Introduction

Extensive work has been done since the 1960s to investigate the phenomenon of extra-marital sexual relationships and consequent illegitimacy in early modern England. This has primarily been undertaken in examining bastard-bearing at parish level and based around birth rates and financial provision for mother and infant, usually culminating in intervention to deal with the perceived moral failings of the parents and resulting social costs. By focusing upon narrow geographical and social boundaries, historians imply that bastardy became a lifetime stigma from which neither mother nor child could escape and, as a result, they do not explore illegitimacy patterns at gentry level and above. Keith Wrightson and David Levine’s path-breaking investigation of illegitimacy in the Essex parish of Terling in the period 1590–1640 identified only one man of gentry status fathering an illegitimate child out of a total of fifty putative fathers. Richard Adair’s outstanding survey of illegitimacy in the parishes of early modern England makes only the briefest of passing mentions of elite involvement in bastardy, essentially in the form of the results of rape or coercion of lower-class women by gentlemen. Yet concern at the extent of sexual relationships outside marriage, and of the extent of bastardy arising from it, was not necessarily limited to commentators on the state of the poor and disadvantaged in parish society. And even the most cursory survey of those who exerted power and influence in late medieval and early modern England quickly reveals the names of men (and some women) of dubious parentage or questionable fidelity. Approximately one in ten gentlemen who made wills during the period in the north of England made some mention of illegitimate offspring, suggesting that illegitimate relationships and children were to be found in at least 10 per cent of gentle families. The illegitimate offspring of gentry and noble families participated in office-holding and local government, and their marriages formed part of the social landscape of the period.

Yet historians have never explored the extent and implications of this situation: just as historians of illegitimacy have shown little interest in the irregular relationships and offspring of the elite, so historians of the gentry, and to a slightly lesser extent nobility, have tended to pass over anything other than straightforward marriage and legitimate children. The possible implications of a group of bastards born to at least one parent of gentle status in
late medieval and early modern England are, however, great: the bastard offspring of
gentlemen could have an education but were not tied by entails and landed settlements
(for example for a widow’s jointure) which governed the choice of marriage partners and
the inheritances of their legitimate step-siblings. Furthermore, the relationship the ille-
gitimate, adult family had with their legitimate half-brothers, half-sisters and other relations
has not been investigated, prompting questions regarding their role in aristocratic/gentry
family influence and honour. The attitudes to these individuals, whether illegitimate
themselves or the parents of bastards (or both), also tells us something about the nature
of socio-religious cultures at a time when the historiography suggests that companionate
marriage, involving love between partners, within a closed, nuclear family was either on
the rise or already well established. Similarly they help to provide an alternative perspective
on the limits to the licence allegedly allowed to men by the ‘double standard’ defined in
recent work, the primary focus of which has been men of the middling and lower sort.
Further, in the rarer cases of well-evidenced illicit relationships conducted by gentlewomen,
we are able to access indications of the behaviour of these women (and degrees of acceptance
and condemnation/sanction) that shed light on the gendered expectations of elite females,
before, during and after marriage, and go beyond some of the complexities of power
networks identified as being negotiated by women on the basis of age and ‘orderliness’. Looking at both men and women, the book will provide a proper context and hinterland
for the better-known mores of court, and the behaviour there of monarchs and courtiers,
their mistresses and lovers, especially as represented in recent scholarship on courts and
court literatures.

In fact, the more closely these and other historiographies of the late medieval and early
modern periods are considered, the lack of questions examining the illegitimate relationships
and offspring of the elite becomes increasingly striking. The classic context for the study
of illegitimate relationships and bastard-bearing is a demographic one, the ultimate assump-
tions of which relate to the control of resources, in an England experiencing significant
economic and social change, characterised by ‘social polarization’. Most significant here
is Tony Wrigley’s and Roger Schofield’s argument that fertility was the main factor in the
limitation of population in England in the early modern period. Even if this has been
challenged by John Hatcher, it remains true that demographics and life cycle generally
provided limiting forces. There is therefore a particular focus in this type of work on
apprenticeship, service, and the expectation that couples should form a household before
marrying and starting a family.

