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**Family Favouritism and Sibling Rivalry  
In Early Modern England.**

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## Abstract

While the relationship between parent and child in early modern England has been a staple of historical inquiry, alongside detailed debates over the nature of adult treatment towards children, much less attention has been paid to the bonds between siblings. Due to a historiographical and, no doubt, contemporary emphasis on patriarchal and inter-generational structures, the more horizontal ties between brothers and sisters have been overlooked. Yet, just like today, sibling interaction must have formed a significant part of contemporary experience, with this interaction being inevitably influenced by familiar social conventions such as patriarchy, gender and social status. This dissertation attempts to piece together the nature of favouritism within the early modern family and the impact it could have on sibling relationships. More specifically, diaries, autobiographies, journals, letters, domestic texts and any relevant literary or visual material will be used to look at the factors which could influence parents to favour one child over another. These factors include gender, birth order, character, educational ability, obedience, and so on. Was the oldest son and heir always favoured, or should we turn to other causes to provide the real explanation for early modern favouritism? The second half of this study will then focus on how this favouritism could shape the two fundamental paradigms of sibling rivalry and affection. Within the scholarship, according to Naomi Miller and Naomi Yavneh, siblings are 'everywhere and nowhere'. This paper will attempt to begin to redress this paradox.

## Introduction

In 1619 Lady Lucy Apsley, pregnant with her fourth child, recounted to her husband a strange dream that had been troubling her. In this dream she was walking with her husband, Sir Allen Apsley, through the gardens of their estate in East Smithfield. Suddenly, a star fell from the sky and landed in her hand. Sir Apsley explained to his wife that her dream signified she should have a daughter of some ‘extraordinary prophecies’. This was delightful news for the expectant mother, who, after having three sons, was desperate for a daughter. And so, on 29 January 1620, Lady Apsley’s first daughter was born and was received with a ‘great deal of joy’. Even though the nurses who attended the birth predicted that ‘little Lucy’ would not live for very long, this only made Lady Apsley fonder of her newborn daughter and more eager to nurse her child to health.<sup>1</sup>

This account of the birth of Lucy Hutchinson, née Apsley, was written by Lucy herself, as part of a small fragment of autobiography that she included with the *Memoirs* of her husband in 1671. Although only fifteen pages long, this segment of Lucy’s life reveals the complex relationships she shared with both her parents and her siblings. Clearly, Lucy was destined to be the favourite child even before she was born. Her mother’s symbolic dream exposed the high expectations that both parents had for their unborn child, while Lucy’s unexpected survival, despite the nurses’ warning, only served to heighten her mother’s fondness further. We can only speculate as to whether the circumstances which surrounded Lucy’s birth were entirely true, or whether they had been exaggerated by the writer for autobiographical purposes. Nevertheless, it would seem that Lucy’s perceptions of

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<sup>1</sup> Lucy Hutchinson, *Memoirs of the life of Colonel Hutchinson: Charles I’s Puritan Nemesis* (ed.) N.H. Keeble (London, 2000).

being born a favourite and being favoured as a child, whether strictly true or not, ultimately shaped her childhood, her character and her familial relationships. For instance, Lucy's acknowledged love of parental praise inevitably had an impact on the relationships she shared with her siblings, who became her competition. While Lucy's brothers were allowed to play together for an hour after supper, Lucy refused to play among children she 'despised'. Instead, she would read any book she could find, until she became certain that her educational talents outstripped those of her older brothers, who had been sent to school.<sup>2</sup> However, while Lucy was the obvious object of her parent's affections, the star that had featured in her mother's dream, she also, later on, became the victim of family favouritism. Lucy admitted that by 1625 her newborn sister had become the favourite, a new daughter that her mother was 'infinitely fond of above all the rest'. Significantly, it is when commenting on the favour bestowed to this younger sister, that Lucy's account suddenly stops, mid-sentence, 'I being of too serious a temper was not so pleasing to my-'. It would appear that after this the pages were torn out, possibly by the author herself.<sup>3</sup> Perhaps Lucy was about to admit that she was now not so pleasing to her mother or father. From previously basking in the light of her parents' favour, Lucy was now simply a sibling on the side-line. Although we cannot know for sure what caused her to end her account so abruptly, a plausible answer could be that these childhood memories had simply become too upsetting.

Though it is frustrating not to be able to track the relationships Lucy had with her siblings through her adulthood, this is nevertheless a rich source which seems to effectively portray many of the themes that will be investigated in this dissertation.

Through this record of the Apsley family, we can witness a clear example of

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<sup>2</sup> Hutchinson, *Memoirs*, p. 15.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 15.

favouritism - a perceived favouritism at least, if not entirely real. In this case, we can piece together the causes for this favouritism: Lady Apsley's desire for a daughter, the circumstances which surrounded the birth, along with Lucy's constant struggle for parental affection and praise. This dissertation will attempt to place such factors in a wider contemporary setting and investigate how gender, age, birth order, education, character, and so on, could shape other forms and causes of favouritism in other early modern families. Were there dominant patterns, or did circumstance play the primary role? Another area of investigation that Lucy's autobiography suggests is the difference between mothers and fathers, and whether they looked for different qualities in their favourite children. Sir Allen Apsley, for example, praised his daughter on her educational talents, such as her progress in Latin, as well as her 'great memory'. Lady Apsley, however, complained that her daughter was neglecting her music and needlework.<sup>4</sup> Clearly she wanted more expressions of femininity from the daughter she had so strongly desired. Finally, existing historiographical assumptions will also be explored and possibly modified, such as the common belief that the oldest son was always the favourite. While this was undoubtedly true in many of the higher status families we will be looking at, it would seem that the favouritism directed towards the older son, and dictated by the steadfast principle of primogeniture, did not always apply in both theory and practice.

In focusing on family favouritism, we are exploring a somewhat neglected topic. A substantial amount of the earlier historiography has depicted the early modern household as a place of brutality and exploitation – not an environment in which favouritism could thrive. According to M. J. Tucker, children in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries were seen as untrustworthy, socially insignificant and

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<sup>4</sup> Hutchinson, *Memoirs*, p. 15.



barely worthy of acknowledgement.<sup>5</sup> Lawrence Stone also advanced this argument in the 1970s, emphasising the emotional distance within the family, at all social levels, and arguing that high mortality rates made deep and affectionate relationships between family members imprudent and unusual.<sup>6</sup> However, over the years, historians have begun to question this all-encompassing idea of parental cruelty, and have instead pointed to the more caring and individual nature of contemporary familial ties. Parental attitudes, for instance, were not static, but were in fact gradually changing, especially towards the end of the seventeenth century. It was at this time that children became favoured objects upon which their mothers and fathers were willing to lavish larger sums of money.<sup>7</sup> Even Stone admitted there was a visible transition from distance, deference and patriarchy to what he termed the ‘affective individualism’ of the eighteenth century.<sup>8</sup> More recently, Linda Pollock has used a large body of primary material to prove that parents were, overall, fonder of their children than has been formerly suggested. This fondness can be discovered, not only in the higher-status families of the late seventeenth century, but also throughout the early modern period, and across the social spectrum.<sup>9</sup> Yet the aim of this study is not to get caught up in arguments over change versus continuity, or affection against oppression, but rather to acknowledge that looking at favouritism within the context of the early modern family is ultimately challenging Stone’s thesis of emotional distance and brutality. Instead, focusing on how parents could favour

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<sup>5</sup> M.J. Tucker, ‘The Child as Beginning and End: fifteenth and sixteenth century English childhood’, in Lloyd de Mause (ed.), *The History of Childhood* (London, 1976), p. 229.

<sup>6</sup> Lawrence Stone, *The Family, Sex and Marriage in England 1500-1800* (London, 1977), p. 88.

<sup>7</sup> J.H. Plumb, ‘The New World of children in eighteenth-century England’, *Past and Present*, 67:1 (1975), p. 60.

<sup>8</sup> Stone, *The Family, Sex and Marriage*, p. 405.

<sup>9</sup> Linda Pollock, *Forgotten Children: parent-child relations from 1500 to 1900* (Cambridge University Press, 1983), see chapter 2 in particular, ‘a thesis re-examined’. Also useful on parent-child relationships: Keith Wrightson, *English Society 1580-1680* (London, 2003), Ralph Houlbrooke, *The English Family, 1450-1700* (London, 1984) and Anthony Fletcher, *Gender, Sex and Subordination in England, 1500-1800* (New Haven; London, 1995).

their children extends even further those current historiographical trends which centre on the more loving nature of the early modern family.

It would be pointless to simply identify and assess the causes of favouritism without looking more specifically at its consequences. Directly connected to the existence of parental favouritism is the impact this could have on the siblings involved, and it is the juxtaposition between sibling rivalry and affection which will form the second half of this dissertation. Once again we can turn to the Apsley family for an ideal example of how favouritism could generate obvious and ongoing sibling rivalry, with Lucy, as already shown, using the word ‘despised’ to describe how she felt about her siblings.<sup>10</sup> Clearly Lucy’s childhood favouritism shaped, if not determined, the relationships that she had with her siblings: not only with the older brothers that she refused to play with and constantly strived to compete with, but also with the younger sister that she felt had later overshadowed her. Furthermore, while sibling relationships inevitably transformed over time, the way Lucy suddenly ended her account also hinted that these emotions were still present, nearly fifty years later, and testified to the lasting damage that favouritism could have on sibling bonds. Of course, not all sibling relations were necessarily characterised by this level of rivalry. Patricia Crawford reminds us of that well-known saying, ‘blood is thicker than water’, and it is true that there must often have been a natural affection and solidarity that flowed between early modern siblings, just as there is today.<sup>11</sup> Nevertheless, despite this, it seems clear that the actual level of emotional involvement invested in

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<sup>10</sup> Hutchinson, *Memoirs*, p. 15.

<sup>11</sup> Patricia Crawford, *Blood, Bodies and Families in Early Modern England* (Harlow, 2004), p. 209.

a sibling relationship could vary considerably,<sup>12</sup> and that favouritism could be a significant factor in diminishing this involvement.

If we agree that sibling rivalry could be a feature of contemporary family life, then we must also investigate the forms this rivalry could take, especially in relation to gender. For instance, in a society where sons were educated separately and daughters were left at home with female companions, the possibility exists that any contention between siblings was experienced along same-sex lines, with boys being more likely to hold up their brothers as viable examples of comparison, and girls more likely to view their sisters as the competition. Perhaps these separate and gendered lifestyles also meant that boys could become closer to their brothers, while girls were left to forge stronger connections with their sisters. Alternatively, if these siblings did live in gendered worlds, then it is also necessary to explore those brother-sister relationships which transcended these gendered boundaries. As Alan Macfarlane has suggested, there may have been a ‘considerable taboo on brother-sister contact’ at this time, although he also admits that we know very little about the quality of this particular blood tie in Tudor and Stuart England, ‘though there is probably much evidence to be gleaned’.<sup>13</sup>

Many historians have acknowledged the need for further investigation into sibling relationships. As we have seen, the bonds between parent and child have been a staple of previous historical study, but the interaction between siblings has received far less attention, ‘sisters and brothers have been rather neglected’.<sup>14</sup> According to

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<sup>12</sup> Alan Macfarlane, *The Family Life of Ralph Josselin: a seventeenth-century clergyman: an essay in historical anthropology* (London, 1970), p. 128.

<sup>13</sup> Macfarlane, *Family Life*, p. 128.

<sup>14</sup> Naomi Miller and Naomi Yavneh (eds), *Sibling Relations and Gender in the Early Modern World: Sisters, Brothers and Others* (Basingstoke, 2006), p. 1 and Rosemary O’Day, *The Family and Family relationships, 1500-1900: England, France and the United States* (London, 1994), p. 93.

Rosemary O'Day, the comparative silence about siblings in studies of the family is surprising, 'these relationships were not necessarily good but they were important'.<sup>15</sup> Furthermore, this importance was regularly emphasised in contemporary cultural and literary paradigms. For instance, brothers and sisters, especially twins, played an important role in Renaissance narratives, which were used to create 'often moving and hilarious explorations of gender roles, familial relations, and so on'.<sup>16</sup> We just have to look at some of Shakespeare's plays, such as *King Lear*, for examples of parents who favoured specific sons and daughters, along with the sibling rivalry that this could cause.<sup>17</sup> Favouritism and sibling disputes were also popular themes in broadside ballads, which not only featured cruel parents who favoured one child over another, but also described spoilt children who treated their brothers and sisters unkindly. Perhaps real sibling rivalry, as Sigmund Freud suggested, was a reinterpretation of a hostility that has long been present in culture and literature. Of course, there has been some historiographical focus on the sibling.<sup>18</sup> For instance, sibling relationships have been addressed in Naomi Miller and Naomi Yavneh's *Sibling Relations and Gender*, although many of the articles included here focus on the cultural representations of siblings in early modern literature and drama, or 'sisterhood' in a religious context, rather than the emotional existence of the sibling

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<sup>15</sup> O'Day, *The Family*, p. 87.

<sup>16</sup> Miller and Yavneh, *Sibling Relations and Gender*, p. 1

<sup>17</sup> Sibling bonds in *The Tempest* (1610) are discussed in Miller and Yavneh, *Sibling relations and Gender*, chapter 13. Favouritism and rivalry are also dominant themes in *King Lear* (1603), in which three sisters compete for their father's favour, and *As You Like it* (1599), a story of brotherly persecution. See Catherine Belsey, *Shakespeare and the loss of Eden: The construction of family values in early modern culture* (Basingstoke, 1999).

<sup>18</sup> Joan Thirsk, for instance, wrote about the negative effects of primogeniture on the lives of younger sons in 1969. See Joan Thirsk, 'Younger Sons in the 17th century', *History*, 54 (1969), pp. 358-377. However, once again, historians such as Linda Pollock and Richard Grassby have challenged this by focusing on the more positive impact of fraternal interaction, contesting Thirsk's analysis by claiming that most brothers enjoyed 'warm, intimate relationships'. See Linda Pollock, 'Younger Sons in Tudor and Stuart England', *History Today*, 39:6 (1989), and Richard Grassby, *Kinship and Capitalism* (2001), pp. 210-15.

within a real familial setting.<sup>19</sup> Nevertheless, even with this previous scholarship, the early modern sibling has still been described as being both ‘everywhere and nowhere’: a phrase which seems to perfectly reflect the topic’s relative ambiguity.<sup>20</sup> Here we are confronted with an intriguing paradox: the ubiquity of sibling interaction in cultural and contemporary experience, against the strange absence of modern scholarly contribution. This study will attempt to begin to redress this paradox and explore the comparatively uncharted territory of sibling rivalry.

According to Helen Berry and Elizabeth Foyster, family history provides the historian with the opportunity to pursue new avenues of enquiry,<sup>21</sup> and in this case it will be possible to approach existing primary material from new directions, using a variety of personal records as examples and case-studies. However, a great deal of caution needs to be exercised when using this type of source. Autobiographies, diaries, memoirs, journals, letters and so on, must be carefully screened for bias, and even then we cannot be entirely sure that these sources offer genuine insights into typical family life. Personal documents such as letters, for instance, can be unhelpful as many were intended for wider circulation and therefore dwell on affairs of state or family business, as opposed to intimate details, feelings, or any negative events. It is therefore necessary to read these sources with a certain level of scepticism about their purpose. Autobiographies, as we have already become aware in the writings of Lucy Hutchinson, could be self-justifying, while memories could also change over time. Peter Laslett even claimed in 1965 that the nature of people’s emotional dealings in the past is irretrievably lost to us, not only because of the uncertainty of the sources, but also because of the unintentional projection of twentieth-century

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<sup>19</sup> Miller and Yavneh, *Sibling Relations and Gender*, chapters 2-5.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 2.

<sup>21</sup> Helen Berry and Elizabeth Foyster (eds), *The Family in Early Modern England* (Cambridge, 2009), p. 15.

attitudes onto historical relationships.<sup>22</sup> Given that favouritism and sibling rivalry are aspects of family relationships which transcend time, it is necessary to situate these topics within the context of the period. Another shortcoming of using these sources is that they relate almost entirely to the lives of the wealthy, a section of society which comprised no more than five per cent of the early modern population.<sup>23</sup> Some relevant diaries, such as those of Ralph Josselin, Adam Martindale, James Yonge, Nehemiah Wallington and Samuel Pepys, do give an example of middle class relationships: charting the lives and families of tailors, ships' surgeons, clergymen, builders and wood-turners. However, it needs to be acknowledged that our source range will not reflect a fully representative cross-section of society, but will mostly converge around the higher sections of the social spectrum.

Alongside textual drawbacks there are also methodological problems. One of the main challenges is how to identify favouritism. Of course, diaries and journals are more likely to include comment on any favourite children as these sources were usually private and were therefore more likely to reveal the genuine thoughts of family members. However, expressions of favouritism were not only verbal, but could also be physical, exposed through certain actions and behaviour. For instance, Lucy Hutchinson noted that her mother breastfed her younger sister, while Lucy and her older brothers were sent to a wet nurse: a sure sign of favouritism.<sup>24</sup> Another possible way to assess these relationships is to look at the money spent on individual children, a method which supports Ilana Krausman Ben-Amos' idea of 'parental transfer'. According to Ben-Amos, financial investment in children could also reflect a parent's emotional investment, with levels of provision varying greatly in scale and

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<sup>22</sup> See Peter Laslett, *The World We Have Lost: further explored* (London, 2005).

<sup>23</sup> O'Day, *The Family*, p. 66.

<sup>24</sup> Hutchinson, *Memoirs*, p. 15.

duration across the life course.<sup>25</sup> Furthermore, as will be shown, favouritism could also become apparent only after the death of a favourite child. As Raymond Anselment acknowledged, parental grief at this time provides an important literary corrective to the widely held belief that the death of an infant was shrugged off as common event 'on which it would have been foolish to waste much emotion'.<sup>26</sup>

While the existence of this grief once again challenges any former historiographical ideas of familial distance, what concerns us here is the scale of this grief, alongside any differences in the anguish caused by the death of one child compared to another. For instance, George Oglander died of the smallpox at his home in Nunwell on the Isle of Wight, in 1632. His father recorded his death 'with tears instead of ink', in spite of the 'good and dutiful sons' who survived.<sup>27</sup> These expressions of grief will be used throughout this study, not only to reveal differences in parental attitudes, but also when assessing the closeness of sibling relationships.

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<sup>25</sup> Ilana Krausman Ben-Amos, 'Human bonding; parents and their offspring in early modern England', *Discussion Papers in Economic and Social History*, 17 (Oxford, 1997), p. 5.

<sup>26</sup> Raymond Anselment, 'Tears of nature: seventeenth-century parental bereavement', *Modern Philosophy*, 91 (1993), p. 1.

<sup>27</sup> Sara Mendelson and Patricia Crawford, *Women in Early Modern England 1550-1720* (Oxford, 1998), p. 78.

## 1. The Desire for a Male Heir

*'My wife has much disappointed my hopes in bringing forth a daughter' - William Blundell, 1653.<sup>1</sup>*

### Case study: an 'impoverished Lancashire gentleman'.

In 1653 the wife of William Blundell, an 'impoverished Lancashire gentleman', was expecting her ninth child. As she had already delivered him five daughters, Blundell desperately hoped the infant would be a son.<sup>2</sup> However, upon discovering his wife had borne him yet another daughter, and that this daughter had died hours after the birth, Blundell wrote to a friend, somewhat scornfully: 'my wife has much disappointed my hopes in bringing forth a daughter, [who,] finding herself not so welcome in this world as a son, hath made a discreet choice of a better'. While forms of grief could point to those children who had been particular favourites, it would also seem that an obvious lack of grief could illuminate parental attitudes, in this case towards gender. Blundell clearly preferred the idea of an heir, and after his daughter's death he became resolved to have 'none hereafter but boys, goody gallant Bishops'. He even claimed that his next child should be called 'Ricardus', as it sounded much better than Francisca Clara, 'the nunnish name of my late little runagate'.<sup>3</sup> Evidently this was a man who had adopted a fairly light-hearted approach to the death of his 'little runagate', at least in these letters, and admitted that she was unwelcome simply because she had not been the boy he had hoped for.

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<sup>1</sup> William Blundell, *Cavalier: letters of William Blundell of Crosby to his friends 1620-1698* (ed.) Margaret Blundell (London, 1933), p. 40.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 44.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 44.



