's lives which was not mentioned in the housewifery guides: their amusements.

If a gentry housewife were to follow strictly the guidelines set by the housewifery advice writers, these women would have had no time to do anything but work. Instead, women of the upper gentry were able to spend a large amount of leisure time in activities such as playing games like "Bowles,"¹⁸⁰ singing and playing musical instruments,¹⁸¹ or even, like Lady Hoby, going fishing with friends.¹⁸² It is interesting to note that the games and amusements of these gentlewomen were less intense than

¹⁸⁰Hoby, p. 70.

¹⁸¹Hoby, p. 99.

¹⁸²Hoby, pp. 121, 134, 219.

those of Lady Clifford and the nobility. Lady Clifford would lose "£27 and odd money" at "Glecko," play at tables, or bowl, and, while "playing at cards with the steward and basket," could afford to have "such ill luck that I resolved not to play in 3 months."¹⁸³

A societal difference is evident in the nature of the nobility's amusements. A gentry wife could not afford to let her amusements prove so costly.

The upper gentry housewives typically spent their leisure time in the company of others. They visited, walked, and "took the aire" in their coaches. Rides in her coach were one way Lady Hoby found amusement.¹⁸⁴ Sometimes she would ride alone or with Mr Hoby, to simply take a ride.¹⁸⁵ On one other occasion she took others in her coach to a picnic. She wrote that she took her "cotch and went in to the feeldes, where I did eate my supper with my mother and other freindes."¹⁸⁶ At other times she used her coach to visit her vast network of friends.¹⁸⁷ The coach was a means of bringing people together to visit and pass the time. It was also a means of amusement by itself.

Visits both to and by Lady Hoby revealed a large thriving network of friends and family which was completely ignored by the advice writers. In six years Lady Hoby received 437 visitors in her home, and made 81 calls of her own. Clearly, she maintained her system of associations well. The advice books present a picture of the gentlewoman centered within the home and surrounded by family and female servants. The truth, instead, at least in Lady Hoby's case, was a fairly evenly mixed world with nearly the

¹⁸³Clifford, p. 42, 45, 59, 65, 70, 76, 109-10, 112.

¹⁸⁴Hoby, pp. 28, 66, 69, 71, 72, 73, 78, 80, 81, 82, 85, 90, 130, 131, 142, 158.

¹⁸⁵Hoby, pp. 66, 69, 71, 80, 85, 90, 129, 142.

¹⁸⁶Hoby. p. 130.

¹⁸⁷Hoby, pp. 72, 73, 78, 81, 130, 131, 158.

same number of women (205) and men (238) involved in her life.¹⁸⁸ Reality also consisted of significantly more involvement with friends and acquaintances than a reader of the housewifery guides would have imagined. During the six years recorded in Lady Hoby's diary she received or gave visits to friends over three times more often than she visited family members like her mother and her cousins.¹⁸⁹ Clearly, the upper gentry housewife was not solely surrounded by family members, and confined to her home. Instead, she found support and entertainment outside the home.

Lady Mildmay's early life was the exception which proved the rule. She preferred to stay at home and indoors, despite the popularity of exchanging visits and attending weddings and christenings, which marked important turning points in the lives of both the individuals and the community. She replied to the repeated invitations that

Myne answer was that God had placed me in the world in this house; and, if I found no comfort here, I would never seeke it out of this house; and this was my certaine resolution. And God did put into my mynde many good delights, wherein I spent my time allmost continually.¹⁹⁰

In this regard, Lady Mildmay's self-imposed isolation was an extreme response. The number of refused invitations confirms the popularity of frequent visits and gatherings among gentlewomen.

For Lady Hoby, unlike Lady Mildmay, her round of visits often took her away from her country home for extended periods of time. She often travelled to London, or

¹⁸⁸These figures were derived from only those guests and friends whose sex could be determined from Lady Hoby's diary entries. Hoby, *passim*.

¹⁸⁹394 visits with non-kin; 116 kin visits. Hoby, *passim*.

¹⁹⁰Mildmay, p. 125.

York, but sometimes stayed closer to home for trips to villages like Linton where her mother lived.¹⁹¹

More often still, Lady Hoby's visits and amusements took place at home, or in the surrounding countryside. One of her favorite activities was walking.¹⁹² Often she would walk in the fields, or in the garden.¹⁹³ However, more often than not her diary merely recorded that she walked abroad or simply that she "walked." Unpleasant weather did not stop her either. She simply walked indoors, probably within the hall.¹⁹⁴ Walks served many purposes for Lady Hoby. They allowed her to walk out and check on the workmen; they enabled her to contemplate some religious question alone; and they also presented her with another manner of visiting with her friends or husband.¹⁹⁵

The advice books did not allow for the complex and time-consuming social lives led by most upper gentry women. It is evident from the general tone and content of the advice books that their writers felt that socializing and entertaining had little place in a housewife's day. The housewifery guides did allow for occasional banquets, and other forms of household hospitality, but not for friendly visits between neighbors.

The advice literature certainly did not allow for many aspects of the upper gentry women's amusements, like fishing or games. On the other hand, the housewifery guides prescribed many things which the actual upper gentry housewife seldom did: for

¹⁹¹Hoby, *passim*.

¹⁹²She recorded 283 different occasions on which she took walks. Hoby, *passim*.

¹⁹³Hoby, *passim*.

¹⁹⁴Hoby, pp. 68, 133, 153, 175, 197.

