Microcynicon: Aspects of Early-modern England

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My academic debts extend back over a long period. I learned a prolific amount whilst in the Department/Centre for English Local History at the University of Leicester, more particularly from Charles Phythian-Adams. As stimulating was my contact with the Department/School of English which offered me a University Fellowship between 2005, when I retired, and 2010. Attendance at many conferences has helped my understanding of contexts, not least the North American Conference on British Studies and the Reading Early-Modern Studies Conference. Embryonic forms of some of the chapters have been tested at the REMSC and the Economic History Society Conference. The Leverhulme Trust kindly funded my research at Lichfield Record Office (project grant EM-2012-002\7), my proposal supported by Greg Clark and Richard Smith. I became familiar with the material on Nottingham through research for the *Records of Early English Drama* for Nottinghamshire. An immense debt is owed to the staff of the Lichfield Record Office and Nottinghamshire Archives, not only for their assistance, but their kindness. The production of this volume owes so much to the OpenSource community, latterly the use of LyX for document processing, but also the deployment of QuantumGIS (QGIS), LibreOffice, gretl (for statistics), and various distributions of Linux and BSD Unix which have served me for well over a dozen years. It also depended on the expertise at Adlard Print and Reprographics. The price of books is so astronomical now, that I believe it a virtue to disseminate ideas and information in a low-cost format, reducing the inessentials of formal publications. In some senses, the book may therefore seem incomplete, without roundedness. I apologise for that issue, but my purpose is to distribute at the lowest possible cost.

ABBREVIATIONS: LRO Lichfield Record Office; ROLLR Record Office for Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland; TNA The National Archives, London; WSRO Wiltshire and Swindon Record Office

Chapter 1

Contexts and content

Microcynicon was composed by Thomas Middleton as *Six Snarling Satires* and was accordingly burned on 4 June 1599, a "diminutive octavo volume [which] exemplifies the conventions and contradictions of late sixteenth-century satire".[1] His small volume consisted of "a heterogeneous compilation of disparate forms".[2] Satires of the 1590s expressed "cultural anxieties about shifts in the social order, particularly the instability of class ..."[3] The present volume lacks the wit of Middleton, but has some of the other characteristics: brevity to a fault; a composite aggregation of disparate contents; and some attempt to address some of the undercurrents of early-modern society, those "conventions and contradictions".[4] In the process, it attempts to relate contemporary dramatic literature, excluding tragedy, to archival evidence, whilst also essaying, if not consistently successfully, to avoid the pitfalls and complications of the comic genre infused with satire and exaggeration.

> Thus may we see by folly oft the wise
> Stumble and fall into fool's paradise ...[5]

Our understanding of the transformations of Tawney's century in the localities, approximately 1540-1640, is an amalgamation from the results of quite disparate approaches.[6] At the level of the "locality", we have expositions of change in individual parishes, administrative entities like counties, and regions or *pays*. Complementing such examinations, there are thematic approaches which consider, often at the level of particular places or localities, discourses and practices of improvement, credit relationships, labourers' conditions, the position of the

[1] The following is simply derived from Wendy Hall, "Microcynicon: six snarling satires" in *Thomas Middleton: The Collected Works*, ed. Gary Taylor and John Lavagnino (Oxford, 2007), pp. 1970-73 (quotation at p. 1970).

[2] Hall, "Microcynicon", p. 1973.

[3] Hall, "Microcynicon", p. 1973.

[4] Hall, "Microcynicon", p. 1970.

[5] Middleton, *Microcynicon*, "Epilogue", lines 1-2, in Hall, "Microcynicon", p. 1984.