These arguments tend to see behaviour, including sexual behaviour, as responding to
implicit rules and to wage rates and economic conditions, rather than to regulation and
more explicit determinants. Such approaches are largely inappropriate when applied to
the elite, given the different ways in which resource constraints applied to them, or should
be understood in very specific ways: for example, service affected the life experiences of
young men and women of the gentry and nobility in particular ways, and arguments about
access to resources apply differently, even during the leanest years of the 1590s. This
explains why most studies with this methodological background pay little attention to
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elite involvement in illegitimacy beyond passing references to, for example, ‘sexual exploitation by masters’. Some of this argument will be addressed in our coverage of the fundamental demographics of levels of bastard-bearing in chapter 2, and the identity and experience of the mistress in chapter 3. There is no inherent incompatibility, however, between an essentially demographic approach, although generally previously focused on non-elite subjects, and an analysis which considers a wider social spectrum, given the importance of service in the life cycle of the elite. Service was for them, as it was for their inferiors, a period in which marriage and the creation of an independent household was not an option, but at the same time a phase of life and a manner of living which offered opportunities for young men and women to mix with others with whom they might form more or less lasting relationships outside the norms of regulated and legitimate marriage. As will be seen in chapters 2 and 3, and also in chapter 4, which considers elite women and their lovers, there is a possibility that these constraints on elite household formation were a factor in some of the relationships formed and maintained by the gentry and nobility between the middle of the fifteenth century and the outbreak of the civil wars of the seventeenth.

By way of contrast, increasing attention has been paid since the beginning of the millennium to the ‘reformation of manners’, with its focus on the common weal and commonwealth. This effort at the regulation of behaviour and morality, with a particular concern at times with disorder and vice, led to action against many groups but especially labourers, apprentices and servants and their personal and sexual behaviour. Martin Ingram in particular has recently argued that the regulation of sexual behaviour was an increasingly intense phenomenon of life in most parts of England from the late fourteenth century onwards, as part of this ‘reformation of manners’. Ingram and others have described how the process might be led by various groups in society and impact increasingly widely, for example dominating the rhetoric of civic governance in London and other cities for much of the period. This force for change in modes of behaviour was potentially a challenge to elite behaviour as it was to non-elite, as in Ingram’s formulation it was a movement which did not have particular social or religious roots. Changes to elite sexual behaviour in the north of England and the nature of challenges to it may therefore provide insights into this understanding of the ‘reformation of manners’ more generally. This will be a particular issue for consideration when we examine the mechanisms and structures of regulation in the north in chapter 1.

It is also hard to deny the role of state-building in changing and developing regimes of sexual regulation during the period covered by our study. Historians have identified this phenomenon in a variety of ways. For some, it has been as extensions of royal government intervention in the early modern period, with the crown’s ministers’ growing role in aspects of what might be categorised as social and economic policy which had been alien to it in previous centuries, and more specifically in some aspects of the ‘reformation of manners’ just described. The historiography of the ‘commonwealth’ movement is longstanding, of course, and has tended to emphasise aspects of novel intervention during the sixteenth century to address poverty, un- or under-employment, the impact of disease or
economic change as manifest in the countryside in shifts from agrarian to pastoral systems (and enclosure) and in towns as expressed in types of urban decline. More recently, the language of commonwealth as applied in circles around the crown has been discussed by John Watts in his paper on “Common Weal” and “Commonwealth” suggesting a situation with roots in the fifteenth century in which this new sense of responsibility might attach to aspects of community and individual conduct and morality. This needs to be read in parallel with the understanding we have from, for example, Gerald Harriss, of the heightened understanding of royal rights and responsibilities seen in government from the late fifteenth century, and which he perhaps a little negatively described as ‘arid Tudor legalism’, bringing an enhanced sense of system and momentum to the nexus of government power. Equally, however, this context of state-building has been presented as the creation of the state from the bottom up, as particularly espoused by Steve Hindle, as communities sought validation for their efforts to resolve disputes and address questions of resource-raising and control, but also for our purposes in particular to reform manners. In the same spirit, developments as seismic as the Henrician reformation and within it the dissolution of the monasteries and consequent redistribution of wealth can now convincingly be seen not as the universally unpopular intervention of a powerful central state in the face of massive popular resistance, but as being successfully negotiated between a variety of actors, most of them local and many of them outside the conventional elite. That ‘reformation of manners’ might have been particularly targeted at some elements of the poor, but it was not necessarily so, and Ingram and others have highlighted the extent to which in London and other cities in might produce a clash between a reforming group and some elite individuals or groups whose behaviour could now be categorised as unacceptable and challenged. Ingram notices, in particular, the tension between those associated with the court and court morality and a civic grouping who were increasingly willing to denounce and act against what they saw as disorder and immorality. Once again, in this study, it will be in our consideration of the structures of regulation in particular, in chapter 1, that we will examine the possibility that either an increasingly assertive central state, or one growing at local instance, was part of a challenge to previously widespread mistress-keeping and bastard-bearing among the elite. It will also be possible to test whether ‘wronged’ partners were willing to use ‘state’ mechanisms to challenge immorality, or whether that behaviour was either tolerated or dealt with by other means – a subject addressed in chapter 5.