Favouritism towards the Blundell children was therefore heavily determined along gender lines, and throughout Blundell's correspondence the distinctions he made between his sons and daughters are consistently apparent. Writing after the birth of his ninth daughter in 1657, he revealed that he considered himself to be in a 'great disability'.<sup>4</sup> While sons were financially advantageous as they could bring money into the family when they married, parents had to provide large dowries for daughters if they were to find suitable husbands. No wonder Blundell commented after the birth of his tenth daughter, somewhat despondently, 'this is not the way to get rich'.<sup>5</sup> Many daughters could spell ruin for a family and this must have strongly influenced the relationship Blundell had with his daughters. After all, he simply referred to his tenth daughter as 'the thing called Bridget'.<sup>6</sup> As Blundell could not afford these dowries, two of his daughters even ended up in French convents, 'at the cut-rate cost of £10 and £15 a year for life'. However, while Lawrence Stone argued that Blundell 'shipped two of them off to nunneries abroad', on closer inspection of Blundell's diary it would appear that the two daughters who were 'shipped off' in fact chose the religious life, with Margaret opting to follow her older sister Jane to a French convent. Blundell even wrote a rather poignant letter to Jane when she arrived, 'I wish to God that you many never suffer anything...I cannot give you a greater blessing' - an example that Stone conveniently leaves out of his analysis.<sup>7</sup> Although Blundell's economic situation meant that he could not support all his daughters, his attitudes towards them here were not completely negative. In fact, it would seem that his relationship with them improved as they got older, which

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<sup>4</sup> Blundell, *Cavalier*, p. 68.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 79.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 68, 79.

<sup>7</sup> Stone, *The Family, Sex and Marriage*, p. 86 and Blundell, *Cavalier*, p. 76.

suggests that familial relationships were not static, and that favouritism could transform and transfer over time.

However, despite this, other examples of parent-child interaction between Blundell and his children do expose differences in parental treatment. In 1663, he created a written exercise for his daughters, to 'embolden them in speaking', which was composed in the form of a dialogue, and was recited by Mary, Frances and Bridget, aged nine, seven and four respectively. Through this dialogue, Mary was urged to remember 'how often she has been whipt and penance'. While, in the exercise, Mary escaped punishment due to her promise to 'pray and mend', Blundell nevertheless disclosed that little girls should be cast face downwards 'and whipped and whipped again for the inculcation of civility'.<sup>8</sup> Yet while girls needed to be regularly punished in order to teach them lessons of civility, it would seem that boys were allowed a much greater freedom. In a letter to Mr. Charles Parker in 1659, Blundell implored him to continue in his position as tutor to his oldest son Nicholas. Blundell recognised that Nicholas might not be the best scholar; however he insisted that he had good reason to pardon and to love him, 'I must own his imperfections as derived immediately from myself'.<sup>9</sup> A significant disparity therefore emerges; Blundell's three daughters were given exercises which threatened punishment after bad behaviour, while his son's imperfections were pardoned and treated as extensions of his own. Here Blundell's actions reflect the widely held beliefs surrounding the female sex at the time, in which women were regarded as weak and unable to control their emotions, possessing 'self-destructive passions, voracious

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<sup>8</sup> Blundell, *Cavalier*, p. 46.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 48.

lusts and tricky temperaments'.<sup>10</sup> Dame Sarah Couper seemed to sum up these contemporary attitudes in 1701, by claiming that 'a worthy lady said she least desired girls, for fear of the disgrace which attends their misbehaviour and ill conduct, whereas boys could scarce do anything the world esteemed a fault'. Similarly, Mr. Beavan, the head-teacher of a school in Mersham, assured one Henry Oxinden in 1647 that he would have more problems with his two daughters than his sons, 'there is more trouble with girls than boys'.<sup>11</sup>

As shown, Blundell clearly made many of the typical distinctions between his children that other elite families did at this time. While he may have grown fonder of his daughters as they reached adulthood, there is no hiding the repeated disappointment he felt at the birth of yet another daughter. The rules of primogeniture therefore dictated the relationships he had with his children, and after his oldest son Nicholas entered the Jesuit order, Blundell's affections arguably transferred onto his second oldest son William, whose marriage suddenly became of a matter of 'urgent importance'.<sup>12</sup> Any favouritism shown by Blundell consequently descended down a visible hierarchy, in which his sons were positioned at the top, and his daughters remained below. This was a hierarchy that was actively promoted by many contemporary theologians. One preacher, Richard Bernard, wrote in 1628 that 'it is a greater blessing to have a sonne, then a daughter', and here Bernard was recognising this hierarchy of preference. Similarly, while Thomas Comber admitted that female and male infants born in post-Reformation England began life on an

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<sup>10</sup> Natalie Zemon-Davis, 'Women on Top', in *Society and Culture in Early Modern France* (Stanford, 1975), p. 124.

<sup>11</sup> Mendelson and Crawford, *Women in Early Modern England*, p. 81 and D. M. Gardiner (ed.) *The Oxinden Letters: 1642-70* (1937), p. 128.

<sup>12</sup> Blundell, *Cavalier*, p. 120.

equal spiritual footing, he nevertheless encouraged the mother to think upon ‘the blessing the family hath received, and especially when an heir is born’.<sup>13</sup>

### The elites

The way William Blundell prioritised the birth of a son was not unusual in elite social circles. After all, ‘the production of a son and heir was the landowner’s *raison d’etre*’.<sup>14</sup> This was a patriarchal, authoritarian and primogenitural society, with the foundations of the family unit being the distribution of power, responsibility and economic allocations. Furthermore, while some bias towards primogeniture existed at all social levels, the law of privileging an oldest son over younger sons, and sons over daughters, was evidently taken much more seriously by the elites, who depended on property transfer to guarantee their futures and continue the family name. The most extreme effects of primogeniture were felt in the families we are looking at here, with family interests being very heavily identified with those of the heir. Blundell was therefore not alone in craving a son to inherit his estate. When Hannah Brograve, aunt to the wife of auto-biographer Sir Simonds D’Ewes, gave birth in 1631 in Suffolk, D’Ewes noted that although it was a daughter it was still very welcome, ‘because it gave them hope of further issue’.<sup>15</sup> While Blundell admitted that his fifth daughter was not wanted, here D’Ewes declared that this daughter was only welcome because she indicated the possibility of a son in the future. Even Sir John Oglander, who had cried ‘tears instead of ink’ at the death of his son George in 1632, admitted that he and his wife Mary later suffered biennial

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<sup>13</sup> R. Bernard, *Ruth’s Recompence* (1628), p. 463 and T. Comber, *A companion to the Temple* (1684), p. 214.

<sup>14</sup> Mary Abbott, *Family Ties: English Families 1540-1920* (London, 1993), p. 47.

<sup>15</sup> Simonds D’Ewes, *The journal of Sir Simonds D’Ewes, from the first recess of the Long Parliament to the withdrawal of King Charles from London* (ed.) Willson Havelock Coates (Hamden, Conn., 1970), p. 416.

disappointments as six daughters came along with ‘mechanical precision’ before the necessary son was born in 1680.<sup>16</sup>

So far, any favouritism that has been directed towards the oldest son has been overwhelmingly by men, and we are swamped with examples of disappointed fathers at the birth of their daughters. A small number of other sources, however, do reveal similar attitudes among aristocratic mothers. Furthermore, while we have looked at how favouritism could be pre-determined at birth on account of the child’s sex, we can also discover evidence of how this pre-determined favouritism could continue as children got older. In *The Memoirs of Lady Ann Fanshawe*, for instance, Lady Fanshawe recounted an episode in 1659 when her then only son died of the smallpox. Even though both her eldest daughters had smallpox at the same time, she chose to neglect them, and ‘day and night attended my dear son’.<sup>17</sup> Lady Fanshawe felt the need to make a choice between her older daughters and her oldest son, and clearly deemed her son as the favourite. Nevertheless, the two daughters recovered, while the son died, ‘the grief of which made me miscarry, and caused a sickness of three weeks’. Six years later when a new son, Richard, was born, Lady Fanshawe could not contain her excitement, ‘God be praised!’<sup>18</sup> Examples such as this demonstrate the levels of favouritism that could exist. It was a form of familial expression between parents and their children, an interaction that Ben-Amos termed ‘unequal exchange’, and in this case involved favouring the oldest son, in neglect of younger sons or daughters, so that the heir might be aggrandized.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Sir John Oglander, *A Royalist’s notebook: The Commonplace Book of John Oglander, Kt., of Nunwell, born 1585, died 1655* (ed.) Francis Bamford (London, 1936), p. 80.

<sup>17</sup> Lady Ann Harrison Fanshawe, *Memoirs of Lady Fanshawe, wife of the Right Hon. Sir Richard Fanshawe...* (London, 1829), p. 128.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 219.

<sup>19</sup> Ben-Amos, *Human Bonding*, p. 17 and Crawford, *Blood, Bodies and Families*, p. 215.

Nowhere is this more evident than in the Wentworth family, and in particular, in the example of the intriguing character of Lady Isabella Wentworth. After the death of her husband William in 1692, Lady Wentworth's older son Thomas became the head of their estate in Twickenham. While the rest of the family was arguably 'deeply affected' by her son's domination, Lady Wentworth was constantly pre-occupied with the perpetuation of the family line through Thomas' children.<sup>20</sup> It was on Thomas that she lavished her praise and flattery, addressing all his letters to 'my dearest and best of children', and declaring that he was the 'darling' of her soul, 'I love you more than all the world together'.<sup>21</sup> However, Thomas waited until 1711 to marry, so until that time it looked as if his younger brother Peter would inherit the estate. This thought severely upset Lady Wentworth, and also affected her immediate relationships with her children. In a letter to Thomas in 1710, for instance, she thanked God for giving her 'soe kynde and good a son', which was a blessing that prevented her from desiring anything, 'except to see that dear soul married and settled'.<sup>22</sup> Yet when mentioning Peter, the son who was married and settled, she admitted she did not have much love for him. She found it difficult, more specifically, to bond with Peter's children, as they were, after all, threats to Thomas' inheritance, 'all his children makes me mallancolly to thinck they are as your airs, for I see no hopes of your having any of your own'.<sup>23</sup> It was not Peter, but Anne, who was her second favourite child after Thomas, 'next to you, anne is who I have now taken my eternall love of in this world'.<sup>24</sup> All of this would suggest that it was, above all, patriarchal issues of inheritance which governed Lady Wentworth's favouritism.

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<sup>20</sup> Berry and Foyster, *The Family in Early Modern England*, p. 190.

<sup>21</sup> British Library, Additional Manuscripts, MS. 22225, 'Strafford Papers', Lady Isabella Wentworth to Lord Strafford, 8 July 1707.

<sup>22</sup> BL, Add. MSS., MS. 22225, 'Strafford Papers', Lady Wentworth to Lord Strafford, 4 July 1710.

<sup>23</sup> BL, Add. MSS., MS. 22225, 'Strafford Papers', Lady Wentworth to Lord Strafford, 12 December 1707.

<sup>24</sup> BL, Add. MSS., MS 22225, 'Strafford Papers', 8 October 1707 and 2 June 1707.

Her devotion to her oldest son was epitomized in her final action of settling her entire fortune on him, whereas Peter was left with nothing, 'I can not have much lov for that brood, nether can I take it kindly to be trickt out of anything for any of them'.<sup>25</sup> It would seem that Lady Wentworth's mind-set operated within a context of a social convention that discriminated between boys and girls, older sons and younger sons. This same mind-set existed for William Blundell, John Oglander, Lady Fanshawe, and countless other aristocratic parents at the time. Therefore, favouritism towards the oldest son was often the inevitable consequence of a society in which the gender of a new child, as we have seen, was public knowledge, and primogeniture and property transfer determined parental attitudes.

### **The middling ranks**

If this was often true in elite circles, did a similar form of favouritism prevail within the middling ranks of early modern England? While, in the context of elite society, the desire for a surviving son took pride of place among the most important of familial matters, lower down the social spectrum perhaps this favouritism was not so evident. A number of our sources are based on such families. Adam Martindale, for instance, was born in 1623 in the parish of Prescott, Lancashire, to Henry Martindale, a builder. This younger son admitted in his autobiography that his older brother Thomas was his father's favourite: his father had 'always favoured him [Thomas] but too much'.<sup>26</sup> However, despite this acknowledgment, Martindale seems to depict his sibling relationships as rather more equal, with very little sign of negative feelings against female infants. For instance, when he was young, Martindale was taught to

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<sup>25</sup> BL, Add. MSS., MS. 31144, f. 191r-v, Lady Isabella Wentworth to Lord Strafford, 5 Jan (before 1711).

<sup>26</sup> Adam Martindale, *The Life of Adam Martindale: written by himself, and now first printed from the original manuscript of the British Museum* (ed.) Richard Parkinson, Chetham Society (1845), vol. 1, p. 32.

read by his brothers and sisters, ‘such delight I took in it, and the praises I got by my parents, who preferred my reading to any other of my family’.<sup>27</sup> Clearly Martindale felt, at this point in his childhood at least, that his parents’ favour belonged not only to Thomas, but also extended to him. Furthermore, Martindale hinted at his mother’s favouritism when he described the traumatic episode when his sister Jane decided to leave for London, ‘my mother’s heart had like to have broke for extremity of sorrow’. Yet, unlike Lucy Hutchinson, who commented on the favouritism towards her sister with an obvious bitterness, Martindale highlighted the strength of his relationship with his sister, claiming that he was also ‘much concerned’ with her journey.<sup>28</sup> Favouritism towards older sons, to the point of indifference or contempt towards daughters, was seemingly not an issue within the Martindale family.

Instead, these sources point to the desire for equal numbers of sons and daughters. For example, Ralph Josselin, a clergyman born in 1616 in Essex, proudly wrote in his diary after the birth of his daughter: ‘God hath evened my number’. Josselin himself was an only son and admitted that he was born to the ‘great joy of father and mother being much desired...[and] as it please God, their only sonne’.<sup>29</sup> However, it would seem Josselin expressed no real favouritism towards his own children. According to Macfarlane, ‘there is nothing to show that there were favourites in the family, and it is more likely that husband and wife worked out the position and prospects of their respective daughters and arranged accordingly’.<sup>30</sup> If we focus on the parent-child relationships that occupy the middle of the social scale, it would seem there was less pressure to secure an heir, and, as a result, less

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<sup>27</sup> Martindale, *The Life of Adam Martindale*, p. 5.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 6.

<sup>29</sup> Ralph Josselin, *The Diary of Ralph Josselin, 1616-1683* (ed.) Alan Macfarlane (London, 1976), pp. 1, 415.

<sup>30</sup> Macfarlane, *The Family Life of Ralph Josselin*, p. 132.



favouritism directed towards the oldest son. Examples such as Martindale and Josselin certainly suggest, as Mendelson and Crawford have argued, that ‘the parents of middling ranks were less likely to desire male offspring’.<sup>31</sup>

Furthermore, on the rare occasion when a specific prejudice against girls was revealed it was unambiguously associated with the ‘squirearchy’ and represented in derogatory terms.<sup>32</sup> One anonymous pamphleteer in 1616 wrote disapprovingly of ‘the folly of some [parents] who are so carried away after their elder sonne, that all the rest are little or nothing regarded’.<sup>33</sup> We can also turn to domestic advice guides to discover criticisms of the existence of favouritism within the family. William Gouge wrote *Of Domesticall Duties* in 1622, and declared that ‘parents ought to be so much the more provident for their other children, in training them up to callings, or laying up portions, or settling other estates upon them beside the main inheritance of the eldest son’.<sup>34</sup> Through these literary tracts, parents were warned against turning their oldest son into a gentleman, while leaving all their other children as beggars, ‘means of maintaining life should be given to all’.<sup>35</sup> In 1705 Thomas Tryon also advised parents to make all their children equal, ‘thy daughter equal with thy sons’.<sup>36</sup> Nevertheless, it was not just in didactic texts and conduct guides that we can find these admonitions. Broadside ballads were not only a popular form of entertainment, but were also used to reinforce accepted social values. One such ballad, entitled *The Downfal of Pride*, printed around 1681, centred on a merchant’s wife who favoured one daughter over another:

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<sup>31</sup> Mendelson and Crawford, *Women in Early Modern England*, p. 82.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 82.

<sup>33</sup> Crawford, *Blood, Bodies and Families*, p. 226.

<sup>34</sup> William Gouge, *Of Domesticall Duties* (1622), p. 207.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 207, 419.

<sup>36</sup> Thomas Tryon, *Some Memoirs of the Life of Mr. Tho. Tryon, late of London* (1705), p. 90, cited in Crawford, *Blood, Bodies and Families*, p. 217.

‘She had two Daughters, both of beauty bright,  
In one of which she plac’d her chief delight;  
The other she did constantly despise,  
And over her did daily Tyrannize.

The youngest Daughter, Modest, Meek, and Mild,  
She did not use as if she was her Child;  
Father and Mother, both did her degrade,  
And kept her like a Drudge, or Servant-Maid.’<sup>37</sup>

These cruel parents eventually became bankrupt and destitute while their tyrannized daughter married a wealthy Knight. On his death she inherited his fortune, while her parents, as well as her spoilt older sister, all became dependent on her generosity (see appendix).<sup>38</sup> This ballad effectively acts as a warning of the dangers of too much favouritism: the preference for one child, the neglect of another, alongside the potential, and unfortunate, outcome.

Perhaps, then, we could argue that these warnings formed part of a distinctly middle-class and popular culture. While, within the elites, the favouritism directed towards the older son was socially promoted as part of an accepted patriarchal lifestyle, lower down the social scale warnings against too much favouritism were

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<sup>37</sup> Anon, *The Downfal of Pride, being an account of a Merchant’s wife...to the Tune of Aim not too High*, printed for P. Brooksby, J. Deacon, J. Blare and J. Back (1675-1696?), The Pepys Library, Magdalene College, Cambridge. See appendix.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

present. Echoes of these cultural attitudes can also be found in the early modern families we are looking at. For instance, when Adam Martindale was sixteen, he became a tutor to the children of one Mr. Shevington, in the parish of Eccles. While Mr. Shevington was ‘very high and tyrannicall’ in his dealings with Martindale, it would seem that he was far too lenient in his dealings with his own children, especially his oldest son. Martindale disapproved of this favouritism, ‘his sonnes also which I taught (especially the elder) gave me great occasion for exercise of patience, for they were just like him, and so encouraged by their parents...that I would almost as soone have led beares’.<sup>39</sup> Similarly, James Yonge, a ship’s surgeon born in Plymouth in 1647, was always spurned by his father, while his other brothers were obvious favourites. In 1679 Yonge was outraged when his father gave his younger brother Nathaniel £100. He also gave him possession of the house Yonge lived in, ‘a thing I so resented that it almost broke my heart’.<sup>40</sup> While we may think this jealousy was only the natural response of a brother who had been constantly overlooked, it would seem that Yonge’s neighbours were also surprised at this father’s actions, ‘[it] became the talk of the town...my father was much blamed’. However, rather than simply opposing this display of favouritism, here the surrounding community was arguably critical of the recipient, ‘[it] was the general wonder of the town that I, who had a great family...should be turned out of doors to make way for a younger brother’.<sup>41</sup> Perhaps if a younger brother had been ‘turned out’, there would not have been such a public outrage.

Evidently, favouritism did exist within the early modern family, but by no means did it always follow the archetypal path of favouring the oldest son. It would

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<sup>39</sup> Martindale, *The Life of Adam Martindale*, p. 30.

<sup>40</sup> James Yonge, *The journal of James Yonge (1647-1721), Plymouth surgeon* (ed.) F. N. L. Poynter (London, 1963), p. 160.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 160.

seem that it was probably quite common for elite parents of higher society to express disappointment at the birth of a daughter, when an heir was needed. This could also shape familial relationships as children got older, with expressions of favouritism towards the older son persisting. However, these examples must be situated within the appropriate context, and there clearly existed a correlation between favouritism and social status. While the law of primogeniture determined aristocratic attitudes regarding the importance of the oldest son, within the middling ranks these attitudes were arguably somewhat diluted. Even contemporary writers emphasised the need for equality within the family, while the dangers of too much favouritism could also furnish the themes of popular ballads. As older sons were treated differently in many early modern families, it would be pointless to label all favouritism as being simply determined by birth order and gender, as this was certainly not the case. For example, this dissertation began with the example of Lady Apsley. In contrast to other aristocratic parents, such as Lady Fanshawe or William Blundell, here was a mother who had desperately wanted a daughter. Perhaps Lady Apsley would have felt less inclined to desire a daughter had they not already had three sons. Nevertheless, her daughter Lucy felt convinced that she was, for a while at least, the true family favourite. One generation later, when Lucy's niece, Isabella, who later became Lady Isabella Wentworth, had children of her own, her own favouritism was directed quite openly towards her oldest son. These families certainly reflect a significant level of variety when looking at early modern favouritism: a variety that will be addressed in the next chapter.