[6] Jane Whittle, "Tawney's Agrarian Problem revisited", in *Landlords and Tenants in Britain, 1440-1640*, ed. Whittle (Woodbridge, 2013), pp. 1-34.

poor, "community", solidarity, reciprocity and "mutuality", and exclusion.[7] Here, a similar exegesis is attempted, combining a geographical expanse with particular themes. The rumination on the themes occurs in consolidated and discrete chapters, concerned broadly with levels of inequality and the conditions which influenced those disparities, in particular the development of finance capitalism, capital accumulation and formation, social differentiation, exclusion, and the discourse and practice of stigmatization and disparagement. The research attempts, appropriately it is hoped, to combine quantitative and qualitative data processing and interpretation.

What is at issue here are the connections between material conditions or circumstances and discourse. The attempt is to understand how the position of the poorest related to the social undercurrents of respect/disrespect, derogation, and disparagement. Whilst contemporary rhetoric often emphasized social order, harmony, reciprocity, and solidarity, all social contacts also involve the converse of friction and dissent. The former is more evident, whilst the latter is often occluded. There are, of course, positive harmonious contexts of the extraction of "the everyday knowledge held by members of a society" which illumines "social reality".[8] The consideration avoids, however, the essential conformity to norms and values of Parsonian structuralism or systems theory. In escaping the Parsonian paradigm, we can elicit the fractious quotidian events disturbing social integration. If action includes "communicative action" (Habermas), then it is not always dialogic or dialectical, but as often disparaging and dismissive between unequals. Language works on people. Its work is done through the actor's perceptions of the material conditions of others. This present volume of essays thus addresses inter-related questions of economic inequality, the impact of finance capitalism, social difference in the countryside, variation in capital formation and acquisition/retention, the language of social differentiation, disparagement and stigmatization which depended upon the differences in economic, social and cultural capital, and the consequent exclusion. All these processes are proposed as fundamental to the transformations and the genesis of early-modern capitalism.

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[7] Recently, for example, David Levine and Keith Wrightson, *The Making of an Industrial Society: Whickham, 1560-1765* (Oxford, 1991); Richard Hoyle and Henry French, *The Character of English Rural Society: Earls Colne, 1550-1750* (Manchester, 2007); *Custom, Improvement and the Landscape in Early Modern Britain*, ed. Hoyle (Farnham, 2011); Craig Muldrew, *The Economy of Obligation: The Culture of Credit and Social Relations in Early Modern England* (London, 1998); Muldrew, *Food, Energy and the Creation of Industriousness: Work and Material Culture in Agrarian England, 1550-1780* (Cambridge, 2011); Marjorie McIntosh, *Poor Relief in England, 1350-1600* (Cambridge, 2012); Steve Hindle, *On the Parish? The Micro-Politics of Poor Relief in Rural England, c.1550-1750* (Oxford, 2004); *Communities in Early Modern England: Networks, Place, Rhetoric*, ed. Alexandra Shepard and Phil Withington (Manchester, 2000); Keith Wrightson, "Mutualities and obligations: changing social relationships in early modern England", *Proceedings of the British Academy* 139 (2006), pp. 157-94; *The Politics of the Excluded, c.1500-1850*, ed. Tim Harris (Basingstoke, 2001). An exhaustive bibliography would be excessive here.

[8] Hans Joas and Wolfgang Knöbl, *Social Theory: Twenty Introductory Lectures* (Cambridge, 2009), p. 151 ("ethnomethodology" or *Lebenswelt*). Much of the following relies on Joas and Knöbl.

> The feeling that such recognition is not forthcoming is not only the result of economic disadvantages, but also of cultural contempt, linguistic discrimination etc.[9]

The geographical focus is "provincial", avoiding contact with the metropolitan culture and economic trends of London. On the other hand, whilst accepting the description "provincial" as adumbrated by Hoskins, there is no intention here to attribute virtue to either the "provincial" or the "particular".[10] The *modus operandi* is simply to explore how transitions and transformations in some parts of England advanced in the century before the Civil Wars.