¹⁹⁵Hoby, *passim*.

example, making clothes, or working in the fields. What kind of relationship did exist, then, between printed page and living woman? The answer is one of essence; one of fundamental nature. The upper gentry woman's household was not self-sufficient, yet it did provide or distribute the essentials for survival: food, medicine, and clothing. Further, there were differing levels of self-sufficiency among upper gentry households. For instance, Margaret Long's household seems to have been less self-sufficient than the others in this chapter.

Likewise, within these households, the upper gentry woman did not personally do the work herself. Instead, she oversaw the production and management of the household's supplies, and only occasionally participated, herself. The actual upper gentry housewife, then, was the person ultimately responsible for meeting the indoor needs identified in the printed advice literature. The outdoor needs, which were considered less important, apparently fell largely outside her area of responsibility.

The diaries and personal correspondence have enlarged our understanding of the upper gentry housewife. When these documents are combined with surviving wills and probate inventories, plus an analysis of gentlewomen's account books, a much fuller and sharper image of the gentry housewife emerges.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

Little secondary work exists on the English housewife of the early modern period, and what does exist is markedly short on scholarship. Though secondary scholarship is sparse, there is a wealth of primary source material available on English housewifery. This thesis looks at one aspect of English housewifery between 1500 and 1640. It examines the printed ideal of good housewifery and then compares it to the actual lives of middling sort and gentry women to see how well the housewifery model was maintained in reality.

Through an analysis of thirty-five published advice books written for women, several basic themes emerged which defined the ideal housewife. First, the housewifery role was divided into two spheres; indoor and outdoor. Within the confines of the house, the housewives were expected to perform three primary functions. The first and clearly most important task was the preparation of food; usually meat and fish, with a complement of vegetables and baked or candied items. Related to the preparation of food was the model housewife's second major indoor responsibility, preserving food. According to the guide writers, the perfect housewife was to prepare fruit, vegetables, meat, and fish, to last throughout the winter. The third and final part of the housewife's main duties was comprised of medical practice and the preparation of medicine. According to the prescriptive housewifery guides, the proper English housewife was to

tend to the illnesses and wounds of her household and family, as well as the ailments of her neighbors.

Interwoven within the three major indoor responsibilities, the model housewife was also expected to performed an assorted number of additional indoor tasks. These jobs ranged from spinning, weaving, and cloth manufacture to brewing beer and distilling a vast number of cordial waters. Religious education for both children and servants was also expected.

Although mentioned only briefly by the housewifery advice books, the model English housewife was also expected to accomplish a long list of incidental tasks. For example, she was to save feathers, wash dishes, and lock the house. These tasks were to be in addition to making ink and candles, storing valuables, carving meat, and banking the fire at night. The model housewife was to busy herself from dawn to dusk. In fact, one advice writer, Thomas Tusser, was quite outspoken in this regard and even included a sample day for the perfect English housewife which literally did dictate that she rise before dawn, and was the last to bed. For some advice writers, the model of the ideal housewife was not complete unless she had perfected her complexion, trimmed her figure, and dyed her hair. Clearly, the twentieth century notion of a "superwoman" is not unique.

The advice writers were not content to direct only the middling sort or gentry housewife's indoor activities. These writers also had a good deal to say concerning her outdoor responsibilities. First, the guidance books asserted that it was fitting for housewives to be outdoors, but they were not to wander past the boundaries of their husbands' yard and fields. The model housewife's major outdoor tasks were directly tied to her indoor responsibilities, and were all centered around food production. She was to

run a dairy for both its milk and cheese. Likewise, she was to plan, plant, tend, and harvest a kitchen garden which was to provide not only food for the table, but medicine for the cupboard as well.

While the dairy and the garden were to command most of the perfect housewife's outdoor time, these middling sort to upper gentry women were also expected to care for sick livestock, and likewise, if the need arose, to choose animals in good health. She was also expected to be able to prune and graft fruits trees, plus assisting with weeding and harvesting. Beekeeping, and the preparation of hemp, wool, and flax were not excluded from the advice literature, either.

The outdoor skills were discussed less by the guide book writers than the model housewife's indoor skills. The outdoor skills were considered a less important aspect of good housewifery than their indoor counterparts. There is, however, a common theme between the two spheres. Indoors or out, the model housewife was to provide food for and medical attention to all members of her household. She was to be the caretaker.

With the advice books' image of the perfect housewife in mind, this study then turned to the lives of actual women of the middling sort and gentry. Sources from the extremes of the social range were used in order to define the boundaries of the housewifery experience for women of the more prosperous social ranks--the middling sort and gentry. Among these women the group which most closely resembled the printed ideal was comprised of those women belonging to the middling sort and the lower gentry. Wills and probate inventories, plus Joyce Jeffries account book, were analyzed to gain an understanding of their lives. These women were nearly self-sufficient. They purchased a tiny portion of their food stuff, and special preserving tubs were listed among their goods, indicating that they preserved foods. With regard to food

these women were consistent with the printed housewifery image. These women were also true to the image of the ideal housewife in their medical self-reliance. For example, Joyce Jeffries recorded only two medical visits in two years. The three major concerns of housewifery advice writers: food, preserving, and medical knowledge were all met by actual housewives in the middling sort and lower gentry ranks.

The other indoor skills mentioned in the advice literature seem to have been as consistently used by these women as the printed model had recommended. They purchased a limited quantity of cloth, and even fewer items of clothing. Spinning wheels and looms listed in wills and inventories confirm this impression. The middling sort and lower gentry housewives also brewed their own beer and make their own candles. They appear to have done everything the advice writers thought important indoors.