More obviously, but perhaps misleadingly if considered in isolation, this is a topic which has been considered in a religious context. The period under scrutiny here is one of dramatic religious transformation, and these centuries’ reformations – whether towards Protestantism, and then in the search for further reformation in a Protestant vein, or under Catholicism as part of a reaction to Reformation that might take the form of reform or retrenchment – were ones which saw an increased religious focus on the regulation of personal behaviour and especially on challenges to sexual immorality. English Protestantism soon took on a distinct flavour of condemnation of personal sexual immorality, perhaps because of the importance of its roots in the attack on monasticism and the way this was initially framed, certain elements of anticlericalism, and the heightened atmosphere of
preaching on the theme in the royal court late in Henry VIII’s reign and under Edward VI. In England, the Protestant Reformation emphasis on the value of marriage was complemented by a denunciation of adultery, so in the translation of Heinrich Bullinger’s work on marriage, as The Christen State of Matrimony in 1543, Thomas Becon added a preface on whoredom, adultery, and fornication. Elements were then reworked into the 1547 homily of whoredom and uncleanness. Largely in response, English Catholicism was not slow to identify personal sexual immorality as one of clearest signs of hypocrisy and incoherence in the challenge it had been facing, and therefore to prioritise its own position as a virtuous alternative. It will be argued through in this book, beginning in chapter 1, that the particular definition of the Protestantisation initiative in the north of England in the early years of Elizabeth was shaped by a challenge to sexual immorality, and especially elite sexual immorality, just as it was by a challenge to continuing Catholic religious practice, for example.