One of the principal "localities" involved is the diocese of (Coventry and) Lichfield, which begs some explanation. An ecclesiastical jurisdiction is hardly a region, merely an administrative unit.[11] Its origins do extend back to the existence of West Mercia, with Tamworth as the capital and Lichfield as the see. In terms of the recently-declared "cultural provinces", the diocese is divided between two constituencies, the Trent drainage (Derbyshire and Staffordshire) and the Severn/Avon confluence and basin (Shropshire and Warwickshire).[12] Cheshire and south Lancashire, although formally and formerly (until 1540) in the diocese are excluded, for the simple reason of the establishment of the new see of Chester by Henry VIII. Within each of the counties existed, however, a diversity of topography and geomorphology. Broadly, each county had distinctively different northern and southern regions. Derbyshire and Staffordshire were separated into northern uplands and southern lowlands, in the latter case both dominated by the Trent valley. Shropshire was similarly cleft. Warwickshire, as is widely understood, contained Arden and Felden.[13] In the case of Warwickshire, only the Arden woodland was contained within the diocese, the rest pertaining to the diocese of Worcester. In Shropshire, the western extreme of the county belonged to the diocese of Hereford.

The topography of each county was more complicated, nonetheless.[14] Staffordshire contained six discrete topographical areas: in the north, the Pennine

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[9] Joas and Knöbl, *Social Theory*, p. 537, commenting on the social theory of Axel Honneth. The other major influences here are Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste*, trans. Richard Nice (Cambridge, MA, 1984), Ian Miller, *The Anatomy of Disgust* (Cambridge, MA, 1997), and Axel Honneth, *Disrespect: The Normative Foundations of Critical Theory* (Cambridge, 2007).

[10] W. G. Hoskins, *Provincial England: Essays in Social and Economic History* (London, 1963).

[11] Paul Claval, *An Introduction to Regional Geography*, trans. Ian Thompson (Oxford, 1998), pp. 124-6.

[12] Charles Phythian-Adams, "Introduction: an agenda for English Local History", in *Societies, Cultures and Kinship: Cultural Provinces and English Local History*, ed. Phythian-Adams (London, 1993), p. 16 and Fig. I.1.

[13] *Field and Forest: An Historical Geography of Warwickshire and Worcestershire*, ed. T. R. Slater and P. J. Jarvis (Norwich, 1982), especially M. J. Stanley, "Medieval tax returns as source material", pp. 231-56.

[14] For brief introductions to the socio-cultural aspects of *pays*, Claval, *Introduction to Regional Geography*, pp. 138-60; Mike Crang, *Cultural Geography* (London, 1998), p. 18 (forwards from the debt to Carl Sauer); Richard Peet, *Modern Geographical Thought* (Oxford, 1998), pp. 14-17; Robert A. Dodgshon, *Society in Time and Space: A Geographical Perspective on Change* (Cambridge, 1998), pp. 39-44

Fringe, contiguous with Derbyshire, and the northern upland; medially, the central lowland and the Cannock Hills, extending to the southern upland; and in the lower reaches of the county, the south-western lowland and the Trent and Tame river systems.[15] Within the diocese of Lichfield, the eastern extent of Shropshire comprised the eastern Sandstone plain (around Shifnal), the coal measures (about Wellington), and the northern plain (focused on Wem, Ellesmere and Market Drayton).[16] Derbyshire contained, as well as upland Dark and White Peaks and the lowland Trent Valley, coal-measures sandstones in the east.

The Lichfield material is compared and contrasted with similar material from the diocese of Salisbury, comprising the counties of Wiltshire and Berkshire. Additional probate material is derived from the archdeaconry of Leicester and the diocese of Durham. Some chapters depend on different material. The chapter on commensality contains material from Nottingham, Oxford, Reading and a variety of provincial urban places. Two of the chapters depend substantially on the interpretation of comedic drama, two plays by Ben Jonson, *The New Inn* and *The Tale of a Tub*. The coherent theme is the relationship between the lowest in society and their immediate superiors. Inequality extends beyond the economic to the social and cultural. After all, one definition of poverty is the inability to participate fully in society.[17]