## 2. Defying patriarchy

*‘While fathers gave their heirs the largest fortunes, they gave the youngest the greatest shares of their affections’ – Robert Boyle, 1638.<sup>1</sup>*

The concept of favouritism within the early modern family is an exceedingly complex one, and it would seem that the causes which influenced both private confessions and visible displays of partiality were not strictly limited to the patriarchal combination of birth order and gender. While, as previously shown, older sons could find themselves as the favourite, this did not necessarily mean that all younger sons or daughters were automatically ignored or neglected. Instead, diaries and autobiographies show that heirs or older sons were not the only ones to enjoy their parents’ favour, and in some cases, were overshadowed by a younger sibling. This chapter will investigate those families in which daughters and younger sons were favoured over older sons, as well as attempting to pinpoint the causes of this favouritism, such as age, character, education and obedience.

### **Younger sons and favourite daughters**

This chapter began with a quote from Robert Boyle, a philosopher and scientist, born in 1627 in Ireland. Boyle insisted that while more money was spent on and given to the oldest son, younger sons were in fact awarded the greatest share of parental affections. While this generalises contemporary father-son relationships, it would seem that in some instances this was true, with financial backing not always acting as a solid indicator of favouritism. John Winthrop for instance, a lawyer born in 1587 in Suffolk, clearly regretted the amount of money he had spent on his eldest son, ‘I have

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<sup>1</sup> Robert Boyle, ‘An account of Philaretus during his minority’, in R.E.W. Maddison (ed.), *The Life of the honourable Robert Boyle* (1909), p. 16.

disbursed a great deal of money for you, more than my estate will bear...I have many other children that are un-provided, and I see my life is uncertain'.<sup>2</sup> Here Winthrop felt compelled to follow the rules of primogeniture in bestowing his heir with the largest amount of his fortune, but afterwards felt guilty at the financial neglect of his younger sons and daughters. Furthermore, Boyle also gives an example of the favouritism that could be directed towards a younger son in another of his tracts in 1691. Here he describes an encounter with a middle-aged woman, who told him that she had been walking along the riverside with one of her younger sons, 'a little boy she was dotingly fond of'. While she was occupied, her son escaped from her watch, fell into the river and drowned. The mother was struck with 'so much horreur upon the sudden accident that tore from her a favourite son' that she fell into a 'dead palsy of her right arm and hand', an ailment which continued alongside her guilt.<sup>3</sup> This mother's obvious fondness for her favourite younger son, alongside the 'horreur' she felt at his death, testifies then to the apparent truth that could lie behind Boyle's assertion: favouritism was not always restricted to the oldest son and could indeed settle on younger children.

Similarly, favourite daughters can also be discovered within the sources. Even if daughters were not specifically acknowledged as favourites, they were often described with great affection. Within the Trumbull family, for instance, one daughter Fanny was labelled in the late seventeenth century as her mother's favourite, 'her beloved of all her children'.<sup>4</sup> William Gouge, despite promoting

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<sup>2</sup> Pollock, *Forgotten Children*, p. 146.

<sup>3</sup> Robert Boyle, *Experimenta & observationes physicae wherein are briefly treated of several subjects relating to natural philosophy in an experimental way: to which is added, a small collection of strange reports / by the Honourable Robert Boyle ...* (1691).

<sup>4</sup> BL, Add. MSS., MS. 72516, 8 November 1689 and 22 January 1690.

equality in his *Of Domesticall Duties*, described his daughter as ‘his sweetest child’.<sup>5</sup> While obvious demonstrations of favouritism, and the consequent neglect of other children, were therefore meant to be avoided, it would seem that small, private expressions which identified favourite children were fairly common. The diary entries of Nehemiah Wallington, a puritan and wood-turner, born in 1598 in Eastcheap, perhaps offers us the most detailed example of a favourite daughter. Although Wallington never explicitly admitted she was a favourite, his *Notebooks* provide a number of clues. For example, throughout his writing, Wallington constantly referred to her as ‘my sweete child Elizabeth’. When his sweet child died in 1625, Wallington’s grief was so great that he could not be comforted. Yet, when his son died three years later, his response was much more positive, claiming that this death, unlike that of Elizabeth, was ‘wholesome’.<sup>6</sup> Wallington’s arguable favouritism is further emphasised in a remarkable entry in 1622, in which Wallington began to contemplate what would happen if ‘the sickness’ should enter his household. He asked himself, ‘who would I be willing to spare?’ Wallington admitted that he shed many tears over these grievous and somewhat morbid thoughts, yet he continued to list his household members in the order he would be most willing to give them to God:

‘Who first? The maid.

Who next? My sonne John.

Who next? My daughter Elizabeth.

Who next; myselfe’.

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<sup>5</sup> BL, Loan, MS 29/202, a letter from William Gouge to Sir Robert Harley in 1613, cited in Anthony Fletcher, *Growing up in England: the experience of childhood 1600-1914* (London, 2008), p. 87.

<sup>6</sup> Nehemiah Wallington, *The Notebooks of Nehemiah Wallington, 1618-1654: a selection* (ed.) David Booy (Aldershot, 2007), p. 61.

He then continued to list his wife, his father and his brother John.<sup>7</sup> While Wallington intended this personal exercise to remain private, he nonetheless forced himself to rank his two children in order of preference. Not only would Wallington rather his children die of the plague before himself, but he would also be more willing to spare his son John than his daughter Elizabeth.

It was Lawrence Stone who argued that younger sons, and particularly daughters, were often 'unwanted' by early modern parents, and were instead regarded as 'tiresome drains' on the economic resources of the family.<sup>8</sup> However, the examples above prove that in some cases younger sons and daughters were favoured over older sons, or at the very least were regarded and described with a significant fondness and warmth. The task remains to try and assess the reasons for this, and to focus on the factors which caused favouritism to deviate from the preferential norms that were investigated in the previous chapter.

### **Age and character**

One reason a daughter might become a favourite was on account of her age and birth-order. Although, in certain early modern families, younger children could occupy the position of family favourite, we should not ignore the role that age could play in contributing to favouritism. Nehemiah Wallington, as mentioned above, created a hierarchy in which he placed his daughter before his son. Elizabeth was two years older than her younger brother John, and perhaps Wallington's favouritism, in part, was determined by her age. Elizabeth was therefore old enough to express individual personality traits. For instance, the night before Elizabeth died in 1625, Wallington's wife was in the kitchen washing dishes when their daughter approached

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<sup>7</sup> Wallington, *Notebooks*, p. 58.

<sup>8</sup> Stone, *The Family*, p. 86.



her and said, mimicking her father, ‘what doe you heere my wife?’ This obviously tickled Wallington’s sense of humour enough for him to note it down.<sup>9</sup> Although still only five years old, this account, alongside other descriptions of the sweetness of Elizabeth’s character, could arguably give the best explanation for Wallington’s favouritism. As Anthony Fletcher argued, ‘as personality bloomed, parents found grief at the loss of children more and more difficult to bear’.<sup>10</sup> Therefore, parents became closer to their children as they got older and could develop individual and distinctive personalities. In this way, age and character could triumph over primogeniture in causing favouritism, and in this way an older daughter could become the favourite over a younger son. A prime example of this is that of Meg (or Peg) and Ralph Verney, from the Verney family of Buckinghamshire. Peg died in the autumn of 1647, and her younger brother Ralph died two days after. As an infant, Ralph had hardly developed a unique personality and had in any case spent his short life with a wet nurse, rather than his mother. Peg, on the other hand, at eight years old, was the apple of both her parents’ eyes, ‘she had been a favourite’.<sup>11</sup> While little Ralph was also mourned, his death was not considered nearly as grievous as Peg’s, and it evoked less comment. The extreme grief both parents felt at the death of Peg ostensibly brought the couple together, and according to Sir Ralph Verney, a hidden favouritism could now be revealed. In a letter to his wife he wrote, ‘no creature knew how much you loved that poor child, I ever concealed what passion I had for her and rather appeared to neglect her lest our over-fondness should spoil her or make the other jealous’.<sup>12</sup> This favouritism, although suppressed during Peg’s life due to the potential sibling rivalry it could cause, was nevertheless acknowledged passionately

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<sup>9</sup> Wallington, *Notebooks*, p. 59.

<sup>10</sup> Fletcher, *Growing up in England*, p. 81.

<sup>11</sup> Fletcher, *Growing up in England*, p. 85, and Miriam Slater, *Family Life in the Seventeenth Century: the Verneys of Claydon House* (London, 1984), p. 111.

<sup>12</sup> Margaret Maria Verney, *Memoirs of the Verney family* (1894), vol. 2, pp. 293-302.

after her death. Peg was apt to be mourned so deeply because in addition to her age, it was the delights of her character which secured her as a favourite. In a letter to Dr. Denton in 1647 Sir Ralph, when describing Peg, claimed ‘there was never a better natured, more obedient, nor more patient creature born’.<sup>13</sup>

Other early modern parents also acknowledged that the death of a younger child was easier to tolerate because these children had not had chance to develop a clear personality. Ralph Josselin for instance, admitted that the death of his second son Ralph in 1648 was ‘not so terrible’, as ‘it was the youngest and our affections not so wonted unto it’.<sup>14</sup> Similarly, Sir Simonds D’Ewes declared that although he had lost three boys soon after birth, those infants were ‘not so endeared [to him]’. Instead, it was the death of two-year old Clopton in 1636 which caused D’Ewes the most grief, as he was the child on whom he had ‘bestowed so much care and attention’. Once again, the uniqueness of Clopton’s character, compared to the infants before him, was referred to, and his father wrote poignantly of Clopton’s ‘delicate favour and bright grey eye’, which were so ‘deeply imprinted on our hearts’.<sup>15</sup>

Miriam Slater, writing about the Verney family, argued that the uniqueness of the individual and the open-ended possibilities of behaviour and achievement were ‘actively discouraged rather than stressed’.<sup>16</sup> Yet, as shown, also within the Verney family itself, these flourishes of individuality were not only acknowledged by early modern parents, but were paramount in forming strong parent-child relationships, and even in determining favouritism. For example, Adam Martindale’s wife gave

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<sup>13</sup> Sir Ralph Verney to Dr William Denton, 24 October/3 November 1647, Princeton Library, Clayton House Letters, VIII, cited in Slater, *Family Life in the Seventeenth Century*, p. 120.

<sup>14</sup> Josselin, *The Diary of Ralph Josselin*, p. 146.

<sup>15</sup> Fletcher, *Growing up in England*, p. 82.

<sup>16</sup> Slater, *Family Life in the Seventeenth Century*, p. 28.

birth to a ‘gallant boy’ in 1660, whom he later described as ‘very manly and courageous, for his age’.<sup>17</sup> Martindale further described the childhood activities of his son, ‘we had a calfe he would encounter with a sticke in his hand, when he was about two yeares old, stand his ground stoutly, beat it backe, and triumph over it, crying caw, caw, meaning he had beaten the calfe’. Martindale proudly wrote, ‘I doe not think one child of 100 of his age durst doe so much’.<sup>18</sup> In this case, it was John Martindale’s strength, confidence and energy that his father admired. Despite arguing that the older the child, the stronger the parent-child bond, in some cases it was simply a child’s distinct personality that triggered parental favouritism. Henry Newcome, a late seventeenth-century non-conformist preacher from Cheshire, had a younger son called Daniel who was fond of playing ‘boisterous games and mischievous pranks’. Daniel had a natural tendency for risking his life, and it would seem that this was an element of Daniel’s character that Newcome particularly liked. He thus approached the task of punishing his son with a heavy heart, because ‘the scapegrace Daniel was his favourite son’.<sup>19</sup> Although Newcome’s conscience told him that his dutiful and studious older son Henry was his ‘best child’, there was no mistaking the affectionate pride with which he described Daniel as his ‘finest boy’.<sup>20</sup> Similarly, Henry Mildmay, a diarist born in 1592 in Essex, also overlooked his oldest son to over-indulge his second son, and favourite child, who he tenderly nick-named ‘Nompée’. While he sent his other sons to Cambridge, Nompée admitted that he disliked school, so Mildmay gave into his son’s wishes and allowed him to leave. Nompée was also given money whenever he wanted it, and ‘was generally spoilt by

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<sup>17</sup> Martindale, *The life of Adam Martindale*, p. 154.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 154.

<sup>19</sup> Ralph Houlbrooke, *English Family Life, 1576-1716: an anthology from diaries* (Oxford, 1988), p. 134.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 134.

his father to the extent that the latter had no control over his son'.<sup>21</sup> Clearly Mildmay held a certain soft-spot for his second son, and it was this favouritism which also meant that Nompée could often escape punishment.

### **Obedience and rebellion**

While younger sons such as Daniel Newcome and 'Nompée' Mildmay were allowed to get away with unruly and defiant behaviour, other parents appear to have favoured the most obedient of their children. As we have seen, traits of boisterousness, manliness and courage could encourage favouritism. In other cases, however, parents demanded obedience and respect from their children, 'obedience is a true real honour; the surest trial of a dutiful child'.<sup>22</sup> Peg Verney, mentioned earlier, was the favourite child, and was described as good-natured, obedient and patient.<sup>23</sup> Other children also strived to be obedient to win parental favour. Margaret Cavendish, the first Duchess of Newcastle, was born in 1623 and, as the youngest child, grew up under the strict influence of her mother and older siblings, recalling later how 'we lived orderly; for riot brings ruin without content or pleasure'.<sup>24</sup> During the Civil War, Margaret left Oxford as a maid-in-waiting to the Queen, much to the disapproval of her mother and siblings. Margaret admitted that she was 'ambitious they should approve of my actions and behaviour [and] when I was gone from them I was like one that had no foundation to stand, or guide to direct me...which made me afraid'. Margaret was therefore eager to be obedient, to follow the advice from her family in order to maintain favour, and did not want to behave in unacceptable ways

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<sup>21</sup> Pollock, *Forgotten Children*, p. 146.

<sup>22</sup> Gouge, *Of Domesticall Duties*, p. 315.

<sup>23</sup> Slater, *Family Life in the Seventeenth Century*, p. 120.

<sup>24</sup> Margaret Cavendish Newcastle (Duchess of), *Paper Bodies: A Margaret Cavendish Reader* (eds) Sylvia Bowerbank and Sara Heller Mendelson (Letchworth, 2000), pp. 41-42.

when away from home.<sup>25</sup> It would seem that a common parenting technique was to use approval and affection as rewards for good behaviour, with obedience helping to secure favour and sometimes favouritism.

Yet disobedient children also feature in the sources. These children, often in the shadow of their older siblings, turned to disobedience, perhaps as a way to win some attention for themselves. That certainly could be an explanation for the behaviour of John Josselin, the youngest son of Ralph Josselin, who, after the death of his older brother Thomas in 1673, began to act extremely insolently towards his parents, disappearing for days on end, stealing money, and even marrying in secret, 'John married unknown to mee'.<sup>26</sup> Though there seems to have been little open favouritism in the Josselin household, John must have felt somewhat isolated from his parents during Thomas' prolonged illness, and his behaviour would suggest 'a violent attempt to attract to himself the love and concern that were likely to be centred on his ailing older brother'.<sup>27</sup> Thomas' death at such a young age must have been a bitter blow, as is clear from Ralph Josselin's reaction: 'my eldest sonne Thomas and my most deare childe ascended early...he was my hope'.<sup>28</sup> Apart from the obvious display of favouritism, 'my most deare childe', another word to pick up on from Josselin's anguished statement is 'hope'. This expresses the expectations that Josselin silently held for his oldest son, and while he did not verbally pressure Thomas to marry or follow a particular calling, this hope nevertheless existed within Josselin's mind, and was exposed in the privacy of his diary.

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<sup>25</sup> Cavendish, *Paper Bodies*, p. 43; Elspeth Graham et al, *Her Own Life: autobiographical writings by seventeenth-century English women* (London, 1989), pp. 89-90.

<sup>26</sup> Josselin, *The Diary of Ralph Josselin*, p. 634.

<sup>27</sup> Macfarlane, *The Family Life of Ralph Josselin*, p. 118.

<sup>28</sup> Josselin, *The Diary of Ralph Josselin*, p. 567.

John Josselin, seven years younger than Thomas, stood in complete contrast to his older brother and spent his early adulthood misbehaving. He was a burden at home, and created a strained relationship with both his parents, ‘my wife afflicted to see John again’. Josselin’s despair at his son’s disobedience and bad behaviour is reflected in a comment he makes when both John and his daughter Jane were ill, ‘some hopes in Jane. But John is John’.<sup>29</sup> Although Josselin was talking here about their health, he is also distinguishing between siblings, once again using the word ‘hope’, or lack of it, in John’s case. However, despite this disobedience, Josselin was always reluctant to disinherit his youngest son and in the end the bulk of Josselin’s estate did pass to John. Perhaps if John had not been the last surviving son he would have been disinherited without more ado.<sup>30</sup> Whereas obedient and well-behaved children could secure a parent’s favouritism, it would seem that favouritism itself could, through jealousy, cause disobedient and rebellious siblings. Another, more light-hearted, example of the affiliation between favouritism and obedience can be found in the disorderly conduct of the younger son of Bulstrode Whitelocke, a lawyer, writer and parliamentarian born in London in 1605. In May 1670 Whitelocke revealed that he could not get a master for his son Bigley. Throughout the same month Whitelocke regularly received news of ‘Bigley’s disorder’ and in October there was ‘more ill news of Bigley’s rebellion’.<sup>31</sup> In September Whitelocke felt only the need to write ‘Bigley was there’, as if these three words were all it took to imply the necessary meaning. Furthermore, Bigley also drew his other siblings into ill favour, and on 10 October, when his brother Sam went to try and lure him away from ‘evill company’, they instead both went to a house of debauchery, ‘att which mother

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<sup>29</sup> Macfarlane, *The Family Life of Ralph Josselin*, p. 120.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 121.

<sup>31</sup> Bulstrode Whitelocke, *The Diary of Bulstrode Whitelocke, 1605-75* (ed.) Ruth Spalding (Oxford, 1990), p. 756.

was much grieved'.<sup>32</sup> Once again, these parents were prepared to support their troublesome son, which implies that these children, while superficially confined within patriarchal constraints, were in fact allowed a great deal of independence.

### **Education and Intelligence**

Just as good behaviour and obedience could determine a parent's favouritism, so too could educational talents and intelligence. Education was vital in furthering a child's prospects, and within the upper sections of society it was imperative that children, boys especially, should receive the appropriate teaching and training. However, simply being sent to school was very different to expressing an inherent aptitude for learning, or to possessing particular abilities in a specific subject. As Robert Ainsworth wrote in 1698, somewhat starkly, 'tis expected a Lad should understand Latin; if he does, all is well, if not, cries the parent, he's a Blockhead'.<sup>33</sup> Parental concern over educational progress could therefore also be indicative of favouritism. This is shown through the correspondence with Sir Justinian Isham and his children. In 1670 Isham was based in London, while his three sons were in Lamport, and Isham was careful to enquire into his sons' studies, 'I doubt not but all of you go in your studies as I directed'. However, it was Tom, the eldest, who was singled out and was instructed not to reply 'in haste to spoil your hand which I would have you careful of'. Tom's immediate response was to remind his father of his progress, that he had 'almost conquered half the Iliad', in an attempt to cement his father's confidence and favour.<sup>34</sup> All of Sir Justinian's hopes became centred on Tom, whom he personally trained for ease in the leadership of country society and the effective

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<sup>32</sup> Whitelocke, *Diary*, p. 818.

<sup>33</sup> Robert Ainsworth, *The most natural and easie way of institution* (1698), p. 5.

<sup>34</sup> Thomas Isham, *The Diary of Thomas Isham of Lamport: kept by him in Latin from 1671 to 1673* (1890), cited in Fletcher, *Growing up in England*, p. 292.

management of his estate.<sup>35</sup> Tom's educational progress was therefore essential: he was being trained to follow in his father's footsteps.