Outside the home these women appear to have conformed to the housewifery ideal as well. Joyce Jeffries was so competent in gardening and animal husbandry that she was able to sell her excess. Other women whose goods were listed in inventories and wills seem to have been similarly engaged out of doors. Tools and items for the diary and field were frequently listed among their goods, as were a large number of animals and their paraphernalia.

The group of housewives which most closely resembled the model housewife of the printed literature, then, both indoors and out, were of the lowest rank in our study, those of the middling sort and lower gentry.

The last group, the upper gentry, were more distant from the published housewifery ideal than were the middling sorts and lower gentry. Furthermore, Margaret Long seems to have stood apart from the others at this level of society. She was the furthest from the ideal. While no group of housewives was totally self-sufficient,

the upper gentry purchased many more goods than their lower ranked counterpart. The commodities purchased by the upper gentry housewife also reflected her distance from the hard-working and unpretentious model housewife. Housewives of the upper social strata tended to purchase nonessentials and luxury items, in addition to daily necessities.

Food was rarely mentioned in the diaries, letters, and other personal documents. When it was mentioned, as in Lady Hoby's diary, it was mentioned briefly, and with no degree of importance attached. However, this same diary shows that the kitchen, staff, and menu were closely supervised by Lady Hoby, and that she was even capable of assisting in the process, both cooking and preserving, upon occasion. Hence, the typical upper gentry housewife did retain ultimate responsibility for her household's food supply and preparation, and in that manner reflected the image of the housewifery ideal. However, she did not adhere to it in detail.

Medically, the upper gentry housewife was a mirror image of the model housewife, except again for Margaret Long, who was the exception which proved the rule. Lady Long paid for the services of a midwife, several nurses, and a number of trips to the hospital. The rest of these women, however, were the primary care giver for their neighborhood, household, and family. They generally were the ones who provided the nursing and care which Margaret Long purchased from professionals, instead. Generally, however, upper gentry women adhered closely to the published expectations for women's medical work.

As the advice writers recommended, these housewives grew most of their medical ingredients within their gardens. In fact, Lady Hoby's garden was so complete that she was able to give excess medical herbs away. The upper gentry housewife also resembled the perfect housewife of the guide books in her frequent and thorough reading of

herbals and other medical books. Indeed, Lady Mildway could have very well have read and taken Vives' suggestions to heart as she drew up and composed her own medical books for her household's use. In this regard, the typical upper gentry housewife lived up to the ideal housewife found in the printed literature.

However, medicine seems to have been the only area where the upper gentry housewife, herself, actually performed those tasks recommended by the advice writers. Nearly all her other indoor responsibilities reflected her supervisory position within the household, and not a hands-on approach.

The other indoor duties suggested by the advice literature were not always performed within the upper gentry household. In fact, many finished goods and products, like clothing, were almost always purchased, instead of being made within the household. In this regard, these women were far removed from the published ideal.

Upper gentry housewives did conform to the ideal in their servant management. The advice literature stressed the need for close supervision of employed help, and the upper gentry women apparently took this warning to heart. In the process they confirmed their own worth as housewives. Maids and menservants alike fell under their ever watchful eye. The upper gentry housewife would go into the fields to watch the servants work, as readily as she would go into the kitchen, or downstairs to their quarters. Supervision did not always take the role of passively observing others work. The good upper gentry housewife would occasionally put her own hand to the task, as well, but never out of necessity. These forays into the world of physical work were often recorded in the diary with an air evocative of an outing, or other amusement. It is clear that these women worked only when they were so inclined, and that their households functioned smoothly without their physical assistance.

The amount of leisure time available to the upper gentry housewife combined with her tightly run home, merely underlined the non-essential nature of her direct participation in housewifery chores. In stark contrast to the printed model, the housewives of the upper gentry spent a great deal of time visiting both friends and family. They also spent a good deal of time in various amusements like cards, bowling, coach rides and picnics. Thomas Tusser's busy day certainly did not allow for breaks and rest within the perfect housewife's day, let alone fun and frivolity.

Within the home the upper gentry housewife maintained the form of good housewifery through a system of management and supervision which freed her to do other, non-household related things.

Outdoors these women continued the same style of supervision. Lady Hoby walked abroad to watch the workmen in the fields. She also checked on her garden's progress, as well as the health of her bees. A few times she did assist in the garden, but as in the kitchen, it seems to have been more for her own enjoyment than to help her hired gardener. As in the advice books, however, the diaries mentioned outdoor tasks infrequently in comparison to the indoor responsibilities. For the upper gentry housewife, like the model housewife in print, the house and its smooth running were undeniably more important than the outdoors.

As a whole these women formed a fairly consistent group with only minor variations in style. Margaret Long, however, deviated from this homogenous group in her apparent greater distance from the housewifery ideal. Lady Long appears to be the housewife who conformed the least to printed expectations. This was underscored by her purchase of such items as prepared horse food, and velvet collars for her greyhounds, as well as a high proportion of the household's clothing, and probably all

their milk and cheese. Her merchant and urban backgrounds may well have been the predominate cause of this difference. All the other upper gentry housewives in this study were born into this level of society.