The first obligation is to describe the jurisdictions and their records. The diocese of Lichfield comprised the entire counties of Staffordshire and Derbyshire, each of which composed a discrete archdeaconry, and substantial parts of the counties of Shropshire and Warwickshire, each constituting archdeaconries. Figure 1.1 (see p. 14) illustrates both the ecclesiastical geography and the distribution of the records. In the latter case, the hatched parishes represent those for which probate material has been analysed. The extensive blank areas in north Derbyshire and in central Staffordshire reflect Peculiar Jurisdictions, those enclaves exempt from diocesan jurisdiction, in these cases because they pertained to the cathedral chapter. Probate material (wills/testaments and inventories) from the diocese of Lichfield comprises a principal source for the discussions below about capital and labour in provincial England in Tawney's century, which is conventionally defined as *c.*1540 to *c.*1640.[18]

The geographical distribution provides reasonable coverage, but there are differences in the representation of individual parishes. Whilst for some parishes only a few inventories are extant, other parishes have a generous survival of probate material. Fortunately, there is a fair geographical representation of these well-endowed parishes. Over 140 items are available for the City of Coventry, at the urban apex. The county boroughs of Derby and Shrewsbury are both illuminated by more than 60 items. Small market towns with 30-70 items in-

[15]David M. Palliser, *The Staffordshire Landscape* (London, 1976), p. 32.

[16]Trevor Rowley, *The Shropshire Landscape* (London, 1972).

[17]Brian Nolan and Ive Marx, "Economic inequality, poverty, and social exclusion", in *The Oxford Handbook of Inequality*, ed. Wiemer Salverda, Nolan, and Timothy M. Smeeding (Oxford, 2009), p. 316.

[18]LRO B/C/11.

clude Leek (Staffordshire), Wirksworth (Derbyshire), Ashbourne (Derbyshire), Whitchurch (Salop), Tamworth (Warwickshire) and Uttoxeter (Staffordshire). Additionally, the market centres, perhaps less vibrant, of Dronfield (Derbyshire) and Stone (Staffordshire) have similar numbers. Birmingham, formally a market town, but rapidly changing, falls into this group.[19] For Stoke on Trent, another place in transformation, there are more than 60 items. What is further significant is that the immense parishes with dispersed settlement, so characteristic of the north and west, are well represented by probate material, some of which have been mentioned above, such as Leek, with more than 70 items, and Dronfield, with more than 50, both in the northernmost extent. Into this category belong Alstonefield (Staffordshire) with more than 70 documents, Duffield (Derbyshire) with a comparable number, and Glossop, in the far north-west of the Peak District, with well over 130. The probate material from these locations importantly provides an antidote to the nucleated parishes of more southern regions. Duffield, for example, extended over about 16,000 acres, the parish encompassing the townships of Belper, Biggin, Hazelwood, Heage, Holbrook, Hulland, Idridgehay, Makeney, Southwood, Turnditch, and Windley.[20]

In accordance with the extant probate material, the chronological boundaries here are 1533 to 1639. [21] Probate material for the diocese is extant in considerable numbers from 1533, with some earlier material for 1526. This extensive corpus has been sampled for 1526 and 1533 to 1639, by researching systematically and comprehensively through the material for the surnames commencing A and B, which has involved 6,710 wills and inventories. Well over a half (3, 872) identified the status or occupation of the deceased in the will and/or the inventory. For many purposes below, the data have been divided into three cohorts: before 1553; 1554-1600; and 1601-1640. Those categories have an arbitrary design, to some extent. The issue is accommodating a sufficient amount of data in each cohort. Generational cohorts would have better comprehended inflationary pressures, but resulted in insufficient data in each cohort.[22] The compromise has been to adopt arbitrary, longer periods to contain a more significant amount of data. The split at 1553 is partly explained by the fiscal, financial and inflationary events at that time.[23] As a result, however, the data before 1553 are desultory and largely provide only anecdotal evidence. The local impact of the fall of money in 1551 is epitomised in one of the inventories of 1552: "Item in monye after the old Ratte vjj [*sic*] li. x s. iiij d. of which was

[19] Alan Everitt, "The marketing of agricultural produce', in *The Agrarian History of England and Wales, volume IV, 1500-1640*, ed. Joan Thirsk (Cambridge, 1967), pp. 470-5.