Other parents also commented on their children's propensity to learn. John Evelyn, a writer and diarist born in Surrey in 1620, listed numerous examples of his son Richard's educational talents. Before the age of five he could read most written hands, 'decline all the Nounes, Conjugate the verbs, regular, & most of the irregular...got by heart almost the intire Vocabularie of Latine & French primitives & words, could make congruous Syntax-' and the list continued.<sup>36</sup> It was these 'and the like' revelations of Richard's ability which lingered in Evelyn's mind after Richard's death in 1658 and it was for these abilities that Richard was praised during his short life. Similarly, within the Martindale family, it was also through education that parental praise could be expressed. Martindale took such delight in reading as a child and his parents preferred to hear him read above any other in the family, 'I thinke I could almost have read a day together without play or meat, if breath and strength would have held out'.<sup>37</sup> Similarly, education was also important when Martindale himself became a parent, and these talents were qualities that he looked for in his own children. When his son John died in 1659, Martindale described him as having had a forwardness in learning and religion, 'it is scarce credible in how short a time I could have taught him to say a Greeke verse by heart'. At the death of another son in 1680, Martindale admitted that his suffering was not only due to the parting of an

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<sup>35</sup> Anthony Fletcher, 'The Ambition of a young Baronet: Sir Thomas Isham of Lamport, 1657-1681', in *The Extraordinary and the Everyday in Early Modern England: Essays in Celebration of the Work of Bernard Capp* (eds) Angela McShane and Garthine Walker (Basingstoke, 2010), p. 32.

<sup>36</sup> John Evelyn, *The Diary of John Evelyn, Kalendarium 1650-1672* (ed.) E.S. De Beer (Oxford, 1955), Vol. 3, p. 207.

<sup>37</sup> Martindale, *The Life of Adam Martindale*, p. 5.



‘onely sonne in the best of his time’, but also because he had spent so much on his learning, ‘his education had cost me so deare’.<sup>38</sup>

Yet, decisions about education were not simply a matter of parental whim. Instead, they were always affected by the child’s position in the family hierarchy, and this, in turn, was determined chiefly by their sex. Perhaps educational talents were more likely to cause favouritism in sons over daughters, simply because girls were not given the same educational opportunities. Ralph Verney, for example, strongly disapproved of his godchild Nancy Denton learning Latin, explaining in 1687 that he esteemed it a vice for a girl to do so, ‘a bible and good plain catechism was more suitable to your sex’.<sup>39</sup> As we have seen, parents did not regard their daughters as unimportant and could favour daughters for a number of other reasons. However, as there were almost no career opportunities for women, the acquisition of Greek or Latin, for instance, was deemed unnecessary for girls. The diary of Sir Henry Slingsby, a Yorkshire landowner and Member of Parliament born in 1602, emphasises this gender divide further. While his daughter was taught by her mother, so that by the age of five ‘she is able to say all her prayers’ and ‘answer to her catechism’, his son Thomas was tutored to read, write and spell, and even read Latin at the younger, and more impressive, age of four.<sup>40</sup>

However, despite acknowledging that daughters, in this aristocratic environment, were less likely to be sent to school, it would seem that favouritism towards a particular daughter could also reflect pride in her academic abilities. William Blundell, for example, favoured his granddaughter over his grandson Nicholas, who was reprimanded at age seventeen in 1686, ‘I am sorry to perceive

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<sup>38</sup> Martindale, *The Life of Martindale*, pp. 108, 219.

<sup>39</sup> Fletcher, *Growing up in England*, p. 33

<sup>40</sup> Henry Slingsby, *The Diary of Sir Henry Slingsby: of Scriven, Bart.* (London, 1836), pp. 53-54.

that the characters of your letters...do still grow worse and worse'. His sister Mary was four years younger, 'and yet she writes a very laudable hand'.<sup>41</sup> Similarly, although Claver Morris, a West Country physician born in 1659, spent a sizeable amount of money on giving his son a formal education, he also spent a substantial amount on his daughter. At the age of seven she attended day school for six days a week. At nine she had violin and singing lessons, and at eleven she was sent to boarding school. He also paid ten shillings for her French lessons and five shillings for a writing master. It is true that her education ended at thirteen, while her brother continued until he left for university at eighteen. Nevertheless, Morris was still proud of his daughter's talents, and it was she who was always asked to demonstrate her prowess in French when he had guests.<sup>42</sup>

### **Mothers and daughters, fathers and sons**

We cannot try and assess the causes of favouritism within the early modern family without looking at the parents themselves. Gender has already featured heavily in our analysis, and, as Fletcher claimed, 'gendered parenting produced gendered children'.<sup>43</sup> In a society that was split along gender lines, perhaps it should be argued that mothers were naturally more likely to favour their daughters, while fathers grew more attached to their sons. This gender divide was recognised within the didactic literature of the time, with one author in 1699 advising mothers, 'leave the boys to the father's more peculiar care, that you may with the greater justice pretend to a more immediate jurisdiction over those of your own sex'.<sup>44</sup> More than a century earlier, Sir Thomas Elyot had issued similar advice in the *The Book Named the*

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<sup>41</sup> Blundell, *Cavalier*, p. 250.

<sup>42</sup> Pollock, *Forgotten Children*, p. 242.

<sup>43</sup> Fletcher, *Growing Up in England*, p. 39.

<sup>44</sup> George Saville Halifax, *Advice to a daughter* (1699), p. 81.

*Governor* in 1531, ‘after a child come to seven years of age, I hold it expedient that he be taken from the company of women’.<sup>45</sup> Fathers, such as Sir Robert Sidney, encouraged their wives to lavish care on their daughters, but preferred to take control over the upbringing of sons, ‘for the boys you must resolve to let me hav my will for I know better what belongs to a man than you do’. In 1597 Sidney declared, ‘I will have him from his nurse for it is time and now no more to be in the nursery among women’.<sup>46</sup> Therefore, fathers knew what was best for their sons. In contrast, daughters were more likely to benefit from their mother’s advice in the private sphere, and it was in this gendered environment that ‘a mother’s role and her closeness to her daughter became critical’.<sup>47</sup> A number of sources reveal this closeness between mother and daughter. Ralph Josselin’s diary entries suggest that the bond between his wife and their daughters was a strong one, as shown by Mrs. Josselin weeping for her daughter when she left home in 1667, and then rushing off whenever she heard of a daughter’s imminent delivery or serious illness.<sup>48</sup> It appears that mothers were also worried for providing for their daughters after death, and in 1609 Anne Newdigate, of Arbury Hall, Warwickshire, petitioned for the administration of her husband’s estate so she could ensure that her daughters would receive their fair share from it. When justifying this action, Anne wrote, with conviction, ‘for though the heir be my oldest son and dearest child...the rest are all of the same breed and I think there is a conscience they should have what their father left them’.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> Sir Thomas Elyot, *The Book Named the Governor* (1531), p. 20.

<sup>46</sup> Fletcher, *Growing Up in England*, p. 149.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 31.

<sup>48</sup> Josselin, *The Diary of Ralph Josselin*, p. 538.

<sup>49</sup> Pollock, ‘Younger Sons’, p. 24.

Along with mothers and daughters, there is much evidence to demonstrate the existence of loving relationships between fathers and sons, especially older sons. As one seventeenth-century yeoman wrote, ‘the bringing up and marriage of his eldest son is an ambition which afflicts him so soon as the boy is born, and the hope to see his son superior...drives him to dote upon the boy in his cradle’.<sup>50</sup> The importance that was placed on inheritance must have characterised a number of father-son relationships. In 1660, Alice Thornton, born in 1627 in Yorkshire, was approached by her daughter Naly after the death of her son, William. This daughter, being about four years old, asked, ‘why do you mourn and weep so much for my brother Willy?’ Alice replied, ‘your father is so afflicted for his loss, and being a son he takes it more heavily, because I have not a son to live’.<sup>51</sup> Here Alice was actively distinguishing between mothers and fathers and claimed that her husband bore the death of their only son much more heavily than she did, simply because there was no replacement heir. Furthermore, despite the high expectations that Sir Justinian Isham harboured for his oldest son Thomas, it would also seem that the two developed a close bond. In 1674 Sir Justinian decided not to send his oldest son to Oxford and he confessed that as he had spent much of the spring at Westminster with Tom, he could not easily part with him: ‘having had my eldest son continually with me I know not now well how to let him go from me’. Yet it was not as difficult to part with his younger son, Justinian, who was promptly sent to Oxford in Tom’s place.<sup>52</sup> Mothers therefore spent more time with their daughters and were advised by contemporaries to focus on daughters over sons, while the preparation for the transfer of responsibilities from father to son could often act as the basis for close relationships. However, this does

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<sup>50</sup> J. Dover Wilson, *Life in Shakespeare’s England* (Harmondsworth, 1962), p. 31.

<sup>51</sup> Houlbrooke, *English Family Life*, p. 153.

<sup>52</sup> Fletcher, ‘The Ambition of a Young Baronet’, p. 36.

not mean that fathers only developed strong bonds with their oldest sons. Simon Forman, a popular Elizabethan astrologist born in 1552 in Wiltshire, recalled how his father would have him sleep at the foot of his bed, ‘in a lyttle bed for the nonce’. Simon was not the oldest, but was the fifth son, and admitted that while he was not loved by his mother or brethren, it was his father who ‘loved him above all the rest’.<sup>53</sup>

Yet displays of favouritism were not necessarily divided along gendered lines and we cannot always separate mothers and daughters, fathers and sons. Surely mothers did not always follow contemporary advice and leave their husbands to care for their sons. Instead, mothers and sons could become very close. Samuel Pepys, for instance, the famous diarist born in London in 1633, wrote that his mother, on her deathbed in March 1667, chose to use her final words as a dramatic dedication to her oldest son, ‘god bless my poor sam!’<sup>54</sup> Another caring relationship between mother and son can be found in the North family, with Roger North, a seventeenth-century lawyer from Norfolk, admitting that his brother Dudley, who was not the oldest son, was his mother’s favourite.<sup>55</sup> However, this favouritism was later explained by the fact that Dudley reminded his mother of his father, ‘for good women are most pleased when their children, being females, are like themselves or as they fancy they were when young; and the males, as the father was in his tender age according to the ideas they form to themselves’.<sup>56</sup> This example adds nostalgia as a potential cause of favouritism. According to North, parents were more likely to favour those children who conformed most to the memories and perceptions they had of themselves or of

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<sup>53</sup> Simon Forman, *The autobiography and personal diary of Dr. Simon Forman: the celebrated astrologer, from 1552 to 1602, from the unpublished manuscripts in the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford*, (ed.) James Orchard Halliwell (London, 1849), p. 3.

<sup>54</sup> Samuel Pepys, *The Diary of Samuel Pepys* (London, 1906), p. 463.

<sup>55</sup> Roger North, *The lives of the Norths* (ed.) Augustus Jessop (1890), vol. 2, p. 1.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 1.

their spouses when young. It is not revealed whether Dudley's resemblance of his father stemmed from his appearance, character, or both. Yet perhaps this potential combination of visual and personal likeness also provided explanations of favouritism in other early modern families.

### **Alice Greenwood**

One last example which seems to involve many of the elements of favouritism that have been investigated in this chapter can be found in the autobiography of William Stout, born in Lancaster in 1665. Although Stout had no children of his own, he commented on a man called Augustin Greenwood, 'my very good friend and neighbour', who died aged forty-five in 1701. Greenwood's wife was called Alice and they had three children at the time of his death: Ann, John and Benjamin, who were twelve, ten and eight years old respectively. Alice educated her oldest daughter as a gentlewoman, and 'being her ownly daughter, humoured her in apparel and diversion without putting her to the exercise of housewifery'. Ann married an indulgent husband, and the two became 'sottish and slothfull' and died after a life of 'high company and living'.<sup>57</sup> However, her youngest son, Benjamin, was 'but dull and slow in learning', and his mother had always said she had little hopes of him. While her daughter was educated, Benjamin was put as an apprentice to a sailor. Unlike Ann, he had much success, 'improved himself', married well and received a good income.<sup>58</sup> Stout's account of his neighbour is almost written like a folk ballad, with Stout warning Alice against neglecting her youngest son, 'I always tould her that I hoped and thought she might have as much satisfaction in him as any other of

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<sup>57</sup> William Stout, *The Autobiography of William Stout of Lancaster, 1665-1752* (ed.) J.D. Marshall (1967), p. 134.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 134.

her children'.<sup>59</sup> Through this example of favouritism we can draw upon many of the causes listed in this chapter. The mother, Alice, favoured and indulged her daughter because she was her 'ownly daughter', once more emphasising the possibility of the divide between mothers and daughters, fathers and sons. Age, character and educational abilities also played a part in shaping this mother's favouritism, as Benjamin was not only the youngest, but was also described as 'dull and slow in learning'. As a result, it was his sister who was educated, while he was denied this opportunity. Arguably this account of the Greenwood family might not be the most typical example of favouritism and could have been exaggerated by Stout, who expediently placed himself as Alice's moral advisor. Nevertheless, it effectively highlights the combination of established social attitudes, gendered boundaries, educational prowess, character and circumstance which could all contribute to the existence of favouritism.

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<sup>59</sup> Stout, *Autobiography*, p. 134.

### 3. Sibling rivalry and affection

*'Her brothers and sisters loved her with a fond love'. Elizabeth Egerton, Countess of Bridgewater, 1666.<sup>1</sup>*

While the previous two chapters have identified some of the causes of early modern favouritism, we move now to the possible consequences of this favouritism, that is, the impact it could have on sibling relationships. As Crawford asserted, 'the law of privileging one sibling over another created tensions in many families', and it is the juxtaposition between these tensions and the affection that could be felt between siblings that will be investigated here.<sup>2</sup> Once again, a substantial amount of variety has to be recognised within this topic. While the tensions that Crawford identified are evident in some of the families we are looking at, also evident are examples of close and loving sibling ties. Some siblings just didn't get on.<sup>3</sup> Yet alongside these were brothers and sisters who depended on each other for their happiness. For instance, the Countess of Bridgewater stated after the death of her favourite daughter Kate in 1666, 'her brothers and sisters loved her with a fond love'. Despite the favour the Countess had lavished upon her daughter, this daughter had still developed strong relationships with her siblings, who grieved heavily for the loss of their beloved sister. After Margaret Cavendish, born in 1623, had left for Oxford in the mid-seventeenth century, she admitted that she dearly wished to return to her mother, 'or to my sister Prye'. This was a sister she had played with as child and had often stayed with when in London. Sister Prye was someone Margaret 'loved with a supernatural affection', and it was noted later that she was indeed her favourite

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<sup>1</sup> Houlbrooke, *English Family Life*, p. 152.

<sup>2</sup> Crawford, *Blood, Bodies and Families*, p. 215.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 255.



sister.<sup>4</sup> However, as will be seen, Paulina Pepys was far from being regarded as a favourite sister by her brother Samuel, and the relationship between these siblings, rather than being characterised by affection, was strained and problematic.

Yet while recognising this variety, there are, once again, several factors that can be identified in the primary material as directly influencing sibling bonds. One of these is age. We have already seen how age could affect displays of favouritism, with pre-conceived ideas about the oldest son, as well as the fact that age affected the development of the child's personality and thus the strength of the parent-child relationship. However, age was also important in constructing sibling identity, with brothers and sisters being labelled and treated according to their birth order and position in the family. Sibling obligations were determined by age, with older siblings having a duty to protect and look after their younger brothers and sisters. For instance, Adam Martindale fell into a marble pit when he was young, but was rescued by his older sister, 'I was almost quite drowned...had not my gracious God caused my sister to desist from her business and to looke after me in that nicke of time'.<sup>5</sup> Another dramatic incident also reveals the strength of Martindale's sibling relationships, for when he slipped into an old coal-pit, 'one that was with me (I thinke it was my brother Henry), got hold of me with all speed, and plucked me away from the jawes of death'.<sup>6</sup> This sense of protecting younger siblings can also be found in other families. Mary Josselin 'saved' her younger brother in 1646, 'Mary was a means to save her brother out of the pond; she being on the stairs, his sister called out to the maids'. Similarly, Edward Coxere, a seaman born in 1633, went to every effort to find his younger brother after an accidental fire broke out on their ship

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<sup>4</sup> Graham et al, *Her Own Life*, p. 90.

<sup>5</sup> Martindale, *The Life of Adam Martindale*, p. 4.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 4.

in the 1640s, ‘my care was then for my brother.’ This effort was returned, as his brother was also searching for Edward, ‘he showed natural affection, for he returned back again and refused to get in the boat without me’.<sup>7</sup> Furthermore, this sibling duty was not simply confined to physical protection, but could also extend to helping younger siblings financially. When Martindale arrived in Liverpool after a bout in prison, his ‘dear brother Henry’ met him to give him clothes and money, ‘though his own circumstances were hard’.<sup>8</sup> Although Henry had little of his own, he still made sure his younger brother was not left wanting. This action, to Martindale, was a sign of true brotherly affection.

It would seem that being the older sibling guaranteed a certain level of authority, alongside the power to help or deny help to younger brothers and sisters. This was especially true for the oldest son, and even if he was not the favourite, he nevertheless had a ‘greater commitment to the family’.<sup>9</sup> For instance, Samuel Pepys, born in 1633, clearly held a position of power within his family, especially in relation to his siblings. For his sister Paulina, with whom he enjoyed a rather tempestuous relationship, Pepys spent his time identifying potential suitors, ‘talking about a husband for my sister’.<sup>10</sup> Pepys similarly held considerable influence when making decisions for his younger brothers. In October 1667 Pepys firmly wrote, ‘my brother [John] shall stay here this winter, and then I will either send him to Cambridge for a year, till I get him some Church promotion, or send him to sea as a chaplain’.<sup>11</sup> There is no mention here of John’s own opinion of his future career, and it would seem that Pepys, as the oldest (and most successful) sibling, had the final say. In this example

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<sup>7</sup> Josselin, *The Diary of Ralph Josselin*, p. 57 and Edward Coxere, *Adventures by Sea of Edward Coxere* (ed.) E.H.W. Meyerstein (Oxford, 1945), p. 6.

<sup>8</sup> Martindale, *The Life of Adam Martindale*, p. 109.

<sup>9</sup> Ben-Amos, *Human Bonding*, p. 17.

<sup>10</sup> Pepys, *Diary*, p. 370.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 498.

at least, we are confronted with the image of an older brother with almost total authority over his siblings. Perhaps this authority was not only derived from his success, as Pepys had quickly overtaken his father in terms of wealth, but also from his position as oldest son.

It would seem then that age is a viable category of analysis when looking at sibling relationships. However, perhaps it would be even more effective to use gender to investigate sibling rivalry and affection. After all, as Crawford insisted, ‘sibling expectations were gendered’.<sup>12</sup> As well as older siblings helping younger siblings, it was also expected that brothers should aid their sisters, as Samuel Pepys did, ‘did give my sister 20s’.<sup>13</sup> Sisters might also be expected to provide their brothers with certain services, and Paulina Pepys, in 1660, entered her brother’s house as a servant.<sup>14</sup> Yet, alongside these expectations, rivalry and affection could also be gendered, with a substantial amount of contemporary sibling experience resting on the separation of the sexes, ‘brothers and sisters were often separated during the guardianship period, some of them being raised in different places for most of their childhood’.<sup>15</sup> This chapter will therefore be structured using gender as a template. Firstly, brothers and sisters will be investigated as individual categories, as it is these same-sex relationships which provide the opportunity to evaluate all the paradigms of siblings bonds: competition, affection, reciprocity and alliance-building.<sup>16</sup> Afterwards, the early modern brother-sister relationship will be explored, in an attempt to discover how our themes of rivalry and affection could transcend gendered boundaries.

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<sup>12</sup> Crawford, *Blood, Bodies and Families*, p. 217.

<sup>13</sup> Pepys, *Diary*, p. 567.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 55.

<sup>15</sup> Sylvie Perrier, ‘Coresidence of siblings, half-siblings and step-siblings in Ancien Régime France’, *The History of the Family*, 5:3 (November, 2000), p. 1.

<sup>16</sup> Miller and Yavneh, *Sibling Relations and Gender*, p. 2.