A further context for this study is the history of sexuality and gender, especially the debates that have taken place about the early modern view of the male as the sexually active party, but the woman as predominantly culpable, and defined by transgression. This applies whether woman is seen as primarily defined by transgression, as Laura Gowing would argue, in terms closer to a simple sexual double standard, or in a less stark sense as Bernard Capp has proposed, in a world in which male culpability might also be established and debated. During our period in the north of England, as elsewhere, women were seen as strongly inclined to sexual activity but issues of reputation and sanctions were undoubtedly also questions for men, and in some case more a matter for men than for women, as will be explored in the discussions of the regulatory and jurisdictional frameworks and patterns of enforcement in chapter 1, and the patterns of male and female behaviour and experience in mistress-keeping and bastard-bearing in chapters 2 and 3. In the case of the male and female elite, these issues interacted powerfully with ideas of gendered individual and social responsibility and power, for those involved might not only act as male and female heads of households but also hold positions which involved them in relationships with wider groups of family members, servants (both gentle and menial), and other dependants and associates. Relative historiographical consensus has emerged since 2010 around a view of early modern manhood or masculinity as being related to sexual potency and dominance, but within complex bounds that meant that illicit sex was unlikely to be something which could be too widely acknowledged if honour and reputation were to be maintained. Widespread and relatively overt mistress-keeping and acknowledgement of bastard offspring by the gentry and nobility of the north potentially stands in tension to this consensus view of early modern manhood and therefore warrants investigation. It is a particular theme of chapters 2 and 3. Gendered attributes such as the furtherance of lineage, property and honour can be posited as social aspects of paternity, yet it might be argued that becoming a father was the ultimate physiological expression of manhood. Some contemporary medical textbooks claimed a direct link between the male reproductive system and virility. Writing in the late sixteenth century, the anatomist and surgeon John Banister argued ‘the substaunce of the Testicle, by his insited facultie, addeth vnto the
bloud, and spirite, conteined in his vessels, the perfect Nature of seede. And this force, in men, is the cause of strength and manhode, and in women (if so we may say) of womanhode. The personal had implications for the social and political sphere. For King Henry VIII, being capable of fathering a healthy (male) child was a matter of national political well-being as well as a demonstration of his own personal strength. It is striking that at the trial of George Boleyn in 1536, it was alleged that his wife, Lady Rochford, was the centre of gossip which alluded to Henry VIII’s lack of sexual prowess, that he ‘nestoit habile en cas de soy copuler avec femme, et quil navoit ne vertu ne puissance’. Ironically, four years after Boleyn’s execution, Henry claimed that he was unable to consummate his marriage to Anne of Cleves. In conference with his doctors, the King shifted responsibility for his impotence to Anne, blaming the ‘loathsomeness’ of her appearance and emphasising that he ‘thought himself able to the act with other but not with her’. That sixteenth- and seventeenth-century medical authors examined the possible causes of male impotence without considering the physical imperfection of the female partner suggests that the King sought to protect the image of his own health as well as that of the body politic. For the nobility and gentry, the idea that sexual immorality and potential siring of illegitimate children signified a failure of self-control stood at odds with their desire to present themselves as strong, virile and commanding. In her examination of Lord Herbert of Cherbury’s autobiography, Christine Jackson acknowledges this tension. She identifies how Herbert’s ‘apologetic presentation of his marital infidelity appears cathartic and confessonal in purpose, albeit a subconscious desire to affirm his sexual virility and attractiveness to women cannot be discounted. In a passage redolent of Henry VIII’s justification one hundred years earlier, Herbert was able to blame his wife for his adultery when posted abroad, while emphasising his own version of masculine self-discipline. ‘As my wife refused to come over and my Temptations were greate I hope the faults I committed were more pardonable; Howsoever I can say truly that whether in France or England I was never in Bawdyhouse nor vsed my pleasures intemperatly and much lesse did accompany them with that dissimulation and falshood which is comonly found in men addicted to love women.’ He went on to claim ‘if I transgressed sometimes in this Kynde It was to avoyde a greater ill, as abhorring any thing that was against Nature’. Herbert was therefore able to construct his own behaviour within a frame which included unconventional sexual relationships, which were for him in some way legitimate and even contributed to his sense of manhood and masculinity, in the effectiveness of the sexual acts at their heart but also the ways in which they demonstrated avoidance of what he could describe as falsehood and unnatural activity. This understanding of elite masculinity is an important one when making sense of our evidence.

Patricia Crawford has also explored the idea that ‘illicit paternity was an uneasy point where private or secret sexual relations intersected with public social relations … If the alleged father were already married his honour involved maintaining a boundary between his household and the world.’ This may be true to a point in some cases, but in many of the cases we have examined in the north there seems to have been a more nuanced situation than simple binaries of married monogamy equalling public acceptability versus
extra-marital procreation equating to secretive affairs. Chapters 2 and 3 explore the ways in which mistresses were often more than marginal and victimised figures in a secretive isolation, and chapter 6 attempts to chart the experience of illegitimate sons and daughters in the ways in which they were accommodated within the legal and financial structures of family life and in many cases as active and visible participants in local and regional society. As Crawford has pointed out, paternity within marriage was discussed contemp- poraneously, with parenthood contrasting with childlessness, which was viewed as emasculat- ing. 28 From the paternal point of view, it could be argued that lineage begotten within wedlock was an act of familial assertion; that begotten without wedlock, of self-assertion and of the assertion of alternative associations. The situation of noble- and gentlewomen who took lovers, or who were suspected of doing so, is explored in chapter 4, highlighting a far greater prevalence of illicit behaviour than might have been expected, revealing the degree of agency which existed for women within these gendered norms of sexual conduct and allowing us to address questions of the reactions this elicited, as well as the issues of regulation and more formal control already addressed and to be considered here. The scope of female honour ran far wider than simply the sphere of chaste self-control, meaning that there was more space for women and their connections to understand other relationships than might otherwise have been expected. 29