Actual English housewives between 1500 and 1640 were as varied in nature as they were varied in personality. The printed advice books for women during this time, however, presented one, single, uniform picture of what a good English housewife of the middling sort and gentry rank should be. No sweeping categorization ever holds up under examination, and the model housewife of the guidance literature is no exception. The examination of personal documents revealed the wide variety of actual housewives. However, it is still possible to draw some conclusions as to the conformance of actual early modern housewives to the ideal. The only instance of near-universal adherence to the ideal was in the area of the model housewife's medical practice and the preparation of medicines. Women at all levels included in this study practiced medicine. In terms of the complete model, those who conformed most closely were those housewives at the lower end of our social scale, the middling sort and lower gentry women. As we went up the social strata the housewives generally moved farther away from the housewifery ideal. However, within the highest of the gentry ranks, these housewives still maintained the form of the perfect housewife, if only through their purchases, and servant management.

This study, as it now stands, is far from the definitive work. Additional research into the lives of actual women would be well-warranted, especially an examination of the middle gentry. Obviously, more diaries, letters, and personal writings, plus additional probate inventories and wills would greatly enhance our understanding of these women. An examination of the middling sort and gentry housewives' personal recipe books, like

those of Lady Mildmay, would add a new insight into their medical roles. In addition, the popular conception of the English housewife could also be expanded and clarified through a systematic search of sermons and broadsheets. Likewise, ballads, folktales, and proverbs which commented upon the nature housewives would provide the study with other valuable insights. Clearly, much interesting and rewarding work remains to be done on the lives and stereotypes of the early modern English housewife.

What is certain is that the English housewife between 1500 and 1640 was expected to be the caretaker of her household, both indoors and out. While the actual housewife agreed with this expectation, her methods of achieving it varied depending upon her position in society.