### Brotherly bonds

Francis Osbourne, in *Advice to a Son* in 1656, argued that the link with a brother was stronger than that with a child, ‘more of our blood runns in a brother then a child’.<sup>17</sup> Examples of this brotherly solidarity can be found within the sources, and once again can centre on dramatic childhood events. The three sons of Bulstrode Whitelocke, for example, found themselves in mortal danger in October 1670 when faced with an angry bull. Whitelocke was proud to reveal that ‘they kept together like brothers’.<sup>18</sup> Furthermore, other near-fatal events also expose these close relationships. Although slightly out of our period, Thomas Isham wrote in December 1717 of an incident in which his sons Henry and Thomas were riding home in a coach. Henry suddenly jumped out, ‘if he had jumped short or his clothes had hung on anything the wheel had gone over him’. Isham gives several examples of Henry and Thomas playing together or getting into trouble, ‘my two little boys Henry and Tommy on the little hobby came galloping into the yard as they came from Church’.<sup>19</sup> These examples not only highlight the concern of an anxious father, but also emphasise the significant amount of time that these brothers spent together, testifying to the strength of their brotherly bond. Brothers could therefore develop close relationships in childhood, and although Isham had other sons, it was arguably Henry and Thomas who forged the strongest attachment, as shown through their episodes of play or mischievous behaviour. Furthermore, moving one form of mischief to another, the conscience of Nehemiah Wallington reminded him in 1622 of the twelve pence that he and his brother Phillip had together stolen from their father as children.<sup>20</sup> This

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<sup>17</sup> Francis Osbourne, *Advice to a son; or, directions for your better conduct through the various and most important encounters of this life* (1656), p. 61.

<sup>18</sup> Whitelocke, *Diary*, p. 761.

<sup>19</sup> Houlbrooke, *English Family Life*, p. 168.

<sup>20</sup> Wallington, *Notebooks*, p. 38.

was a secret that both brothers had kept from their father for sixteen years. Clearly, while brothers might quarrel among themselves, they would band together against outsiders, following the popular contemporary saying, ‘between brothers put not thy hand, for who severs them has ever the worst’.<sup>21</sup>

Moving from childhood to adulthood, it would seem that brothers could also maintain affectionate relationships as they got older, despite any individual or familial problems. The wicked act of stealing money as a child was one of many sins that came back to haunt Wallington as a teenager, causing him a significant amount of mental anguish and distress. However, during one of Wallington’s many suicide attempts it was his brother John who stopped him, ‘I rose from supper...making account to leape out of the gutter into pudden laine: but as I was opening the gutter doore my brother John...cam up to mee and perswaded me to come down and be quiet and I yielded unto them’.<sup>22</sup> It would seem that Wallington’s siblings had to constantly keep a mindful watch over their unstable teenage brother. Even John Josselin, the disobedient younger brother mentioned earlier, seemed to have felt warmly for the older brother with whom he may have been competing during his early years. Despite any hidden rivalry that may have existed between them, John still asked for his body to be buried ‘as neer my brother Thomas as can be’,<sup>23</sup> which suggests that, in the end, the bond between these brothers was stronger than any previous jealousy.

However, despite acknowledging this affection, perhaps we can just as easily use rivalry as a typical characteristic of the early modern fraternal bond. According to Macfarlane, the relationship between brothers was ‘often one of great conflict’,

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<sup>21</sup> Crawford, *Blood, Bodies and Families*, p. 209.

<sup>22</sup> Wallington, *Notebooks*, p. 34.

<sup>23</sup> Macfarlane, *The Family Life of Ralph Josselin*, p. 124.

with the degree of tension and avoidance ‘probably being directly related to the inheritance system’.<sup>24</sup> This system of primogeniture, as we have seen, was paramount in influencing expressions of favouritism, alongside attitudes to the oldest son. As a result, it was also important in shaping brotherly relations and historians have argued that these fraternal relationships were dominated by ‘bitter rivalry and mercenary considerations’.<sup>25</sup> As stated by Joan Thirsk, younger brothers were innately jealous of the heir’s privileges, ‘a younger son meant an angry young man, bearing more than his share of injustice and resentment, deprived of means by his father and elder brother, often hanging around his elder brother’s house as a servant, completely dependent on his grace and favour’.<sup>26</sup> This assertion, while perhaps exaggerated, nevertheless seems to be built on solid foundations. The disadvantages that were a natural by-product of being a younger brother were clearly recognised. For instance, William Gouge in 1622 wrote of the inevitable pre-eminency of the first-born, with the younger brother always being made subject to his elder, ‘the elder brother was a lord over his other brothers’.<sup>27</sup> It would seem that this image of the unfortunate younger brother was a popular one. When a seventeenth-century grocer realised he would find no justice in his company court, he argued, ‘if I be a brother you make a younger brother of me’, while the fragile pride of another grocer was wounded when he was called a ‘younger brother’.<sup>28</sup> Being young was therefore associated with this grocer’s sense of injury, while being a younger brother was recognised, overall, as a position of weakness. While the ballad in the previous chapter focused on a younger daughter as a victim of favouritism, other ballad sellers stirred suspicions and much

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<sup>24</sup> Macfarlane, *The Family Life of Ralph Josselin*, p. 130.

<sup>25</sup> Pollock, ‘Younger Sons’, p. 23.

<sup>26</sup> Thirsk ‘Younger Sons’, p. 360.

<sup>27</sup> Gouge, *Of Domesticall Duties*, p. 207.

<sup>28</sup> Paul Griffiths, *Youth and Authority: formative experiences in England 1560-1640* (Oxford, 1996), p. 101.

speculation about younger brothers as misfits, labelled as ‘boyes’ and ‘idle youths’.<sup>29</sup> Contemporary proverbs also highlighted the potentially fraught nature of fraternal relationships, with one such proverb claiming that ‘brothers are like two buckets in a well...if one go up, the other must come down’.<sup>30</sup>

Being a younger brother in early modern society could therefore be fraught with difficulties. Not only could the brother in question find himself competing with his other siblings for parental resources, he was also not guaranteed any parental support in later life. Henry Patrick, for instance, was the son of a gentleman who had fifteen children, and although his father enjoyed an annual income of £500, with so many children ‘he could make but small provision for the youngest of them’.<sup>31</sup> This uncertainty and lack of provision was the reason that John Verney, another younger brother, gained experience as a merchant: he did not expect to inherit his father’s position and estates. He was also on poor terms with his older brother Edmond, ‘their ages and humours are so different’, and so probably did not expect any help there either. He therefore took the responsibility of his future provision into his own hands. In fact, John was emotionally closer to his cousins, who likewise suffered from their older brothers, ‘there is some sympathy between us as younger brothers’,<sup>32</sup> and we get a distinct image here of a group of younger brothers huddled together, complaining about their inequitable plight. Similarly, when Sir Thomas Isham came into his inheritance after his father died in March 1675, the close relationship he had once shared with his younger brother, Justinian, now became strained. Even though his position as heir had allowed him previously to ‘rule the roost with his elder sisters

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<sup>29</sup> Griffiths, *Youth and Authority*, p. 101.

<sup>30</sup> Morris P. Tilley, *A Dictionary of Proverbs in England in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries* (Ann Arbor, 1950), p. 69, B689.

<sup>31</sup> Crawford, *Blood, Bodies and Families*, p. 216.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, p.216.

and younger brothers', as soon as he became the new Baronet, 'the teenage master's pride, egoism and self conceit quickly put friends and relatives on their guard'.<sup>33</sup>

While Thomas and Justinian had once been close, their fraternal dealings now became dominated by matters of money. In May 1672 Sir Thomas quarrelled with Justinian, who was finding it difficult to adapt to his elder brother's new attitude towards him. Justinian had presumed it was 'not required' when he was asked to account for his expenditure of his allowance at Oxford. Tom berated him for this, 'a very odd and foolish letter and very much unbeseeming yourself'. Justinian backed down, apologised for any impertinence and asked for pardon from his mother, who had been informed by Tom that Justinian was the one in the wrong.<sup>34</sup> Whereas John Verney had not expected to receive any financial help from his older brother, Justinian Isham had assumed that the relationship he shared with his older brother would continue unchanged, and was perhaps somewhat startled when Tom began to demand him to justify his expenses.

Just as Tom Isham persuaded his mother that Justinian was to blame for their quarrel, the older brother of James Yonge, John, convinced their father that his younger brother was up to no good. When John became out of favour by engaging in a voyage to the East Indies in 1688, against his father's wishes, Yonge had hoped to be treated more compassionately by his father, 'I thought to have enjoyed his kindness'. However, at John's departure, he 'buzzed my father in ear, as if my mother had a design to make me elder and greater than he...this, with some other ill things his discontent suggestd, made me ill with my father'.<sup>35</sup> This is a prime example of brotherly rivalry and John Yonge, anxious that his absence would propel

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<sup>33</sup> Fletcher, 'The Ambition of a Young Baronet', p. 37.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 37.

<sup>35</sup> Yonge, *Journal*, p. 123.



his younger brother James to the position of favourite, shrewdly sabotaged his brother's chances for reconciliation. This rivalry had been present since childhood, with Yonge's older brother being 'maintained like a prince', while Yonge himself was 'clad with old turned clothes, sparrow-billed shoes, etc, and not one penny in my pocket'.<sup>36</sup> While his older brother was spoiled and indulged, this younger brother was 'shipped' to become a 'Chyrurgeon of the *Reformation*'. Yonge complained bitterly that he was not even given the common necessities that every sailor had, such as clothes, medicines and utensils.<sup>37</sup>

It seems probable then that jealousy could be a central characteristic of these sibling relationships, with older brothers benefiting from privileges and power that younger brothers simply did not enjoy. As a result, younger brothers could easily be overlooked. Philip Sidney, for instance, was fifteen years older than his youngest brother Thomas and was constantly held up as a model for his younger brothers. Sir Henry Sidney, born in London in 1629, instructed his 'middle' son Robert to 'imitate (Philip's) vertues, exercises, studies, and acyons, he ys a rare ornament of thys age. In troth I speak yt without flattery of hym, or of myself to hathe the most rare vertues...once again I say imitate him.'<sup>38</sup> This highlights, once again, the favouritism that could exist in the early modern family, with this father clearly favouring his oldest son. Sir Henry actively categorized and separated his three sons by describing Philip as being of 'excellent good proof', Robert of 'great good hope', and Thomas 'not to be despayred of, but very well to be liked'. However, whereas declarations of favouritism were often private, here Sir Henry felt no qualms about revealing this

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<sup>36</sup> Yonge, *Journal*, p. 53.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 53.

<sup>38</sup> Margaret P. Hannay, 'Mary Sidney's Other Brothers', in Naomi Miller and Naomi Yavneh (eds), *Sibling relations and Gender* (Basingstoke, 2006), p. 90.

favouritism directly to his younger sons, and ‘we can only imagine what such advice did for the relationship between the brothers’.<sup>39</sup>



**Figure 1: The Sidney Brothers in the 1570s (approximately.) Taken from the collection of the Viscount De L’Isle, cited in Pollock, ‘Younger Sons,’ p. 23.**

The two Sidney brothers are presented in the painting above, although it has also been suggested that this was in fact a depiction of Robert Sidney’s two sons, William and Robert. Nevertheless, if these brothers were in fact Philip and Robert, as suggested by the inscriptions at the top of the portrait, then the image before us suggests a certain level of brotherly unity and friendship. These two brothers looked alike, were dressed identically and stood arm-in-arm, as if to suggest fraternal comradeship. Yet the purpose of such a painting would have been to present this kind

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<sup>39</sup> Hannay, ‘Mary Sidney’s Other Brothers’, p. 91.

of impression; perhaps the unity that was depicted on canvas in fact hid feelings of jealousy underneath. The way Philip Sidney positioned his leg in front of his younger brother's leg perhaps hints at this hierarchy. In reality, it would appear that Robert was quite literally forced to follow his father's advice of imitating his older brother, not just in appearance, but also throughout his life. Like Philip, Robert was sent on a somewhat scaled-down tour of Europe in 1579, using many of the same tutors and contacts as his older brother.<sup>40</sup> Robert not only echoed Philip in his humanist education, but also, it would seem, lived very much in his shadow.

The brotherly bond was thus not always amicable and often rivalry could exist or quarrels could break out. However, the close fraternal relationships that were enjoyed by the likes of Nehemiah and John Wallington, Henry and Thomas Isham or the Whitelockes, should not be forgotten either, and in many cases sibling loyalty and co-operation could triumph over the occasional quarrel or any hidden sense of injustice. While brotherly ties might not always be peaceful or harmonious, perhaps there was, at the very least, a grudging acceptance of the hierarchical nature of the family, with younger brothers supporting their older siblings. In return, perhaps younger brothers were valued more than has been previously suggested. Even though jealousy or bitterness could feature in the interaction between older brothers and their younger counterparts, heirs could not retain power by their own abilities alone, but instead relied on extensive patronage networks: worthy supporters amongst whom their siblings could generally be counted.<sup>41</sup> William Wentworth was offered a choice of three posts by his older brother Thomas in the late seventeenth century. For personal reasons he accepted the least advantageous of the three and apologised to Thomas, 'I hope your Lordship...will not be displeased'. This was a public testimony

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<sup>40</sup> Hannay, 'Mary Sidney's Other Brothers', p. 91.

<sup>41</sup> Pollock, 'Younger Sons', p. 24.

to Thomas' generosity, which confirmed his nobility and prestige and legitimated his high status.<sup>42</sup> Younger siblings learnt that the powerful position of the eldest son was a valuable asset, 'particularly in the form of buffer between them and parental wealth...a younger son at least was entitled to 'warmth under the wing' of his elder brother'.<sup>43</sup>

It would therefore make more sense for younger brothers to stay on side and benefit from the rewards that having an older brother could offer them, rather than participate in any long standing rivalry. This is perfectly shown through Samuel Pepys' relationship with his younger brother John. This relationship was certainly based on the imbalance of power, with Pepys regularly giving John money, entertaining him at dinner and offering advice, 'I did give him some good counsel and 20s. in money, and so he went away'.<sup>44</sup> John knew he could approach his older brother for guidance and financial support, and in return Pepys was always ready to help. Perhaps we can look to this relationship for an example of the most typical older-brother, younger-brother rapport. John Pepys was not plotting to kill his brother, like the younger brother Edmond in *King Lear*, nor was he embroiled in a bitter rivalry, like James Yonge with his older brother John. However, neither were they heroically banding together against danger like the Whitelocke brothers. Instead, on the scale of sibling relationships, with rivalry and affection as the two extremes, it would seem that these brothers occupied an agreeable area somewhere in the middle. While Pepys evidently showed kindness to John, he was also regularly critical of his brother's efforts, 'I did give him some advice to study pronunciation, but I do fear he will never make a good speaker; nor, I fear any general good

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<sup>42</sup> Pollock, 'Younger Sons', p. 25.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., p. 25.

<sup>44</sup> Pepys, *Diary*, p. 83.

scholar'.<sup>45</sup> Clearly Pepys sometimes got irritated with his brother, 'I like his voice so ill'.<sup>46</sup> However, despite these ups and downs, their relationship was ultimately one of fondness, with Pepys, in 1667, expressing his love and sympathy for his brother, 'poor fellow! he is so melancholy...that I begin to love him, and would be loath he should not do well'. Finally, in one ultimate act of affection, Samuel wrote in his will to leave everything to his wife, 'but my books, which I give to my brother John'.<sup>47</sup>

### **Sisterly sentiment**

When looking at the relationships between sisters, we are also confronted with, on the whole, a positive picture. However, there is again some evidence of sisterly strife. For instance, although the matter of inheritance could intrude on brotherly relations, it could also cause trouble for those daughters who felt they were not getting their fair share. All of Ralph Josselin's children, including the daughters, inherited large portions of money and land, and received advanced payments to set themselves up as servants. This division of property caused disagreements, with Jane, the eldest daughter, feeling that her younger sisters were getting too generous a treatment.<sup>48</sup> After Josselin had set his daughters Mary and Rebecka in London in May 1677, he was visited by Jane, who he described as being 'affected by the providence (providing)'. She was also 'full of discontents' in January 1678, 'perhaps for the same reason'.<sup>49</sup> In 1683 Jane was again upset as she had only received £200 as her dowry portion, while Mary and Rebecka got £500 each. Jane directed her anger at this unfairness not only towards her father, but also towards her sisters, 'Jane took on

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<sup>45</sup> Pepys, *Diary*, pp. 3, 430.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 237.

<sup>47</sup> Pepys, *Diary*, pp. 492, 15.

<sup>48</sup> Macfarlane, *The Family Life of Ralph Josselin*, p. 132.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 132.

at mee and them for their great porcons'.<sup>50</sup> Once again the hazy question of favouritism emerges, and in this case a possible favouritism is shown through the difference in dowries, although Josselin does not reveal why he chose to give his two younger daughters larger portions; perhaps he had simply become more prosperous and could afford to offer more. While this type of sibling conflict cannot explicitly be defined as rivalry, it is clear that the jealousy caused by this financial imbalance did affect, however temporarily, these sisterly relationships.

One clear case of sisterly rivalry can be found in a memory recounted to Lucy Hutchinson by her mother, Lady Apsley. Her mother, born in 1593, was the youngest daughter of Sir John St. John and, by her daughter's account, was the favourite, 'my mother was by the most judgements preferred before all her elder sisters' attracting all of the suitors who came to their house in Wiltshire. Her mother's sisters were envious at this, and as a result 'used her unkindly', although it is not revealed how. Her aunt even felt compelled to persuade her to 'remove herself from her sisters' envy' and travel to the Isle of Jersey.<sup>51</sup> The issue of inheritance has so far in this chapter featured as a significant determinant of sibling rivalry, not only between older brothers and their younger counterparts, but also between sisters, as in the case of the Josselins, above. However, the example of Lady Lucy and her envious older sisters introduces the possibility of other causes for sibling conflict. In this case, it was beauty and popularity which created feelings of jealousy; clearly this rivalry was gendered and was specific to the female sex. While the authority and wealth awarded to older brothers could instigate resentment in those younger brothers who were overshadowed, with sisters, as in this instance, being more attractive could cause a certain level of jealousy. In a society where a marriage could

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<sup>50</sup> Josselin, *The Diary of Ralph Josselin*, p. 643.

<sup>51</sup> Hutchinson, *Memoirs*, p. 11.

affect the whole family and was a ‘crucial economic adjustment’,<sup>52</sup> acquiring a wealthy and well-positioned husband was an incredibly important task, in which beauty could play a part.

One West Country ballad, printed in the late seventeenth century and labelled *Crums of Comfort For the Youngest Sister*, revealed a younger sister’s despair at not being married. The ballad was written from the perspective of a ‘kind young man’ who reassured her by making her an offer of marriage, ‘when we two married be’. He also persuaded her not to feel jealous of her sister, who was now too old to attract suitors:

‘What though thy Sister is bestow’d  
let not that trouble thee,  
On her young men some years have blowd,  
*Thou young shall married be.*

Thou hast no wrinkles on your face  
and so i’m sure has she  
‘Twill be an honour, no disgrace,  
*That thou shall married be.*<sup>53</sup>

Here the importance of age and beauty is once again drawn upon. This younger sister was told not to worry as she had no ‘wrinkles’ on her face, although this was a fate

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<sup>52</sup> Macfarlane, *The Family Life of Ralph Josselin*, p. 94.

<sup>53</sup> Anon, *Crums of Comfort For the Youngest Sister, to a pleasant new West country Tune*, printed for P. Brooksby (1672-1696?), The Pepys Library, Magdalene College, Cambridge. See appendix.

that had befallen her older sibling. It would seem that this ballad highlighted the more general concerns of the younger sister, who could feel jealousy towards those older sisters who were already married and settled. Jealousy also characterised the relationship between Lucy Apsley and her older sisters, however these sisters were envious of their younger sister's supposed beauty and the interest she gained from worthy potential husbands. No wonder Pepys spoke of the urgency of finding his sister a husband in 1667, 'we must endeavour to find her one now, for she grows old and ugly'.<sup>54</sup>

Yet, in order to get the full picture, we must also look at the surrounding context of Lady Apsley's upbringing. Her father and mother died when she was five and she was brought up in the house of her uncle, Lord Grandison. At this time Lady Apsley was separated from her sisters, who had been dispersed to 'several places', where they grew up separately. It was not until some years later that they were all brought home to her brother's house, which is where the unkind treatment began.<sup>55</sup> These sisters therefore re-convened, not only as young adults, but almost as strangers, and although they presumably kept in touch throughout the years they had been apart, this separation arguably prevented them from forming strong sisterly bonds. This idea of emotional as well as geographical distance is important and the impact it could have on sibling relationships can be examined more fully by looking at those siblings who were separated as children. This separation, as seen previously in the case of the Apsley sisters, could occur due to the death of a parent or parents, although in some cases, children could also be sent away to help other family members. William Stout, for example, offered a home to one or two of his brother Leonard's eight children. When Stout's sister and housekeeper Elin died in 1724,

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<sup>54</sup> Pepys, *Diary*, p. 565.