This is also a story with other contexts, including those defined by historians of the family, who have in many cases seen the late medieval and early modern periods as ones of a major transition. While at the start the family was clearly still an extensive formation with at its core a marriage made around alliances representing family and especially landed power, most historians have seen it becoming, by the end of the seventeenth century, a more focused unit with a central role for an affective relationship between man and wife formed and maintained through love. While some such as Lawrence Stone were keen to argue for the significance of change over continuity, others such as Ralph Houlbrooke were more confident that strong elements of affective relationships were already present at the start of the period and became stronger. 30 The place of a mistress or mistresses, or lover(s) taken by a married woman, in such a setting can only suggest extreme and unusual disfunction of a marital model based on affection (especially in the latter formulation). Their presence on an extensive level would question major parts of the theory, and this will be something the discussion of the extent of mistress-keeping, and responses to it, especially in chapter 5 on the ‘wronged partner’ in the marriage will address. 31

In all of these major historiographical contexts there has been a tendency to disregard the elite when exploring the continuing significance of illegitimate relationships and bastard-bearing; these debates have tended to be conducted in a way which places less emphasis on regional variation, with a more or less explicit assumption that national patterns of behaviour and attitudes were at work. Given the subject matter here, it is important, therefore, to foreground other, less directly specific, contexts for the study.

Among those other contexts which must be kept in mind are those relating to the historiography of the gentry and nobility, and the environments in which they lived, notably at court and in their localities. The first of these is discussion of the culture and
politics of the court and the extent to which this is seen as distinct from the world of the ‘country’, as refracted through the particular prism of sexual activity which is the subject here. One of the most immediate challenges raised by this project is the degree to which these cannot be seen as two separate worlds but as environments which overlapped and where attitudes and behaviours were always in a complex dialogue. No courtier lived exclusively within a court environment; even the city of London, for example, provided a contrasting moral sphere in which a courtier might operate at various points through the fifteenth, sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. A country home in perhaps Essex or Kent, or Yorkshire or Cheshire, too, represented a different moral setting in which to conduct him or herself. However abstract, in some contexts, might appear the ideas of courtly love by which courtiers seemed to be bound, the variety of settings in which they found themselves may well have given the opportunity for a freer range of interpretations of those ‘rules’. There was evidently substance to the allegations of adultery made against Elizabeth Brooke, wife of the courtier and poet Thomas Wyatt. Wyatt’s own long-term mistress, Elizabeth Darrell, was the servant of the marchioness of Dorset and then a maid of honour to Catherine of Aragon, and Wyatt established her at Allington Castle in Kent after separating from Brooke, with the relationship producing three children. The culture of courtly love which pervaded the court of Henry VIII and which has formed the basis for so much of the discussion of the politics of the court of Elizabeth I has been controversially seen as associated with sexual activity at court, and it is important to understand how far it was of a piece with a world in which courtiers away from court kept mistresses and took lovers and were associated with adultery and fornication – but this is rarely addressed in the debate on life and politics at court. Equally, those cultures defined by Paul Hammer in studies of Elizabeth’s court, or in literary court cultures which were especially strong during the Elizabethan and Stuart periods as discussed by Johanna Rickman, might have had relevance in courtiers’ activity away from London. The courts of the archdeaconry of Buckingham in the final quarter of the fifteenth century handled allegations of adultery affecting senior gentlemen where it appears that court connections led to particular caution being exercised: in one case, care was necessary given the connections and protection being given to Sir Roger Dynham, brother of Henry VII’s Lord Treasurer John, Lord Dynham. He was one of the most astute political survivors of the period, and Sir Roger was allegedly involved with the wife of one of his own servants. Two other men who were active at court and particularly close to the king also demonstrate these issues: Matthew Baker had been with Henry in exile in Brittany and was trusted to guide him on his perilous escape to France, becoming an esquire for the body early in the reign. Indictments in King’s Bench then show him keeping whores and bawds within the Palace of Westminster; in his will he left £20 and two feather beds to one Joan dwelling at Kenilworth, where he had established himself from early in the reign, ‘and the childe she goth with all’. An indication of the level of the king’s trust in Baker was his appointment as captain of the strategically important island of Jersey in 1486. One of Baker’s successors in that posting was Sir Hugh Vaughan, who like him had been in exile in Brittany with the king, and who was quickly appointed a gentleman usher and esquire of the body. Vaughan was disliked by many in the island, not least for a reputation
for debauchery, which was seen to rest on his trust in the king’s personal friendship: ‘se
confiant par trop en la faveur que le Roy luy portoit, s’oublia luy-mesme, s’abandonnant
trop à son plaisir et s’adonnant à pailliardise et dissolution, il devint si débauché qu’il
prenoit communément les jeunes filles par force, ensorte qu’elles n’osoient aller seules
par les chemins de peur de luy.’ Even the king’s astrologer, William Parron, notorious
for his inaccurately rosy predictions of the futures of the ill-fated Queen Elizabeth and
Prince Arthur, was also part of the elite sexual moral climate at odds with the context in
which he lived much of his life, facing action by the London court of aldermen, ignoring
it, and eventually being imprisoned. A better understanding of elite sexual cultures in
the provinces will help us to understand the nature of sexual cultures and politics at court,
and their interconnectedness.