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APPENDIX A

TABLE OF ADVICE LITERATURE

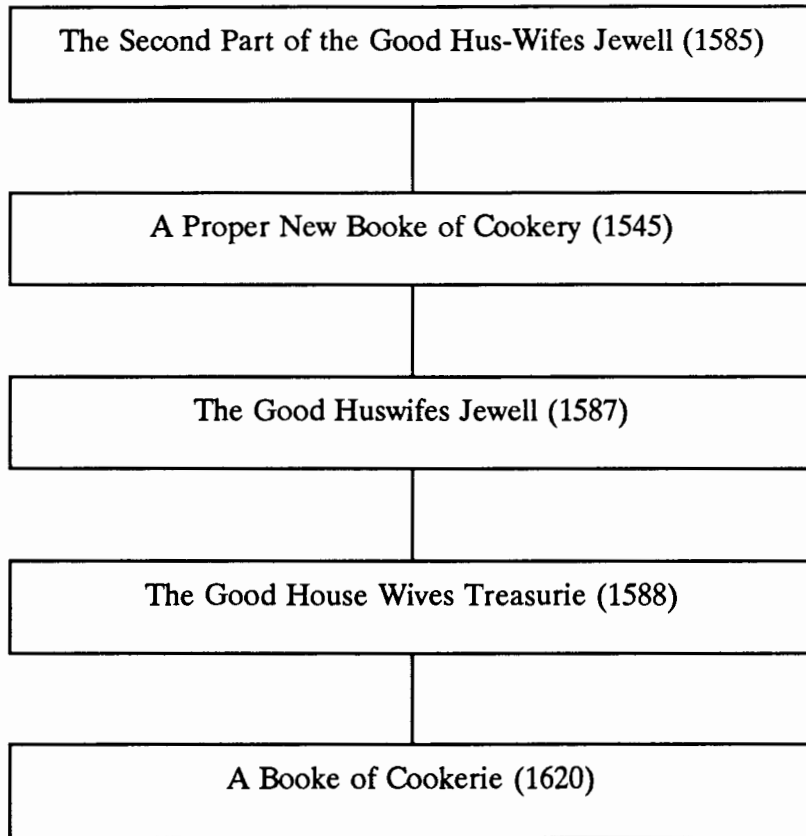
APPENDIX B

CONTENT SCATTER GRAPH

APPENDIX C

GENEALOGY OF HOUSEWIFERY IDEAS

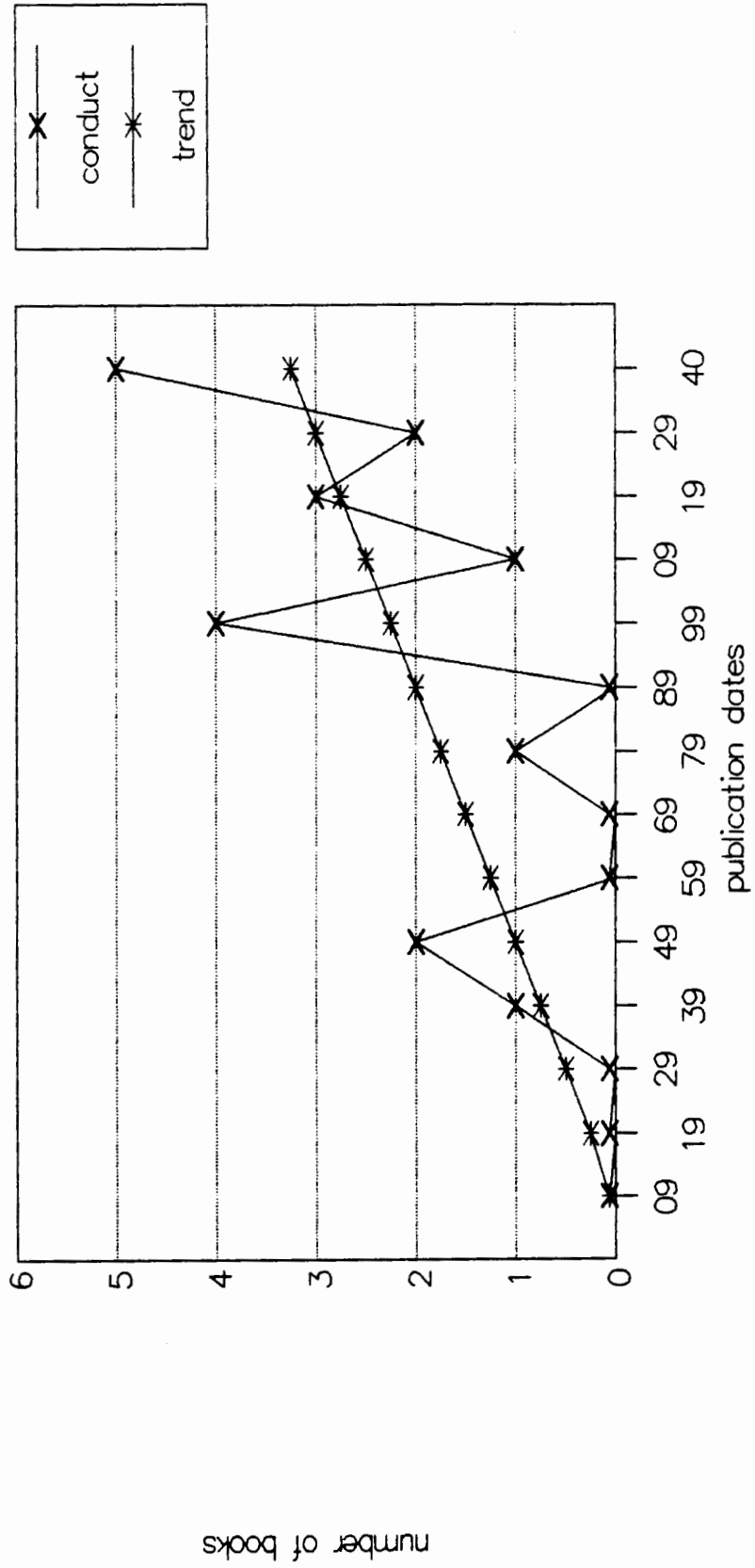
A GENEALOGY OF HOUSEWIFERY IDEAS



APPENDIX D

CONDUCT BOOKS, 1500 - 1640

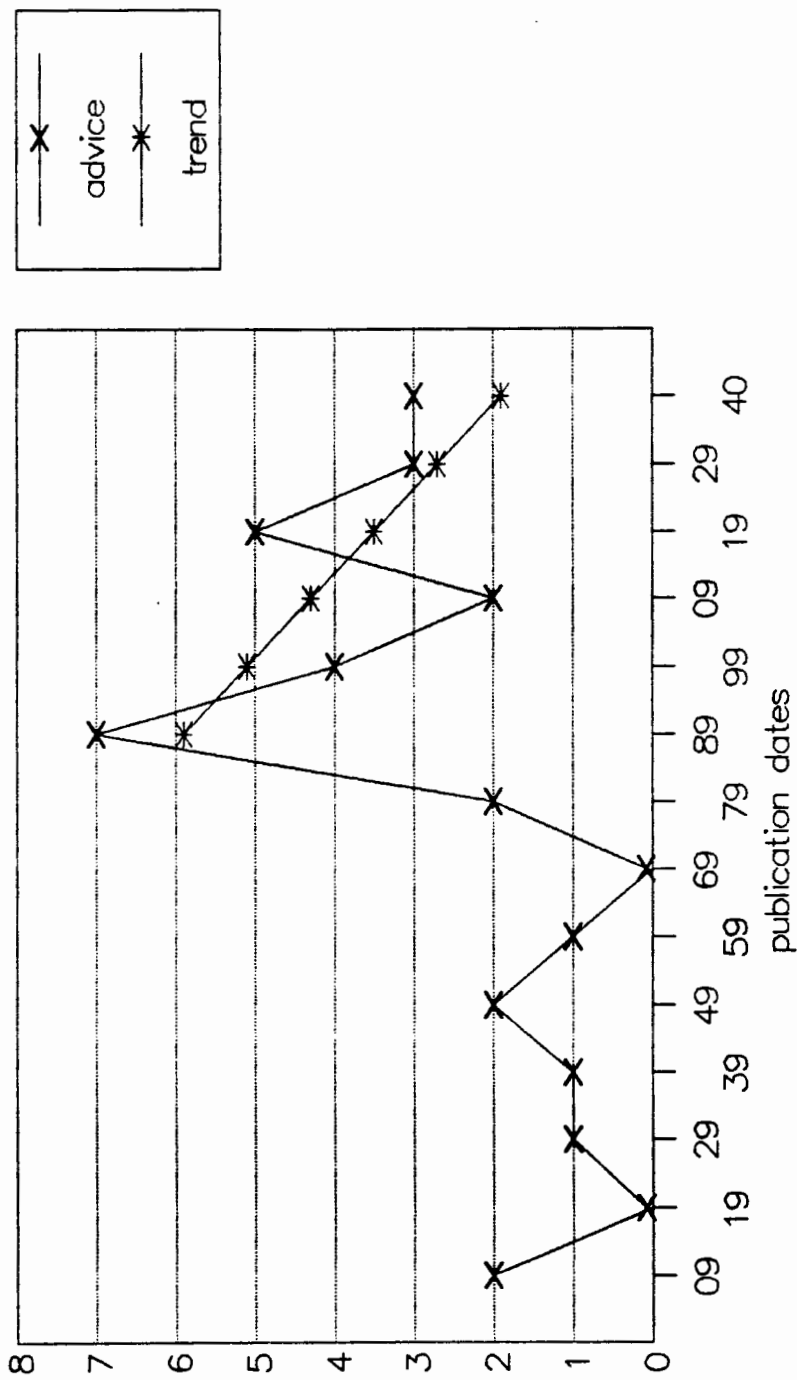
CONDUCT BOOKS, 1500 – 1640



APPENDIX E

ADVICE BOOKS, 1500 - 1640

ADVICE BOOKS, 1500 - 1640



number of books

APPENDIX F

STATISTICAL METHODOLOGY

STATISTICAL METHODOLOGY

The content analysis of the thirty-five housewifery advice books was broken into three sections. The first segment looked closely at topic relationships only within the indoor skills. The second part examined the outdoor skills in the same manner. Finally, the third section looked at the relationship between indoor and outdoor topics. The only significant relationship found was within the indoor skills, between cooking, food preserving, and medical practice.

When testing a relationship between two sets--in our case two topics discussed in the advice literature--one looks to see if, when one book contained "x," it necessarily followed that it contained "y," or its converse, that the inclusion of "y" would automatically preclude "x." To measure statistically whether a relationship existed between "x" and "y," or whether their appearance in the literature was purely at random, we have employed the Chi-Square formula. This is a standard measure of nominal relationships.

After repeated statistical analysis, our study concluded that with few exceptions no relationships existed between subjects included in the indoor housewifery skills. For example, the Chi-Square value was computed for the two variables, servants and child-raising. What we were testing, in a sense, was whether books which mentioned servant management also discussed child-care, or whether child-care was automatically excluded in those cases. One reason these two variables were singled out for examination was the relatively infrequent mention of them in the literature. Perhaps a relationship existed between these topics, and when they were mentioned in the literature that fact would tell us something about the nature of that particular book, or its author. In other words, did they only occur together? And if so, in what type of book? One written specifically for

the nobility? One written by a Catholic? The result of this particular piece of analysis was that a relationship existed in only ten to twenty percent of the cases.¹ Statistically, this was far from significant, and therefore, one must conclude that, indeed, no relationship existed between the two.

Chi-Square values were computed for other pairs of subjects--for example, servants and surgery, servants and banquets, cooking and child-care--with similar results. The Chi-Square values were far below the level of significance. The results of this examination confirmed the impression gained from a visual evaluation of the spreadsheet summary of advice book contents, and a reading of the material, itself. The contents of the advice books appeared at random.