<sup>55</sup> Hutchinson, *Memoirs*, p. 11.



Leonard reciprocated his brother's services by sending his second daughter, Jennet, to 'keep' his house until he was otherwise provided.<sup>56</sup> While Rosemary O'Day argued this was an excellent example of how a family would create and support a household consisting of an 'artificial family' for reasons of mutual advantage, it remains unclear how these siblings felt about being split up.<sup>57</sup> While there is only room for speculation, perhaps Jennet, who was removed from her parents and the rest of her siblings, struggled to maintain strong relationships with her sisters and brothers while she was isolated at her uncle's house.

This notion of separation is also emphasised when looking at those daughters who were sent to convents. Though only a very small proportion of the population in England was Catholic at this time, the act of sending daughters away offers another example of the acceptable nature of sibling separation. For instance, Jane and Margaret Blundell, as shown previously, were sent to a French convent together in the 1660s. According to Craig Monson, there was usually a 'two-sister limit', which meant that a maximum of two sisters from one family would be accepted into the same convent together. Although Monson was writing here in the context of Italy, it would seem that the two-sister limit was also used in the case of Jane and Margaret Blundell. A letter was also sent to two of Blundell's other daughters, Alice and Mary, at Graveline's convent in 1675. These sisters were therefore split up and sent away in pairs; 'families often had to parcel their daughters out among several convents', and it would seem that the relationships these daughters had with the rest of their family might have been difficult to sustain.<sup>58</sup> This was certainly the case with Alice and Mary Blundell, who were evidently displeased with the lack of contact they received

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<sup>56</sup> O'Day, *The Family*, p. 92.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 93.

<sup>58</sup> Craig A. Monson, 'Families, Convents, Music: The Power of Sisterhood', in Naomi Miller and Naomi Yavneh (eds), *Sibling Relations and Gender* (Basingstoke, 2006), p. 41.

from their family. Their father wrote to them, ‘it is whispered of late in these parts that you think your friends at Crosby have been unmindful of you...when business requires no more your Mother or I do commonly write to our children once in little less than a year’.<sup>59</sup> This example emphasises the impact that distance and separation could have on parent-child relationships, although perhaps Alice and Mary’s other siblings were more successful at keeping in touch with their sisters. Furthermore, the fact that sisters were often sent to convents in pairs also suggests that the relationships they had with each other would have automatically become very strong, with the presence of another sister making the transition from the world to the cloister easier to bear, ‘and sometimes quite attractive’.<sup>60</sup>

Sibling separation could therefore occur through the death of a parent, as in the case of Lady Apsley, or to help other members of the family, as in the case of William Stout. In a number of families siblings could also be separated because of financial necessity: it was cheaper for William Blundell to send his daughters to a convent than to pay for their marriage portions. However, siblings were also separated throughout their childhood by gender, and it was in this environment that boys were sent to school or apprenticed, while girls would stay at home or sent to live with trusted relatives. In 1551, for example, Sir Edmund Molineux placed his daughters with a cousin and his wife, expecting their training in ‘virtues, good manners and learning to play the gentlewoman and good housewives’.<sup>61</sup> While this inevitably created distance between these removed daughters and their remaining brothers, it could also have made these sisters closer and their relationships more meaningful. As a result, in a society clearly divided along gender lines, ‘sister-sister

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<sup>59</sup> Blundell, *Cavalier*, p. 170.

<sup>60</sup> Monson, ‘Families, Convents, Music’, p. 42.

<sup>61</sup> Fletcher, *Growing Up in England*, p. 259.

relationships might seem to afford the most obvious means of support'.<sup>62</sup> For instance, Mary Sidney's brother Philip left for Shrewsbury School in the 1560s, when she was three, so she would have seen him only occasionally in her childhood. Consequently, her closest relationships were with her sisters, especially her younger sister Ambrosia. Mary and Ambrosia studied together, played together and even dressed alike, 'in their winter gowns of purple mocado with warm woollen petticoats, or their more formal dresses of crimson satin'. The account books for the Sidney family reveal that Ambrosia's dresses were made 'in all points' like Mary's. While the girls wore matching dresses of purple and orange, Mary's two brothers, Robert and Thomas also had cloaks in matching fabrics.<sup>63</sup> It would certainly seem that these young brothers and sisters spent their childhoods and young adulthoods separated by figurative gendered boundaries.

While, as we have seen through the sisterly envy shown to Lady Lucy Apsley, competing for the same goal could cause jealousy amongst sisters, in other cases it could lead to mutual support and even empowerment in a world in which women were placed lower down the social hierarchy. Despite any separation that may have taken place, or any quarrels or rivalry, it would seem that sisters could form strong relationships with each other. This section began with the Josselin sisters, and perhaps we can conclude by returning to them. Even though they lived apart and were married, and despite any annoyance over dowry portions, these sisters still maintained close ties, often undertaking visits to see each other. When Amy, the second oldest, became ill, Jane rushed to visit her. When Jane herself became ill in 1678, her sister Mary was also 'sent to be with her'.<sup>64</sup> It is small actions such as

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<sup>62</sup> Miller, *Sibling relations and Gender*, p. 9.

<sup>63</sup> Hannay, 'Mary Sidney's Other Brothers', p. 90.

<sup>64</sup> Macfarlane, *The Family Life of Ralph Josselin*, pp. 112, 115.

these, rather than any overblown declarations of love or devotion, which attests to the true affection of sibling relationships.

### **‘The alternative sibling relationship’**

According to Monson, the ‘alternative sibling relationship of brother and sister’ proved very important in early modern society, since sibling relationships outlasted parental ones, often by decades.<sup>65</sup> Investigating brothers and sisters separately has pointed to the overall affection that could be felt between these siblings, although examples of rivalry have also been found. However, within contemporary brother-sister relationships it has been argued that the ‘embittered sense of envy did not exist’<sup>66</sup> and it would seem that this assertion is correct. While sibling rivalry could occur between brothers competing for the same resources, or sisters competing for the same husband, it was a lot less likely for brothers and sisters, in this gendered society, to view each other as objects of comparison or competition. Instead of rivalry and affection, perhaps we can use closeness and distance to analyse these sibling bonds. The sons and daughters of Ralph Josselin, for instance, were clearly close. Josselin wrote of Thomas and Anne, brother and sister, ‘lying in the same grave’ in 1673. These siblings were of similar ages and died at similar times, and Josselin’s act of burying them together showed that he recognised such deep affection, and approved of it.<sup>67</sup> Death could therefore effectively highlight strong brother-sister ties. When John Wandesford got smallpox in 1642, his sixteen-year old sister Alice was so attached to him that she broke the strict quarantine enforced by her parents by exchanging messages tied round the neck of the family dog. Eleven years later, when her brother George was accidentally drowned when crossing the

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<sup>65</sup> Monson, ‘Families, Convents and Music’, p. 61.

<sup>66</sup> Stone, *The Family*, p. 87.

<sup>67</sup> Macfarlane, *The Family Life of Ralph Josselin*, p. 130.

river Swale, she nearly died of grief. Similarly, Adam Martindale's daughter Mary was born in 1654, died in 1658 and was buried next to her younger brother, 'as her owne desire was'. Martindale claimed that she was a very witty child, however after his death seemed to utterly despise life, '[she] would frequently talke of heaven and being buried by him'.<sup>68</sup>

Yet that is not to say, despite these heart-warming examples, that all brothers and sisters lived amicably, as this was clearly not the case. Samuel Pepys, for instance, often used his diary to vent his frustrations over his sister Paulina (Pall), and it would seem that a clash of personalities lay at the root of their discord. Pepys seemingly felt frustrated that his brotherly help was not met with more gratitude. In October 1662 he gave her ten shillings, but she in return showed no kindness, 'I cannot love her and she so cruel a hypocrite that she can cry when she pleases'.<sup>69</sup> In 1661 Pepys agreed that his sister should enter his household as a servant, and it was clear that this was how he planned to treat her, 'I do not let her sit down at table with me'. Yet when his wife asked if Pall might work as her 'woman' in 1663, he reluctantly disagreed because of her character, 'I must be forced to spend money on a stranger, when it might be better upon her (Pall), if she were good for anything'.<sup>70</sup> Instead, Pepys busied himself with finding her a suitor, so he could be 'eased of one care how to provide for her'. When he finally found a suitor in one Mr. Jackson in 1668, he reported that he was a man of few words, plain, with no education nor discourse, yet

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<sup>68</sup> Alice Wandesford Thornton, *The Autobiography of Mrs. Alice Thornton* (Edinburgh, 1875), p. 33 and Martindale, *The Life of Adam Martindale*, p. 88.

<sup>69</sup> Pepys, *Diary*, p. 154.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 62, 171.

he was good enough for Pall, 'my mind pretty well satisfied with this plain fellow for my sister'.<sup>71</sup>

Brother-sister bonds were therefore not always harmonious, and in the case of Samuel and Paulina Pepys, their sibling relationship was epitomised by the reluctance of Pepys to provide for a sister he disliked. However, at the same time, he felt compelled to help her, as it was his brotherly duty, 'I have no great love for her; but only [she] is my sister, and must be provided for'.<sup>72</sup> The clash of this brother and sister undoubtedly put a strain on Pepys' sense of duty, however he nevertheless continued to support Pall. Furthermore, this sense of duty was present in other brother-sister relationships. Ralph Josselin, for instance, was the brother of three sisters, all of whom depended on his help from time to time. Being the only brother, Josselin felt it was his duty to help them, writing in 1632, 'when my father was dead, in my poverty, I bless God I did not forget to doe for them'.<sup>73</sup> He often lent and gave his sister Dorothy small amounts of money and property and at the end of 1646 he received a letter from her asking to borrow thirty shillings, which he intended to give.<sup>74</sup> Furthermore, the next year, Josselin sent his sister Mary five pounds, and then started to pay another £7 10s to 'my poore sister Mary, whose heart is broken with greife and trouble'. In fact, so strong was Josselin's sense of duty, that he complained about not seeing her enough and felt slighted when she came to town in 1661 but did not visit. These sibling relationships were therefore built on responsibility and obligation, and this seemingly continued as Josselin and his sisters got older. As late as 1673 Josselin wrote of his sister Anne coming to stay, and claimed she was

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<sup>71</sup> Pepys, *Diary*, p. 613.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 567.

<sup>73</sup> Josselin, *The Diary of Ralph Josselin*, p. 4.

<sup>74</sup> Macfarlane, *The Family Life of Ralph Josselin*, p. 130.

‘entertained with joy’ and that she ‘left with presents’.<sup>75</sup> One broadside ballad in 1635 even charted the cruel actions and unfortunate outcome of an only son who, after receiving his inheritance, ignored his duty to his three sisters and cast them out in the street: ‘Possession of the house he took, in most despite full wise,/ throwing his sisters out of doors,/ With sad lamenting cryes’.<sup>76</sup> This wicked brother had refused to obey his fraternal duty, and, in a rather gruesome warning to those brothers who intended to do the same, ended up in prison, ‘Himselpe he hanged in desperat wise/...And being cast forth, the Ravens pickt out his eyes’.<sup>77</sup>

Alongside this idea of obligation is the notion of reciprocity, which was a ‘central feature of the sibling relationship’.<sup>78</sup> While brothers therefore felt compelled to protect or help their sisters, they nevertheless expected other things in return, such as help with household duties, looking after children or simply unquestionable loyalty. Brother-sister relations might therefore be distinguished, not only by authority, but also by mutual empowerment.<sup>79</sup> Although sisters may not have had the resources available to assist their brothers financially, they nevertheless found other ways to help. William Stout’s sister Elin waited on her younger brother from a young age, as both his parents were fully employed with the harvests and looking after their servants in the fields. Later, when Stout became ill of ‘a rhumatism’ it was his ‘dear sister Elin’ who attended him and his shop.<sup>80</sup> In return, Stout admitted that he was very tender to her, ‘who was very infirme of body and subject to many infirmities’. Stout remained a bachelor throughout his life, and although at one point he

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<sup>75</sup> Josselin, *The Diary of Ralph Josselin*, 1647, p. 105; 1661, p. 483; 1673, pp. 569-570.

<sup>76</sup> Anon, *The first part of the Widdow of Watling street & her three daughters, & how her wicked Son accused her to be an harlot, and his sisters Bastards. To the tune of Bragandry*, printed for Fr. Cowles (1635?), The Pepys Library, Magdalene College, Cambridge. See appendix.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid.

<sup>78</sup> Miller and Yavneh, *Sibling relations and Gender*, p. 3.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid., p. 10.

<sup>80</sup> Stout, *Autobiography*, p. 92.

entertained himself with thoughts of marriage with a woman called Bethia Green, he persuaded himself it was not a good match, and contented himself with living with his selfless sister.<sup>81</sup> Similar examples of this reciprocity include Paulina Pepys, who entered her brother's house to serve, although, as mentioned, she was treated as a servant and was not allowed to sit at his table. Ralph Josselin also took his sister Mary under his roof at one point as a servant, although, unlike Pepys, Josselin's respect continued to be towards her 'as a sister' rather than an employee.<sup>82</sup> Finally, William Blundell expressed concern over his sister Frances, 'in the decay of Trade I fear Franke will not earn her living', however to solve this problem Blundell invited Frances to educate his daughters instead, 'Mistress Frances considered it her duty towards her brother to educate his children'.<sup>83</sup>

Perhaps, then, it could be argued that contemporary brother-sister relationships revolved around an unquestionable and unswerving sense of duty and obligation. It would certainly seem that sibling rivalry was not as pronounced between brothers and sisters as it was between siblings of the same sex. Yet not all brothers were as duteous as Ralph Josselin, nor all sisters as hard-working as Elin Stout, and perhaps it is these sibling relationships which were characterised, not by relentless rivalry, but more by distance or detachment. For instance, the strained familial relationships of Lady Anne Clifford are depicted through the triptych below:

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<sup>81</sup> Stout, *Autobiography*, p. 142.

<sup>82</sup> Josselin, *The Diary of Ralph Josselin*, p. 14.

<sup>83</sup> Blundell, *Cavalier*, p.55.





**Figure 2: Lady Anne Clifford's Great Picture, the Clifford Family from Appleby Castle (1636), taken from Graham et al, *Her Own Life*, p. 36.**

Commissioned by Lady Anne in 1636, it expresses the history of her family and her personal 'cause'. In the central panel it depicts the members of her immediate family: her parents, the Earl and Countess of Cumberland. Her mother stands near the centre of the picture, but as her father was absent for a lot of her childhood, he is cast to the right. Both parents use their right arms to present their sons, Lady Anne's two brothers, who both died when they were young. A fifteen-year-old Anne is set apart from her siblings, in the left section of the picture, and is surrounded by the things that were arguably more important to her: the portraits of her tutor and governesses hang behind her on the walls, her books stack the shelves, while her own arm leads the eye towards her lute. Fifteen was her age at the year of her father's death, when she should have inherited the Clifford lands, but they were instead given to her uncle. In the right section of the picture Lady Anne presents herself as a fifty-six year old woman, in the year she eventually succeeded to the land.<sup>84</sup> Clearly this picture

<sup>84</sup> Graham et al, *Her Own Life*, pp. 35, 36.

centred on Lady Anne's 'bold and tenacious belief' that she was, though female, the rightful heir to her family's estate in the north. This cause was much more significant than Lady Anne's marriages, and the portraits of her two husbands hang diminutively in the background, 'almost as trophies of her past'.<sup>85</sup> Although Anne was left the not inconsiderable sum of £15,000 when her father died, he willed the entire landed estate to his brother Francis, who then succeeded to the earldom. Her father wrote that he wished to save his daughter the responsibilities attached to running such a vast enterprise. It was not an acceptable excuse in Lady Anne's eyes: 'it was a cruel move'.<sup>86</sup>

Furthermore, although commissioned as a triptych and therefore split into three parts, the viewer cannot help but be drawn to the solid divide between a young Lady Anne and her two brothers. Lady Anne would not have had chance to develop strong relationships with her siblings, however the memories of these brothers were perhaps tainted by issues of inheritance. If her brothers had survived, their father's inheritance would have unquestionably passed to them, but as they did not, and with Anne being the only child, it went to the next available male. This example therefore highlights the difference between brothers and sisters, and although the mutuality of the brother-sister relationship in terms of obligation and duty was investigated earlier, this does not mean they were seen as being equal in the eyes of society. It was therefore gender norms which set social boundaries that were determined by masculine and feminine identities, and this in turn affected how siblings related to each other. Because the position of the head of the household was inherently male,

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<sup>85</sup> Graham et al, *Her Own Life*, p. 33.

<sup>86</sup> Lady Anne Clifford, *The Diaries of Lady Anne Clifford* (ed.) D.J.H. Clifford (Sutton, 2003), p. 2.

women's relationships to men were secondary considerations, and it is this which testified to the fluid and negotiable nature of sibling relationships.<sup>87</sup>

While the physical divide quite literally separates Lady Anne from her brothers in the triptych above, it would seem that there was also a social divide between brothers and sisters in general. Macfarlane has even suggested the existence of a taboo on brother-sister contact, while Fletcher wrote that 'boys were set on an entirely different path from girls'.<sup>88</sup> Once more we return to this idea of separation, 'people did not hesitate to move children from one place to another...even if it meant separating brothers and sisters for a period of time'.<sup>89</sup> For instance, the three sons of John Dee were sent to school in 1590, while a man called John Stokden came to govern and teach his daughters, Madinia and Margaret.<sup>90</sup> Furthermore, while the Sidney brothers felt the pressure of living up to their older brother Philip, the girls were arguably under less pressure from comparison, 'their opportunities and responsibilities were not the same as their brothers'. As previously mentioned, they spent their childhoods together, were given a humanist education, and were primarily trained to make a good marriage and become respected aristocratic women.<sup>91</sup>

It would seem, then, that there were different expectations which surrounded the two genders, and it was these expectations which could make it difficult for strong sibling ties to form. Margaret Cavendish, the youngest of seven children, noted that while she was eager to please her siblings, she felt isolated from her brothers in her childhood. Growing up in the first half of the seventeenth century, she admitted that she knew not how her brothers were bred: 'first, they were bred when I

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<sup>87</sup> Pollock, 'Younger Sons', pp. 62-63.

<sup>88</sup> Macfarlane, *The Family Life of Ralph Josselin*, p. 128 and Fletcher, *Growing Up In England*, p. 5.

<sup>89</sup> Perrier, 'Coresidence', p. 6.

<sup>90</sup> Pollock, *Forgotten Children*, p. 240.

<sup>91</sup> Hannay, 'Mary Sidney's Other Brothers', p. 90.

was not capable to observe, or before I was born; likewise the breeding of men were after different manner of wayes from those of women'.<sup>92</sup> There was a clear divide between these brothers and sisters, who were not only separated physically, but also spent their time following different pursuits. Margaret claimed that when she saw her brothers together they exercised themselves with 'fencing, wrestling, shooting and such like exercises, they did seldom...dance, or play on musick, saying it was too effeminate for they'.<sup>93</sup> Here Margaret acknowledged the lack of common interests between her and her brothers. In a society in which 'boyhood and aggression were closely identified', while girls were expected to train for civility and domestication, it is not surprising that Margaret never formed strong attachments to her brothers, 'I know not how they lived...I was parted from them'.<sup>94</sup> Perhaps the boyish behaviour of Margaret's brothers was accepted and even encouraged. It was a key issue for parents of boys to guard against effeminacy, against the 'slippage into weakness, softness and delicacy of womankind'.<sup>95</sup> Surely these attitudes placed an inevitable gulf between brothers and sisters.

This was a society in which the separation of the sexes was commonplace, 'everybody readily accepted it'.<sup>96</sup> There must have been many sisters, like Margaret Cavendish, who felt closer to their sisters and cut off from their brothers. These brothers had their own set of goals, interests and responsibilities. However, one of these responsibilities was to protect their sisters and control any threats to the family honour. Perhaps it was mainly through this staunch sense of duty that strong relationships could transcend any possible brother-sister taboos and create close and

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<sup>92</sup> Cavendish, *Paper Bodies*, p. 43.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 43.

<sup>94</sup> Fletcher, *Growing Up in England*, p. 5 and Cavendish, *Paper Bodies*, p. 43.