[20] Heather Falvey, "The articulation, transmission and preservation of custom in the forest community of Duffield (Derbyshire)", in *Custom, Improvement and the Landscape in Early Modern Britain*, ed. Richard W. Hoyle (Farnham, 2011), p. 74.

[21] Probate jurisdiction and its records are now succinctly analyzed in *When Death Do Us Part: Understanding and Interpreting the Probate Records of Early Modern England*, ed. Tom Arkell, Nesta Evans and Nigel Goose (Oxford, 2000).

[22] Now comprehensively discussed by David Hackett Fischer, *The Great Wave: Price Revolutions and the Rhythm of History* (1996), pp. 65-102.

[23] J. D. Gould, *The Great Debasement: Currency and Economy in Mid-Tudor England* (Oxford, 1970).

lost in the Falle of the monye halfe the Rest ys iij li. xv s. ij d."[24]

The diocese of Salisbury comprised the whole of the counties of Wiltshire and Berkshire.[25] A purposive sample has been extracted, an integral series, for the consistory court, comprising 2,498 individuals. The material extends from *c.*1584 (but few before 1591) to 1639, although some additional material has been considered too down to 1650.[26] The Salisbury diocesan material is basically employed in the discussion of the development of fiscal capitalism (written instruments of debt, risk and security), comparative agrarian status, and capital formation (especially weavers and tanners).[27] Figures 1.2 and 1.3 (p. 15) represent the parishes for which probate material is extant before 1640 in the two counties of Wiltshire and Berkshire. The blank spaces in the maps reflect the substantial peculiar jurisdictions. About fifty parishes and chapelries in Wiltshire were exempt from the Ordinary, consisting mainly of estates of the Dean and the Cathedral Chapter (prebendaries). These exempt jurisdictions extended into Berkshire.[28] Although Trowbridge was a peculiar jurisdiction, some probate material is contained within the consistory court documents. Indeed, some of the Trowbridge wills mention that it was a peculiar.[29]

Topographically, Wiltshire consisted of two broad divisions, the Chalk and the Cheese, although smaller sub-divisions existed. Clothworking developed as a by-employment mainly in the north-west, but with an arc extending towards the City. Ingram compared two parishes in each of the contrasting regions, Keevil and Wylye, the former infused with clothworking.[30] Clothworking extended into the City, where bonelace was also an extensive occupation.[31]

In the chapter on financial instruments, material is also derived from the statute staple court in Nottingham and the borough court in Newark. Comparative examples are derived from the archdeaconry of Leicester, from *c.*1522.[32] Incidentally, it should be commented here that the boundary between north-west Leicestershire and south-east Derbyshire fluctuated, with many of the parishes

[24]LRO B/C/11 William Aspeshay, Drayton in Hales, 1552.

[25]For the ecological divisions of Wiltshire, David Underdown, *Revel, Riot and Rebellion: Popular Politics and Culture in England, 1603-1660* (Oxford, 1985). For Berkshire, Margaret Yates, *Town and Countryside in Western Berkshire, c.1327-c.1600: Social and Economic Change* (Woodbridge, 2007); Martin Ingram, *Church Courts, Sex and Marriage in England, 1570-1640* (Cambridge, 1990), p. 74.

[26]WSRO P/1.