The outdoor skills, too, showed no relationship existed between topics. They were randomly distributed between and throughout the books. Even the third part of the statistical analysis--between indoor and outdoor topics--exhibited this same trend except in one instance. A relationship did exist between the discussion of preserving fruit and growing it.² In this case, it was a negative relationship: if one was discussed, the other was not.

The actual structuring of the advice books for women appears as random as the statistics suggested. For example, it was not uncommon to find cooking, medicine, and husbandry recipes side by side, or medicine and husbandry intertwined.³ Just as common a combination was the mingling of husbandry, candle-making, and feather-

¹The Chi-Square value was computed at .0875, with one degree of freedom.

²Chi-Square equaled 20.997, with one degree of freedom.

³Partridge, *Widowes Treasure*, Sigs. D1-G7; Dawson, *Good Huswifes Jewell*, pp. 41-44.

saving.⁴ It appears, both statistically and subjectively, that the organization of the housewifery books was random and without discernable planning.

It would have been satisfying, of course, to have found more relationships between subjects, other than one major triad among cooking, preserving, and medicine. Correlations between topics could have suggested sub-models within the ideal of housewifery model. For example, if spinning and brewing were never found within the same volume it might have suggested that the good housewife only needed to do one and not the other. Unfortunately, that was not the case. Instead, the statistical analysis led only to a confirmation of randomness, and in a sense, into a blind alley.

⁴Tusser, *Five Hundreth Points*, pp. 134-36.

APPENDIX G

BANQUET MENU

BANQUET MENU

First Course

1. A Grand Sallet
2. A boyld Capon
3. A boyld Pike
4. A dish of boyld Pea-chickens, or Partridges, or young Turky-chicks
5. A boyld Breame
6. A dish of young Wild-ducks
7. A dish of boyld Quatles
8. A florentine of Puft-paste
9. A forced boyld meate
10. A hansh of Venison roasted
11. A Lomber Pye
12. A Swan
13. A Fawne or Kid, with a pudding in his belly, or for want of a Fawne you may take a Pigge ans sley it
14. A Pastry of Venison
15. A Bustard
16. A Chicken Pye
17. A Phesant or Powtes
18. A Potato Pye
19. A Couple of Caponets
20. A set Custard

The Second Course

1. A Quarter of a Kid
2. A boyld Carpe
3. A Heronor Bitter
4. A Congers head broyled, or Troute
5. A Hartichoake Pie
6. A dish O Ruffes or Godwits
7. A cold baked meate
8. A sowst Pigge
9. A Gull
10. A cold bakte meat
11. A sowst Pike, Breame, or Carpe
12. A dish of Partriges
13. An Oregado Pye
14. A dish of Quailles
15. A cold baked meat
16. A fresh Salmon, Pearch, or Mullet
17. A Quodling Tart, Cherry, or Gooseberry Tart
18. A dryed Neates-tongue