<sup>95</sup> Fletcher, *Growing Up in England*, p. 15.

<sup>96</sup> Perrier, 'Coresidence,' p. 6.

loving bonds. Even the irksome sister of Samuel Pepys sent him a 'basket' on 14 May 1663, which Pepys admitted, rather reluctantly, had 'a great deal of labour in it for a country innocent work'.<sup>97</sup> The bonds between brothers and sisters, it seems, were not simply defined by the two extremes of rivalry and affection. Instead, perhaps these 'alternative sibling relationships' should be situated appropriately between the boundaries of closeness and distance, duty and disregard.

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<sup>97</sup> Pepys, *Diary*, p. 194.

## Conclusion

It is clear that any sweeping conclusions would be dangerous in this field, because of the huge diversity of attitudes and relationships that this study has unearthed. For every father who favoured his oldest son and heir, such as Sir Ralph Verney, there was a father who favoured a younger son, like Henry Newcome. For every mother who preferred her oldest daughter, such as Alice Greenwood, there was a mother who favoured her youngest, like Lady Apsley. This favouritism cannot be explained by separating parents by gender, as mothers and fathers did not necessarily favour their daughters and sons respectively. This has been shown in the devoted mother-son relationship of Lady Isabella and Thomas Wentworth, or in the strength of the bond between Nehemiah Wallington and his daughter Elizabeth. However, what can be said with some confidence is that favouritism could play a significant part in shaping contemporary relationships, and that this favouritism was a natural product of a society in which hierarchy determined social values and familial identity. It is true that favouritism is a social construct which transcends time. Nevertheless, there were certain social conditions, specific to the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, which encouraged favouritism and the particular forms it could take. The very nature of the relationship between early modern parents and their children, for instance, meant that it was socially acceptable to make hidden acknowledgements and visible expressions of favouritism. Historians have in recent years accepted that parents were fonder of their children than had been previously suggested, which would, in turn, indicate that these households were appropriate settings for displays of parental praise and approval. Yet, simultaneously, the imbalance of power within the contemporary parent-child relationship was great enough to allow these parents to

reveal, sometimes openly, their favour for one child, even if this resulted in feelings of neglect or jealousy on the part of other children.

Furthermore, within the aristocratic families studied here, the dominant system of primogeniture was central to family survival and fundamental in positioning the oldest son as family favourite. Daughters could also be seen as a disadvantage because of the obligation to provide them with expensive dowries. These social structures and obligations meant that the desire for a son and heir formed part of the elite mind-set, in which differences in parental treatment were regarded as conventional. This has been emphasised in some of our sources: in fathers such as William Blundell who expressively displayed disappointment at the birth of yet another daughter, or in mothers such as Lady Wentworth who bestowed all her attention and favour on her oldest son, to the exclusion of her younger son and grandchildren. Clearly, in these families, as we have seen, sons and daughters could be treated very differently, with mothers prioritising sick sons over sick daughters, or fathers punishing their daughters while simultaneously pardoning their sons. Any favouritism that occurred in these families did so in the context of elite attitudes towards gender, where girls were seen as potential problems and burdens while boys were given greater autonomy. Sons and daughters, in theory at least, occupied separate positions in a gendered hierarchy: a hierarchy that not only structured early modern society, but also determined familial relationships.

However, one of the questions this dissertation has addressed is whether this hierarchy was equally prominent further down the social spectrum. In aristocratic households, the birth of a son could be a matter of the utmost importance, yet the same importance does not seem to have been placed on the oldest son in middle- and lower-status families. In the middling ranks, or at least in these sources, there was

less pressure to provide an heir, and a stronger desire for an equal number of boys and girls. Inheritance, primogeniture and marriage portions were seemingly not such central concerns for those families who relied on individual earned incomes and had much less landed property. In fact, there is even evidence of a middle-class and popular culture which denounced extreme forms of favouritism: domestic guides which promoted equality, and ballads which warned against favouring one child at the neglect of another. There would certainly seem to be a correlation between favouritism and social status in this respect, although favouritism could also appear at all social levels. Perhaps if more middle and lower status sources were available, we could chart this notion of social difference further.

In middling and poorer families, favouritism was far more likely to be shaped by a number of other factors. Indeed, even in those aristocratic families which placed great importance on the heir, there could also be other reasons for favouring a certain child. Sir Ralph Verney, for instance, shared a relationship with his oldest son that was arguably stronger than any other family tie. However, his daughter Peg had also been a hidden favourite. This, according to Verney, was because of her age, character and obedience. Oldest sons, although automatically propelled to position of favourite in some upper-gentry families, were therefore not always the only ones to enjoy parental favour. Instead, praise could be lavished on those children, boys or girls, oldest or youngest, who expressed specific educational abilities, or had endearing or playful personalities. In the case of John Martindale, his father admired his strength, confidence and energy, while Richard Evelyn was praised for his impressive skills in language. As we have seen, Nompée Mildmay was also spoiled by his father, despite his refusal to go to school, which testifies to the fact that these causes of favouritism were specific to the parent and child in question. It would seem that displays of early



modern favouritism, although often influenced by established social conventions and existing attitudes surrounding birth order and gender, could also be shaped by a variety of other social factors. Circumstance and the individual also played a vital role, and any favouritism must have reflected the character of the parent and the qualities they regarded as important, rather than being influenced solely by the qualities of the favoured child.

Although the image of the favoured older son should certainly not be rejected, it should perhaps be modified, as reasons for favouritism were much more complex than this image suggests. When Joan Thirsk wrote of the angry younger brother she was correct to some extent, and in some cases favouritism towards the oldest son could provoke rivalry, or at the very least could create feelings of bitterness or frustration. While older brothers could enjoy a certain level of prestige and authority over their younger siblings, this could also create a great deal of tension, as shown in the cases of John Verney, James Yonge and Justinian Isham – all younger brothers who wrote of their feelings of neglect or jealousy. However, it is clear that fraternal relationships were not only characterised by rivalry, but could also be defined by other feelings, such as duty, dependency, acceptance or even fondness. Research into sister-sister and brother-sister bonds has also presented a somewhat mixed picture, although there have been some dominant themes we can use to characterise these sibling ties. Age, for instance, was clearly a factor in shaping sibling identity and there was certainly a position carved out in early modern society for the ‘younger brother,’ and maybe even for the ‘younger sister,’ although to a lesser extent. It would certainly seem that women, such as Lady Apsley, had their own set of problems and could also face envious sisters when they received bigger marriage portions or more male attention. However, while it must be acknowledged

that there was a gender divide in contemporary society, it would appear that brothers and sisters developed different ways to express their affection for each other. These expressions, as we have seen, could include incidents such as saving a younger brother from falling down a coal-pit, sending regular payments to a sister in financial adversity, or even sending family members to help a brother with his household duties. The contemporary sibling relationship, although sometimes tainted by rivalry, jealousy, or separation, could therefore just as likely be characterised by mutuality, reciprocity, and even affection.

In focusing on the more horizontal relationships between siblings, as opposed to the vertical relationships between parent and child, this dissertation has hopefully proved that the position of 'sibling' was a significant dimension in early modern identity. Contemporary family relationships should not simply be studied in relation to the parent-child hierarchy, although in this case we have used parental favouritism as a medium through which to shed new light on sibling bonds. As Macfarlane insisted in 1970, 'we know very little about family life and kinship in pre-industrial England,'<sup>1</sup> and although over the last forty years there have been considerable advances, it would seem that Macfarlane's request for historians to turn to more specific familial ties, including those between brothers and sisters, still offers a way forward. It is important for the historian to make connections with the past, but also to acknowledge any differences and looking at favouritism and sibling relationships has allowed us to do both. It would seem that historians are now moving away from viewing the early modern family as distant and violent, and are instead focusing on how familial relationships could be more affectionate, with the identification of favourite children as further proof of this. However, relationships between parents

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<sup>1</sup> Macfarlane, *The Family Life of Ralph Josselin*, p. 105.

and their children, as well as between siblings, were also situated within a society in which gender, patriarchy and primogeniture all had important roles in determining levels of affection, rivalry, and everything in-between. By investigating how sibling relationships operated within the context of these social conventions, alongside the impact of favouritism, perhaps we have become one step closer to rescuing the early modern sibling from its paradoxical prison: from being 'everywhere and nowhere', to becoming an area of scholarly interest in its own right.

## Appendices

## 1) Ballad - 'The Downfal of Pride.'

## + The Downfal of Pride:

BEING

An Account of a Merchants Wife, who having two Daughters, loved one, and hated the other: Together with a Relation of her Darling, and her own Misfortune, as likewise the Prosperity of her despised Daughter, by whom they were all at length Succoured in their Distress.

To the Tune of *Aim not too High.*

Licensed according to Order.

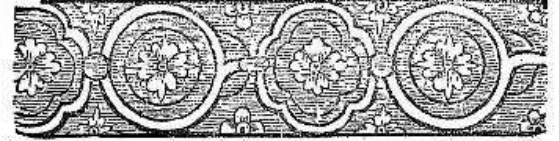


In London liv'd a wealthy Merchants Wife,  
Who lived here a long and happy Life;  
Her loving Husband Plough'd the Ocean Main,  
In sumptuous Robes his Lady to maintain.

The Glory of this World she did behold  
Rich Jewels, Diamonds, Chains of shining Gold,  
Embroider'd Silks, and other Gems vast store;  
As Rich as ever London Lady wore.

Her very Heart was swallow'd up in pride,  
So that she minded little else beside;  
If that she did frequent the House of Prayer,  
It was to see and learn new Fashions there.

She had two Daughters, both of beauty bright,  
In one of which she plac'd her chief delight;  
The other she did constantly despise,  
And ever liv'd with daily Contempt.



The youngest Daughter, modest, sweet and mild,  
Her did not use as if she was her Child;  
Father and Mother, both did her adore,  
And kept her like a Wife, or Servant-Maid.

In all occasions, still early of morn,  
The younger Sister was oblig'd to wain;  
She cheerfully yet faine did undergoe,  
Because it was their will it should be so.

Their Darling like a Peacock like and gay,  
Was all about in sumptuous rich array;  
And to a Dancing-School was sent to be  
Fit for a Husband of no mean degree.

Her Portion being Fifteen hundred pound,  
The most of which was lay'd all London round;  
So that rich Suitors came both Night and Day,  
At length a Merchant boy she chose away.

In State and Triumph they the Wedding kept,  
The younger Sister, she in joyous wept,  
Because while they did feast with sumptuous fare,  
They did not think her worthy to be there.

But now behold how Fortune soon did frown,  
To sell their high and haughty Splines down;  
In three Months space the wealthy Father dyed,  
And thus began the woeful Fall of Pride.

Soon after this, the Son-in-law was found  
To be in Debt, above Five thousand Pound,  
So that her Daughters Portion went at last,  
And he likewise into a Prison cast.

The Mother to release him out of Jail,  
For her dear Daughters sake did part with all;  
And tho' by this, as length he was set free,  
They were reduc'd to woeful Poverty.

The youngest Daughter whom they did esteem,  
At hand of Providence did bless the weale;  
For living with a worthy Ancient Knight,  
She durst on her splendid Beauty boast.

Then making her his honest lawful Wife,  
With whom she led a comfortable Life;  
And when he dy'd, he left her all his Goods,  
Which was two thousand Pounds a year and more.

So soon as e're her Spinning year was past,  
Many rich worthy Suitors came at last,  
But she no choice of any Party would make,  
But liv'd a Widow for her Mothers sake.

Home to her house this Daughter took her Neighbour  
To live there, on a plentiful Estate;  
And was always to Duty inclin'd,  
That former Misings she would not bear in mind.

Both she and Sister likewise did weep;  
Oh her, for why they had no other friend;  
But she whom they had often spighted so,  
To whom they for their wrongs had sworn to go.

Now, let all Parents that this Story hear,  
Have equal kindness for your Children dear;  
Those that you think scarce worthy of your love,  
Do oftentimes the greatest Blessings prove.

Printed for P. Brooksby, J. Deacon, J. Blare, and J. Bask.

Text transcription:

*The Downfal of Pride:*

BEING

*An Account of a Merchants Wife, who having two Daughters, loved one, and hated the other: Together with a Relation of her Darling, and her own Misfortune, as likewise the Prosperity of her despised Daughter, by whom they were all at length Succoured in their Distress.*  
*To the Tune of Aim not too High. Licensed according to Order.*

IN London liv'd a wealthy Merchants Wife,  
Who lived here a long and happy Life;  
Her loving Husband Plough'd the Ocean Main,  
In sumptuous Robes his Lady to maintain.

The Glory of this World she did behold  
Rich Jewels, Diamonds, Chains of shining Gold,  
Embroider'd Silks, and other Gems vast store;  
As Rich as ever London Lady wore,

Her very Heart was swallow'd up in pride,  
So that she minded little else beside;  
If that she did frequent the House of Prayer,  
It was to see and learn new Fashions there.

She had two Daughters, both of beauty bright,  
 In one of which she plac'd her chief delight;  
 The other she did constantly despise,  
 And over her did daily Tyrannize.

The youngest Daughter, Modest, Meek, and Mild,  
 She did not use as if she was her Child;  
 Father and Mother, both did her degrade,  
 And kept her like a Drudge, or Servant-Maid.

On all occasions, still early or late,  
 The younger Sister was oblig'd to wait,  
 She cheerfully the same did undergo,  
 Because it was their will it should be so,

Their Darling like a *Peacock* fine and gay,  
 Was still adorn'd in sumptuous rich array;  
 And to a Boarding-School was sent to be  
 Fit for a Husband of no mean degree.

Her Portion being Fifteen hundred pound,  
 The noise of which was blaz'd all *London* round;  
 So that rich Suiters came both Night and Day,  
 At length a Merchant bore the prize away.

In State and Triumph they the Wedding kept,  
 The younger Sister, she in sorrow wept,  
 Because while they did Feast with sumptuous fare,  
 They did not think her worthy to be there.

But now behold how Fortune soon did frown,  
 To pull their high and haughty Spirits down  
 In three Months space the wealthy Father dyed,  
 And thus began the woeful Fall of Pride.

Soon after this, the Son-in-law was found  
 To be in Debt, above Five thousand Pound,  
 So that her Daughters Portion went at last,  
 And he likewise into a Prison cast.

The Mother to release him out of thrall,  
 For her dear Darlings sake did part with all:  
 And tho' by this, at length he was set free,  
 They were reduc'd to woeful Poverty.

The youngest Daughter whom they did revile,  
 A hand of Providence did bless the while;  
 For living with a worthy Ancient Knight,  
 He doted on her splendid Beauty bright.

Then making her his honest lawful Wife,  
 With whom she led a comfortable Life;  
 And when he Dy'd, he left her all his store,  
 Which was two thousand Pounds a year and more  
 So soon as e're her Mourning year was past,  
 Many right worthy Suitors came at last;  
 Yet she no choice of any Match would make,  
 But liv'd a Widow for her Mothers sake.

Home to her House this Daughter took her streight  
 To live there, on a plentiful Estate;  
 And was always to Duty so inclin'd,  
 That former Wrongs she would not bear in mind

Brother and Sister likewise did depend  
 On her, for why they had no other friend;  
 But she whom they had often spighted lo,  
 To whom they for their ronstant Succour go.

Now, let all Parents that this Ditty hear,  
 Have equal kindness for your Children dear;  
 Those that you think scarce worthy of your love  
 Do oftentimes the greatest Blessings prove.





Anon, *The Downfal of Pride, being an account of a Merchant's wife...to the Tune of Aim not too High*, printed for P. Brooksby, J. Deacon, J. Blare and J. Back (1675-1696?), Pepys Collection, The Pepys Library, Magdalene College, Cambridge.  
<http://ebba.english.ucsb.edu/ballad/20683/image>

## 2) Ballad - 'Crums of Comfort'.

*Crums of Comfort*  
For the  
**YOUNGEST SISTER.**

*The youngest Sister in despair,  
At last did comfort find,  
Which banisht all her grief and care,  
And eas'd her troubled mind.*

*A kind young man did promise her  
That she should married be,  
She answered him again Kind Sir  
Thereto I'm wondrous free.  
To a pleasant new West country Tune.*

*I* Have a good old Father at home,  
an ancient man is he,  
But he has a mind, that e're he dies,  
That I should marry'd be.

And since I heard of thy complaint,  
methoughts I pitt'y'd thee,  
To me thou seemest like a Saint,  
And thou shalt married be.

The Roses and the Lillies fair  
cannot compare to thee,  
Then mine own Dear do not despair,  
for thou shalt married be.

*I* have been curious in mine eye,  
yet ne'r could any see,  
That so much pleas'd my fantasie,  
And thou shalt married be.

All night between my loving Arms,  
thou shalt have embraces free,  
And ile secure thee from all harms  
When thou shalt married be.

An e wouldst thou have a pretty Babe  
ild quickly get it thee,  
Thy credit and my own to save,  
When we two married be.

*A* Thousand joys ile promise more  
and all the world shall see,  
That none like thee I will adore,  
And thou shalt married be.

What though thy Sister is bestow'd  
let not that trouble thee,  
On her young men some years have blow'd  
Thou young shalt married be.

Thou hast no wrinkles in thy face  
and so i'm sure has she,  
'Twill be an honour, no disgrace,  
That thou shouldst married be.

And tell me now canst thou deny  
so kind a friend as me,  
That faith thou shalt no Maiden die,  
But thou shalt married be.

If I walk through the Universe  
I can no fairer see,  
But every where I will reherse  
That we will married be.

He Crown thee with the joys of love,  
some Mortals ne'r did see,  
And some shall with that live above,  
Like us to married be.

Can *Hymen* any joys provide,  
my Dear for thee or me,  
Out of his thoughts they cannot slide,  
But thou shalt married be.

No, no, torment thy self no more,  
nor fear loves cruelty,  
Thou art the girl that I adore,  
And thou shalt married be.

Give me thy hand, take here my heart,  
and be from sorrow free,  
I know the worth of thy desert,  
And thou shalt married be.

Twill be one day a blessed time  
and we from cares be free,  
When thou art married in thy prime  
That I may happy be.

*Printed for P. Brookshy at the Golden in Ball West-Smithfield.*

## Text transcription:

*Crums of Comfort*  
For the  
**YOUNGEST SISTER.**  
*The youngest Sister in despair,  
At last did comfort find,  
Which banisht all her grief and care,  
And eas'd her troubled mind,  
A kind young man did promise her  
That she should married be,  
She answered him again Kind Sir  
Thereto I'm wondrous free.  
To a pleasant new West country Tune.*

*I* Have a good old Father at home,  
an ancient man is he,  
But he has a mind, that e're he dies,  
That I should marry'd be.

And since I heard of thy complaint,  
methoughts I pitt'y'd thee,  
To me thou seemest like a Saint,  
And thou shalt married be.