Given that, there are also important contexts for this study in the historiography of
gentry and noble society in the localities. Ever since the 1960s, most historians have built
their view of the workings of local society from component elements made up of the
family connections of the gentry, especially marriage alliances. This approach was pioneered
by Alan Everitt in the 1950s: he saw Kent as an archetypal example of a ‘partially independent
county-state’ built on strong relations between families with local connections and dis-
inguished by remarkably high levels of endogamy – what he called ‘intense inbreeding
and family feeling’. The assumption within this model is that the pattern of marriage was
one which reinforced connections between families and enhanced their capacity to rely
upon one another. At its historiographical high-point, this enabled an argument about the
influence of what John Morrill called the ‘mere country’, epitomised by William Davenport
of Bramall Hall in Cheshire and his fellows, as a driving force in the revisionist account
of the outbreak of the English Civil War and the course followed by those conflicts through
to Restoration and beyond. This understanding of local society has been extended into
the earlier part of the period and the later middle ages, notably through the work of
Michael J. Bennett. If this approach has been questioned, challenges in the earlier part
of our period have been through an attempt to reassert the continuing power of lordship
as a connective in society across administrative boundaries – and this has not necessarily
been a tendency which has been any less prone to rely on marital alliances in understanding
how lordship might have secured links between families. This study is therefore once
again at a pivotal point in that historiography: if we are to understand local societies’
growing coherence at least in part as based on marital alliances, the extent to which these
might be undermined by other relationships, or exist alongside them, needs to be considered.
Such bonds – and possible tensions – are a theme in chapter 6, where the role of illegitimate
offspring is discussed, and in chapters 2 to 5, which consider the impact of the role of
mistress-keeping and the reactions of ‘wronged’ wives and husbands and their kin.

These were also local societies which, it has been argued, were shifting from being based
on codes of honour to cohering more around the values of a ‘civil’ society and moralisation
of politics. As espoused for the north of England with particular relevance to the sixteenth
century by Mervyn James, this thesis might suggest that whatever role had existed for
illegitimate relationships among the gentry and nobility would be reduced or eliminated, as
part of a parallel modernisation narrative to those of the affective marriage.
described in these studies were ones which have been described as experiencing disruptive changes in their political culture, especially in the eyes of historians who understand the period as one of a fundamental and relatively rapid socio-economic shift away from the regional dominance of a powerful nobility and their associates among the gentry, previously used to acting with relative impunity as the agents of a monarchy with no alternative allies there and with no meaningful competitors for power in the shape of an urban or other middle class. This disruption manifested itself most acutely in the rebellions of the sixteenth century, the Lincolnshire Rising and the Pilgrimage of Grace in 1536–37, and the Northern Rebellion of 1569, as the disciplines of civil society began to make themselves felt. Amid the cultures of honour which had governed northern society previously, it was argued by James and others, were codes of sexual behaviour which permitted the keeping of mistresses. This was a culture of ‘virtue’, in the sense of the unswerving exercise of the will, emphasising male autonomy asserted towards fate, significantly often imagined in female form. It was a world in which ‘Men of honour could (and did) … seduce, and commit adultery, without incurring dishonour’. It was to be replaced by one with a tighter regulation of personal behaviours, under the guise of civility, Protestant religion and morality. It has been suggested by Richard Cust and others that the pattern of change identified by James is too stark, with a more complex understanding of honour required, which might allow for it reinforcing community and defusing tension; but these writers still tend to emphasise the growing incompatibility of ‘lechery, incontinence, whoremongering and being cuckolded’ with the capacity, right and responsibility to govern.44 Once again, the testing of assumptions about the prevalence of mistress-keeping and bastard-bearing among the elite will allow for questions to be raised about these historiographies on the nature of regional political cultures in the north during the early modern period.