19. A Jale of Sturgeon
20. A sucket Tart of puffe-paste

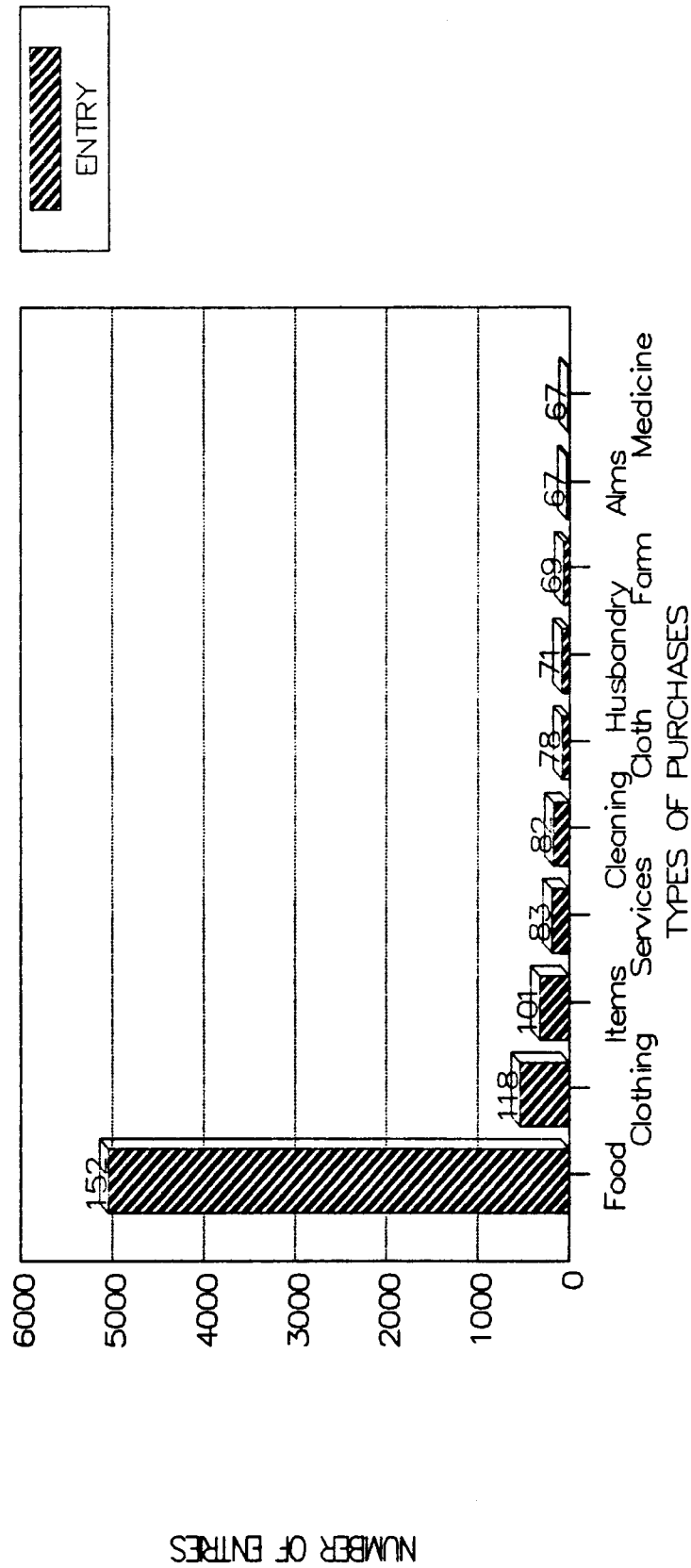
A third coo[r]se for the same Messe

1. A dish of Pewets
2. A dish of Pearches
3. A dish of green pease, if they be dainty
4. A dish of Dotrel
5. A dish of hartichoakes
6. A dish of buttered Crabs
7. A dish of Prawnes
8. A dish of Lobstars
9. A dish of Anchoves
10. A dish of pickled Oysters