The Roses and the Lillies fair

cannot compare to thee,  
Then mine own Dear do not despair,  
*for thou shalt married be.*

I have been curious in mine eye,  
yet ne'r could any see,  
That so much pleas'd my fantasie,  
*And thou shalt married be.*

All night between my loving Arms,  
thou shalt have embraces free,  
And ile secure thee from all harms  
*When thou shalt married be.*

An e wouldst thou have a pretty Babe  
ild quickly get it thee,  
Thy credit and my own to save,  
*When we two married be.*

A Thousand joys ile promise more  
and all the world shall see,  
That none like thee I will adore,  
*And thou shalt married be.*

What though thy Sister is bestow'd  
let not that trouble thee,  
On her young men some years have blow'd  
*Thou young shalt married be.*

Thou hast no wrinckles in thy face  
and so i'm sure has she,  
'Twill be an honour, no disgrace,  
*That thou shouldst married be.*

And tell me now canst thou deny  
so kind a friend as me,  
That faith thou shalt no Maiden die,  
*But thou shalt married be.*

If I walk through the Universe  
I can no fairer see,  
But every where I will reherse  
*That we will married be.*

Ile Crown thee with the joys of love,  
some Mortals ne'r did see,  
And some shall with that live above,  
*Like us to married be.*



Can *Hymen* any joys provide,  
my Dear for thee or me,  
Out of his thoughts they cannot slide,  
*But thou shalt married be.*

No, no, torment thy self no more,  
nor fear loves cruelty,  
Thou art the girl that I adore,  
*And thou shalt married be.*  
Give me thy hand, take here my heart,  
and be from sorrow free,  
I know the worth of thy desert,  
*And thou shalt married be.*

Twill be one day a blessed time  
and we from cares be free,  
When thou art married in thy prime  
*That I may happy be.*

Anon, *Crums of Comfort For the YOUNGEST SISTER to a pleasant new West country Tune*, printed for P. Brooksby at the Golden in Ball West-Smithfield (1672-1696?), The Pepys Library, Magdalene College, Cambridge.  
<http://ebba.english.ucsb.edu/ballad/21139/transcription>

## 3) Ballad - 'The Widdow of Watling Street' (parts 1 and 2).

*The first part of the Widdow of Watling street & her three daughters, & how her wicked Son accused her to be an Harlot, and his sisters Bastards. To the tune of Bragandary.*

OF the kinde Widdow of Watling street  
I will the story tell,  
Who by her husband deere was left,  
In substance very well,  
A prodigall sonne likewise had she,  
And faire young daughters lovely three?  
*Great misery, sorrow and misery,  
Commeth for want of grace.*  
For by his daily practises,  
Which were both lewd and ill,  
His fathers heart from him was drawne,  
His love and his good will,  
But yet what chance so ere befell,  
His mother lov'd him dearely well,  
When in prison lay full poore,  
For dole that he did owe,  
His father would not sterve out of doore,  
For to release his woe,  
But when his mother his griefe did see,  
She found the routes to set him free,  
And when her husband fell full sicke,  
And woe to make his will,  
O husband remember your sonne she said,  
Although he hath bene ill,  
But yet no dole he may retaine,  
repeating the will he hath done,  
Remember wife what sorrow and care,  
through him I daily feare:  
Who through his lewd ungracious deede,  
Hath spent no money a pecke,  
I wanne not for to dole with him,  
And therefore see Execution here,  
I doo thee onely make:  
Topey thy debts & paynes, the rest unto thee take,  
Nay so my husband deere (quoth she)  
but let your sonne be joynd with me,  
For why he is our child (she said)  
we can it not denie.  
The first that ever graced you  
with fathers dignitie,  
Oh, that ever you did me love,  
grant his request for his beleeve,  
They love deare wife woe evermore,  
most precious unto me,  
And therefore for thy woeen loves sake  
I grant thy will to thee,  
But ere one yeare be fully spent,  
I know thou wilt the same repent,  
New was his some received home,  
and with his mother deere,  
Was found Execution of the will,  
which did his courage shere:  
The old man dying, buried was,  
but now beheld what came to passe,  
The funeral being ended quite, it fell upon a day  
some friend did fetch the Widdow forth,  
To drive connectis away,  
While she was forth and thought no ill,  
her wicked sonne doth worke his will,  
Possession of the house he took, in woe despite full wile  
throwing his waters out of doore,  
With sad lamenting eyes,  
When this they did his mother shew,  
She would not believe he would doo so.

But when she came unto her house,  
and found it so undoe,  
Shee call'd unto her son and said, although her heart did bleed,  
Come downe my sonne, come downe said she,  
let in thy mother and sisters three,  
I will not let in my mother he said,  
nor sisters any one,  
The house is mine, I will it keep,  
Therefore away begone,  
O sonne how canst thou endure to see't  
thy mother and sisters to live 'th street,  
Did not thy father by his will,  
For teame of this my life,  
Give me this house for to enjoy, without all father wile,  
And more of all his goods and shere,  
I am Executioner joynd with thee,  
My father left you the house, he said,  
but this was his intent,  
That you therefore during your life,  
Should pay the yearely rent:  
An hundred pound a yeare therefore,  
you shall receive me, or else give it to us,  
And with the Citie custome is,  
that you thirds must have  
Of all my fathers reasonable,  
I grant what law doth crave:  
But not a penny more will I,  
discharge of any Logistic,  
O wicked sonne, quoth shee that seeks  
thy mother than to feare:  
Thy father to his daughters gave  
Three hundred pound a pecke:  
Till me who shall their portions pay,  
appointed at their marriage day,  
Then with a sorrowfull smile he said,  
What take you of so much:  
Ten pounds a pecke, I will them give,  
My charite is such,  
Now be upon their heart, quoth she,  
but thus dost deale with them and us,  
But ere that they and I will take  
this injurie at thy hand:  
The chiefest Peeres of England shall  
the matter understand:  
Nay, if you goe to that, quoth he,  
make well what I shall tell to thee,  
Thou hast a secret harlot bene,  
and this he prove full plaine,  
That is my Fathers life time didst  
Lewd Kallian entertaine:  
The which did thee begot of thee,  
in wicked sort these bastards three,  
No daughters to my father then  
were they in any wise:  
As he supposed them to be,  
Thou blinding so thy eyes,  
Therefore so right at all have they,  
so any penny given this day,  
When shee did heare her shamelesse sonne,  
for to defende her us,  
Shee with her lovely daughters three,  
with griefe away did goe,  
But how this matter out did fall,  
the second part will shew you all.

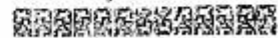
F I N I S.

*The second part of the Widdow of Watling street and her three Daughters  
To the tune of the Widdow wife.*

THE beautiful Widdow of Watling street,  
Being thus falsely accused by her sonne,  
With her three daughters of favour so sweet,  
Whose beauty the love of many had wonne,  
With her daughters three for succour went she,  
unto the Kings Council of Noble degree,  
*Not for a spot of falsehood, and forgerie, feake,  
For great is the wick, and it will proveable.*  
Her sonne by Wint now summoned is,  
At the Star-chamber with speed to appeare,  
To answer the vile abuses of his:  
The Lords of the Council the matter will heare,  
This newes being brought, his wits he sought,  
Which way his villany best might be wrought,  
Then up and downe the Citie so faire,  
He seeketh companions to serve his harme:  
A sort of Vagabonds taked and bare,  
The which to wicke trades for money are wont:  
He hired for witness his lies to uphold, etc.  
My masters, quoth he, my mother by name,  
To be a lewd strumpet accused I have:  
And having no witness to prove the same,  
Your aide and assistance herein I doe crave,  
Therefore without feare, before the Lords there,  
That this thing is certaine you sise shall it sweare,  
The first two quoth he shall sweare on a Booke,  
That twelve years past they plainly did see,  
As they through the Garden hedge sally did looke,  
That she in one houre was abused by three:  
But how it befell, they two markt it well,  
That just nine monthes after she had her first Gilt,  
The second couple shall sweare in this sort,  
That at twelve about thirteene eares past,  
She with her owne pretence did fall in such sport,  
That her second daughter was got at the last,  
Now trust us quoth they wicke sweare what you say,  
Or any thing else for money this day, etc.  
And than the first couple their oath now shal take,  
That at the Bath shee stay'd on a day,  
For a ch in the bones an excuse shee did make,  
How shee with a Courtier the wanton did play,  
And how well you wot in that pleasant place,  
Her dearest young daughter for certaine was got,  
But now my masters your names let me know,  
That I may provide your appaell with speed,  
Like sixe grave Citizens, so must you goe,  
The better your speeches the Nobles will heere:  
So shall I with some ere Saturday morne,  
Prove her a harlot, my Sisters base borne,  
My name is Hicke with the first man did say,  
And Praxite Ligio Alger the second likewise:  
Cretcher Cretche-winkow the third to display,  
And how well Widdow with foote staring eyes,  
Jacke shandance came then with Harry scale-bee,  
You are quoth the Widdow sonne right honest men,  
Before the Lords most prudent and grave,  
This wretch doth with his witnesses come,  
The Mother complains, and Justice doth erre,  
Of all the offences that he hath her done,  
My Lords than quoth, I pray you heare me,  
The Law for my deede, my woman shall be.

Her sonne said also shee's a harlot most vile,  
And those be her bastards that stand here in place,  
And that she hath often her body defile,  
By very good witness hee prove to her face,  
This thing of thy Mother thou oughtest to smother,  
Tis shame for a child to speake ill of his Mother,  
But if this matter be proved crima,  
And thou a false Liar be found to thy face,  
Worse than an Infidell, Pagan, or Jew,  
I hat ought 't to be punish'd and plagu'd in this case,  
And therefore draw necke and let us heare,  
What sayes the witness that here doth appeare,  
When the first couple did come for to sweare,  
They quivered and quaked in most woodous sort,  
The Lords very countenance did put them in feare,  
And now they knew not what to report,  
What sayes the witness that here doth appeare,  
The Lords perceiving the case how it went,  
Did aske the last couple what they had to say,  
Who fell on their knees in earnestment,  
Saying they were hired for money that day:  
Quoth they it is so the truth for to shew,  
Against the good Widdow no harme we doe knowe,  
Thus was the Widdow delivered from blame,  
With her three Daughters of beazny most bright,  
Her sonne reproached with sorrow and shame,  
Having his Judgement appointed him right,  
To strike even all the goods he possesseth,  
To loose both his eares, and berishe, so rest, etc.  
When he heard his Judgement pronounced to be,  
The scars full bitterly fell downe from his face:  
To Mother and Sisters hee knelled on his knee,  
Comfounding that harme had brought this day,  
That for mine owne gaine I sought to defame  
My Sisters three portions this hee I did have,  
Therefore deare Mother forgive meesse I crave,  
Of you and my Sisters, offered so sore:  
My body from penit if you will but save,  
I sweare I will grieve and offend you no more,  
The Lords then repleide the Law justly tride,  
The punishment now thou art like to abide:  
Therefore to prison now thou shalt goe,  
Whereas thou shalt the Kings pleasure abide:  
From thence to be brought with shame and with woe  
To suffer the punishment due for thy pride,  
The rest of hand thou shalt understand,  
That presently thou shalt be banish't the Land,  
Now while in prison this prisoner did rest,  
Hermelle hee hang'd in desperate woe:  
Such horror of conscience possessed his braine:  
And being cast forth, the Ravens pickt out his eyes:  
All Children beheld what hath bene told,  
Accuse no man falsely for Lucre of Gold,  
*Not for a spot of falsehood, and forgerie, feake,  
For great is the wick, and it will proveable.*

Printed for Fr. Cowles.



## Text transcription:

*The first part of the Widdow of Watling street & her three daughters, & how her wicked Son accused her to be an harlot, and his sisters Bastards. To the tune of Bragandary.*

OF the kinde Widdow of Watling street  
I will the story tell,  
Who by her husband deere was left,  
In substance very well;  
A prodigall sonne likewise had she,  
And faire young daughters lovely three?  
*Great misery, sorrow and misery,  
Commeth for want of grace.*

For by his daily practises,  
which were both lewd and ill,  
His fathers heart from him was drawne,  
His love and his good will.  
But yet what chance so ere befell,  
his mother lov'd him dearely well,

When in prison lay full poore,  
for debt that he did owe,

His father would not stirre out of doores,  
For to release his woe.  
But when his mother his griefe did see,  
shee found the meanes to set him free.  
And when her husband fell full sicke,  
and went to make his will,  
O husband remember your sonne she sayd,  
Although he hath beene ill:

But yet no doubt he may returne,  
repenting the evill he hath done.  
Remember wife what sorrow and care,  
through him I daily found:  
Who through his lewd ungracious deedes,  
Hath spent me many a pound:  
And therefore let him sinke or swim,  
I meane not for to deale with him.

And therefore sole Executor heere,  
I doe thee onely make:  
To pay thy debts & legacies, the rest unto thee take,  
Not so my husband deare (quoth she)  
but let your sonne be joynd with me:  
For why he is our child (she sayd)  
we can it not denie.

The first that ever graced you  
With fathers dignitie,  
Oh, that ever you did me love,  
grant this request for his behove.  
Thy love deare wife was evermore,  
most precious unto me:  
And therefore for thy sweet loves sake  
I grant thy suit to thee.

But ere one yeare be fully spent,  
I know thou wilt the same repent.  
Now was his sonne received home,  
and with his mother deare,  
Was joynd Executor of the Will,  
which did his courage cheere:  
The old man dying, buried was,  
but now behold what came to passe.

The funerall being ended quite, it fell upon a day  
some friend did fetch the Widdow forth,  
To drive conceits away,

While she was forth and thought no ill,  
 her wicked sonne doth worke his will.  
 Possession of the house he took, in most despite full wise,  
 throwing his sisters out of doors,  
 With sad lamenting cryes.

When this they did his mother show,  
 She would not beleewe he would doe so.

But when she came unto her house,  
 and found it so indeede,  
 Shee cald unto her son and said, although her heart did bleede,  
 Come downe my sonne, come downe said she,  
 let in thy mother and sisters three.  
 I will not let in my mother he said,  
 nor sisters any one,  
 The house is mine, I will it keepe,  
 Therefore away begone.

O sonne how canst thou endure to see't.  
 thy mother and sisters to lye i'th street.  
 Did not thy father by his will,  
 For tearme of this my life,  
 Give me this house for to enjoy, without all further strife.  
 And more of all his goods said shee,  
 I am Executor joyn'd with thee.

My father left you the house, he said,  
 but this was his intent,  
 That you therefore during your life,  
 Should pay me yearely rent:  
 An hundred pound a yeare therefore,  
 you shall give me, or else give it o're.  
 And sith the Cities custome is,  
 that you thirds must have  
 Of all my fathers moveables,

I grant what law doth crave:  
 But not a penny more will I,  
 discharge of any Legacie.  
 O wicked sonne, quoth shee that seekes  
 thy mother thus to fleece:  
 Thy father to his daughters gave  
 Three hundred pounds a peece:

Tell me who shall their portions pay,  
 appointed at their marriage day.  
 Then with a scornfull smile he said,  
 What talke you of so much:  
 Ten pounds a peece, I will them give,

My charitie is such.

Now fie upon thee beast, quoth she,  
that thus dost deale with them and me.

But ere that they and I will take  
this injurie at thy hand:  
The chiefest Peeres of England shall  
the matter understand:

Nay, if you goe to that, quoth he,  
marke well what I shall tell to thee.

Thou hast a secret harlot beene,  
and this Ile prove full plaine,  
That in my Fathers life time didst  
Lewd Ruffians entertaine:  
The which did then beget of thee,  
in wicked sort these bastards three,  
No daughters to my father then  
were they in any wise:  
As he supposed them to be,  
Thou blinding so his eyes.

Therefore no right at all have they,  
to any penny given this day.  
When shee did heare her shamelesse sonne,  
for to defame her so,  
Shee with her lovely daughters three,  
with grieve away did goe.  
But how this matter out did fall,  
the second part will shew you all.

FINIS.

*The second part of the Widdow of Watling street and her three Daughters  
To the tune of, the Wanton wife.*

*T* He beautifull Widdow of *Watling* street,  
Being thus falsely accused by her sonne,  
With her three daughters of favour so sweet,  
Whose beauty the love of many had wonne:  
With her daughters three for succour went she,  
unto the Kings Counsell of Noble degree.  
*Now fie upon falsehood, and forgerie fraile,  
For great is the truth, and it will prevaile .*

Her sonne by Writ now summoned is,  
At the Star-chamber with speed to appeare,  
To answer the vile abuses of his:  
The Lorde of the Counsell the matter will heare,

This newes being brought, his wits he sought,  
Which way his villany best might be wrought.

Then up and downe the Citie so faire,  
He seeketh companions to serve his turne:  
A sort of Vagabonds naked and bare,  
The which to worke murders for money are won:  
These wretches behold, for money and gold,  
He hired for witsse his lies to uphold, etc.

My masters, quoth he, my mother by name,  
To be a lewd strumpet accused I have:  
And having no witsse to prove the same,  
Your ayde and assistance herein I doe crave,  
Therefore without feare, before the Lords there,  
That this thing is certaine you sixe shall it sweare.

The first two quoth he shall sweare on a Booke,  
That sixteene yearss past they plainely did see,  
As they through the Garden hedge sadly did looke,  
That she in one houre was abused by three:  
But how it befell, they two markt it well,  
That just nine moneths after she had her first Girle.

The second couple shall sweare in this sort,  
That at *Bristow* about thirteene yeares past,  
She with her owne prentise did fall in such sport,  
That her second daughter was got at the last,  
Now trust us quoth they weele sweare what you say,  
Or any thing else for money this day, etc.

And thus the third couple their oath now shal take,  
That at the Bath shee stayd on a day,  
For ach in the bones an excuse she did make,  
How shee with a Courtier the wanton did play,  
And how well you wot in that pleasant plot,  
Her dearest young daughter for certaine was got.

But now my masters your names let me know,  
That I may provide your apparell with speed,  
Like sixe grave Citizens, so must you goe,  
The better your speches the Nobles will heed:  
So shall I with scorne ere Saturday morne,  
Prove her a harlot, my Sisters base borne.

My name is *Make-shift* the first man did say,  
And *Francis Light-finger* the second likewise:  
*Cutbert Creepe-window* the third to display,  
And *Rowland Robman* with foule staring eyes,  
*Jacke shamelesse* came then with *Harry steale-hen* ,

You are quoth the Widow sonne right honest men.

Before the Lords most prudent and grave,  
 This wretch doth with his witnesses come,  
 The Mother complaines, and Justice doth crave,  
 Of all the offences that he hath her done.  
 My Lords than quoth, I pray you heare me,  
 The Law for my deeds, my warrant shall be.

Her sonne sayd also shee's a harlot most vilde,  
 And those be her bastards that stand here in place,  
 And that she hath often her body defilde,  
 By very good wnesse Ile prove to her face,  
 This thing of thy Mother thou oughtest to smother,  
 Tis shame for a child to speake ill of his Mother.

But if this matter be proved untrue,  
 And thou a false Lyar be found to thy face,  
 Worse than an Infidell, Pagan, or Jew,  
 Thou ought'st to be punish't and plagu'd in this case  
 And therefore draw neere and let us heare,  
 What sayes the wnesse that here doth appeare.

When the first couple did come for to sweare,  
 They quivered and quaked in most wondrous sort,  
 The Lords very countenance did put them in feare,  
 And now they knew not what to report,  
 The second likewise so star'd with their eyes,  
 They stammered and knew not what to devise, etc.

The Lords perceiving the case how it went,  
 Did aske the last couple what they had to say,  
 Who fell on their knees incontinent,  
 Saying they were hired for money that day:  
 Quoth they it is so the truth for to show,  
 Against the good Widdow no harme we doe know.

Thus was the Widdow delivered from blame,  
 With her three Daughters of beauty most bright.  
 Her sonne reproached with sorrow and shame,  
 Having his Judgement appointed him right,  
 To forfeit even all the goods he possest,  
 To loose both his eares, and banisht, so rest, etc.

When he heard his Judgement pronounced to be,  
 The teares full bitterly fell downe from his face:  
 To Mother and Sisters he kneeled on his knee,  
 Confessing that lucre had brought this digrace,  
 That for mine owne gaine I sought to detaine  
 My Sisters three portions this lie I did faine,

Therefore deare Mother forgivenessse I crave,  
 Of you and my Sisters, offended so sore:  
 My body from perill if you will but save,  
 I sweare I will grieve and offend you no more.  
 The Lords then replide the Law justly tride.  
 The punishment now thou art like to abide:

Therefore to prison now thou shalt goe,  
 Whereas thou shalt the Kings pleasure abide:  
 From thence to be brought with shame and with woe  
 To suffer the punishment due for thy pride,  
 Then out of hand thou shalt understand,  
 That presently thou shalt be banisht the Land,

Now while in prison this prisoner did rest,  
 Himselfe he hanged in desperate wise:  
 Such horroure of conscience possessed his brest:  
 And being cast forth, the Ravens pickt out his eyes  
 All Children behold what hath beene told,  
 Accuse no man falsely for Lucre of Gold.  
*Now fie upon falsehood and forgery fraile,  
 For great is the truth and it will prevaile.*

FINIS.

Anon, *The first part of the Widdow of Watling street & her three daughters, & how her wicked Son accused her to be an harlot, and his sisters Bastards. To the tune of Bragandry and The second part of the Widdow of Watling street and her three Daughters. To the tune of, the Wanton wife*, printed for Fr. Cowles (1635?), The Pepys Library, Magdalene College, Cambridge.

<http://ebba.english.ucsb.edu/ballad/20061/transcription>



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## **Images**

Figure 3: The Sidney Brothers in the 1570s (approximately). From the collection of the Viscount De L'Isle, cited in Pollock, 'Younger Sons', p. 23.

Figure 4: Lady Anne Clifford's Great Picture, the Clifford Family from Appleby Castle (1636), taken from Graham et al, *Her Own Life*, p. 36.

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