This book is, therefore, a study of far more than simply the regulation of illegitimate relationships and the children they produced. But, since it was the attempt to describe this behaviour, to define its limits, to proscribe it, to control it and to punish those who engaged in it which is so important in the way it was imagined at the time and in the way it is relevant to us in our consideration of these major debates on the late medieval and early modern past, it is with this that the book begins.

Notes


8 Wrightson, *English Society*, p. 84.


The gentleman’s mistress


15 Ethan Shagan, Popular Politics and the English Reformation (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), esp. parts II and III.

16 Ingram, Carnal Knowledge, pp. 292–302, for the intense and broadly-focused moral enforcement campaign of the late 1540s and early 1550s in London.


18 The language of whoredom was almost immediately associated with Anne Boleyn, and sexual immorality with the bishops who associated with her: G. W. Bernard, Anne Boleyn: Fatal Attractions (New Haven CT, London: Yale University Press, 2010), pp. 184–8. For the situation under Mary: Ingram, Carnal Knowledge, pp. 271–2.


21 John Banister, The Historie of Man Sucked from the Sappe of the most Approved Anathomistes, in this Present Age, Compiled in Most Compendious Foure, and Now Published in English, for the Vtilitie of all Godly Chirurgians, within this Realme (London: printed by John Daye, 1578), fo. 87v.


23 Anne’s pre-contract with the duke of Lorraine was also referenced. LP xv. 850; Starkey, Six Wives, p. 632.

24 See Eucharius Roeslin, The Byrth of Mankynde, Newly Translated out of Laten into Englyshe. In the Which is Entreated of all suche Thynges the which Chaunce to Women in theyr Labor, and all suche Infiirmitees whiche Happen vnto the Infants after they be Delyuered. And also at the Latter Ende or in
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the Thyrde or Last Boke is Entreated of the Conception of Mankynde, and Howe Manye Ways it may be Letted or Furtheryd, with Divers other Fruytefull Thynges, as doth Appere in the Table before the Booke, translated from Latin by Richard Jonas (London: printed by LR, 1540), fo. lxxxii: ‘maye there be defecte and lacke in the man as yf the seade be over hote ... or to cold & others whyche shall not nede here to be rehearsed’; Ambroise Paré, The Works of that Famous Chirurgion Ambrose Parey Translated out of Latine and Compared with the French. by Th: Johnson (London: printed by Th: Cotes and R. Young, 1634), also suggests problems with the condition of the seed, physical injury or illness and ‘defects or imperfections of the yard’, including how to diagnose a ‘palsie’.

26 Ibid., p. 101.
28 Ibid., p. 114.
30 Stone, Family, Sex and Marriage; Houlbrooke, English Family.
31 In Houlbrooke’s account, for example, it is particularly to matches hastily made through love, or at least physical infatuation, that the acts of ‘the very small minority of married people [who] broke their bonds’ are ascribed: English Family, pp. 114–15.
32 This is a hugely influential historiography originating in the work of Norbert Elias on court society. The court as a focus for the control of the aristocratic behaviours through processes of self-constraint, emphasising particularly the control of physical violence through its channeling into codes of etiquette and conduct of e.g. duelling, might apply equally to previously untrammelled expression of aristocratic sexual appetites: Die höfische Gesellschaft: Untersuchungen zur Soziologie des Königtums und der höfischen Aristokratie (Neuwied: Luchterhand, 1969). This underpins key English historiography from David Starkey et al. (eds), The English Court: From the Wars of the Roses to the English Civil War (London: Longman, 1987).


42 For example in the challenges to these arguments made by Christine Carpenter, in *Locality and Polity: A Study of Warwickshire Landed Society, 1401–1499* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992); esp. ch. 17 ‘Conclusions’.


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