APPENDIX H

ITEMS PURCHASED BY MARGARET LONG

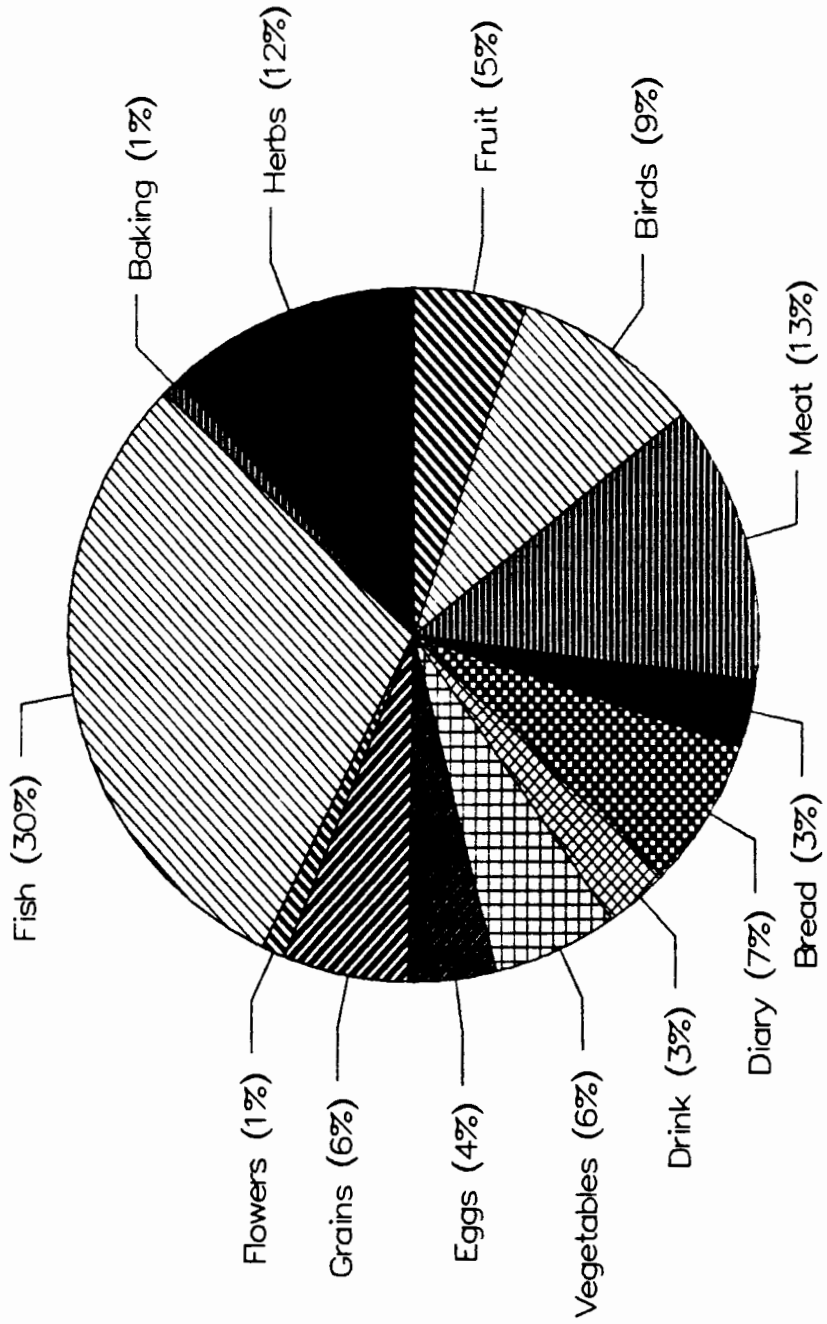
ITEMS PURCHASED BY MARGARET LONG



APPENDIX I

FOOD PURCHASED BY MARGARET LONG

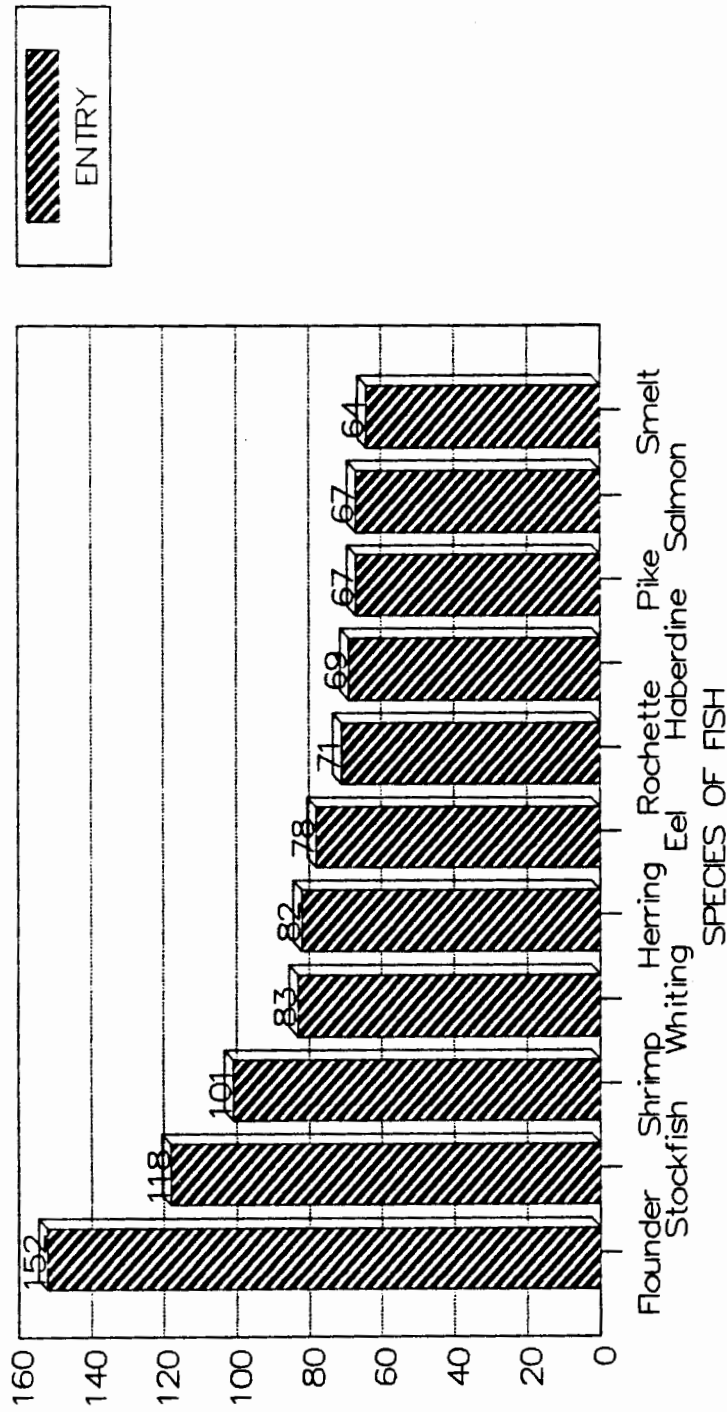
FOOD PURCHASED BY MARGARET LONG



APPENDIX J

FISH PURCHASED BY MARGARET LONG

FISH PURCHASED BY MARGARET LONG



NUMBER OF ENTRIES