[27]For the contexts, Eric Kerridge, "The movement of rent, 1540-1640", repr. in *Essays in Economic History Volume Two*, ed. Eleanor M. Carus-Wilson (London, 1962), pp. 208-26; George D. Ramsay, *The Wiltshire Woollen Industry in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (2nd edn, London, 1965); Ingram, *Church Courts, Sex and Marriage*, pp. 74-5; Eric Kerridge, "Agriculture, c.1500-c.1793", in *Victoria County History of Wiltshire* vol. IV (London, 1979), pp. 43-64; John Hare, *A Prospering Society: Wiltshire in the Later Middle Ages* (Hatfield, 2011).

[28]Ingram, *Church Courts, Sex and Marriage*, pp. 36-8, including a map of the peculiars.

[29]WSRO P1/G31, S78.

[30]Ingram, *Church Courts, Sex and Marriage*, pp. 21, 78-82.

[31]Paul Slack, *Poverty in Early Stuart Salisbury* (Wiltshire Record Society 31, 1975); Slack, "Poverty and politics in Salisbury, 1597-1666", in *Crisis and Order in English Towns, 1500-1700: Essays in Urban History* ed. Peter Clark and Slack (London, 1972), pp. 164-203.

[32]ROLLR 1D41.

historically in Derbyshire. In the chapter concerning capital formation and accumulation, comparative material (for tanners and weavers) has been collected from the diocese of Durham, largely the two ancient counties of Durham and Northumberland.[33] The geographical expanse of the research thus comprehends several hundred parishes in the diocese of Lichfield, the whole of which jurisdiction contained 603 parishes, combined with the several hundred parishes in the diocese of Salisbury. The ecological dimensions include both upland and lowland *pays* and local regions, importantly located medially across England, at a distance from, but not unconnected to, the metropolis and capital.[34]

In 1624, the appraisers of the personal estate of Robert Bodington, of Foleshill within Coventry, valued his chattels in all at £9 14*s.* 8*d.*, but referred to part of his estate collectively as "other implements belonginge to a poore house".[35] About fifteen years later, the appraisers of a labourer in Tamworth, accounted for his chattels in a total amount of £5 7*s.* 0*d.*, remarking: "The party Deceased Liued partly of the Almes of the towne".[36] These two inventories should alert us to some of the characteristics of probate jurisdiction in the diocese of [Coventry and] Lichfield: that the inventories represent the indigent as well as the affluent. Addressing the socio-economic status of the subjects of inventories in the diocese of Lichfield, before 1640 at least there was no unmitigated bias to the most affluent nor an unremitting exclusion of the poor in the corpus of inventories. Technically, of course, probate inventories were compiled only for deceased who had personal estate which exceeded £5 – *bona notabilia.* In fact, in the diocese of Lichfield, a significant proportion of the inventories contain less than £5, even in the decades after the Probate and Mortuaries Act of 1529 before the impact of inflation.[37] Tables 1.1 and 1.2 demonstrate the incorporation of some of the poorest sections of society in the probate process, including inventories of their personal estate. Sixteen percent of the inventories in the generation after the 1529 Act were concerned with total personal estate below the "legal" criterion of £5. The norm appears to have been to include at least a section of the poorest. After 1554, the proportion with less than £5 declines, but the impact of serious inflation after 1540 explains at least some of that transition, as asset prices increased as a consequence.

It can be observed, however, that there was a tendency towards exclusion – if not complete – of the less well-endowed by the early seventeenth century.

[33]<http://familyrecords.dur.ac.uk/nei/data/advanced.php>, examined November 2013.

[34]LRO B/C/11 John Bowdler, Newport, mercer, 1602: goods sent from London by bills amounting to £36 6*s.* 11*d.*; Ambrose Arden, Longcrofts in Yoxall, 1626: 15 pieces of London pewter in his own chamber; LRO B/C/11 Edmund Allen, Uttoxeter, 1602: a capper owed money by William Hattley of London.

[35]To reduce the number of footnotes, references are not always given to probate material from the LRO because the "call-number" consists of the surname, forename, place and date, as indicated in the text.

[36]LRO B/C/11 Thomas Berisford, Tamworth, 1639.

[37]Following Žižek, we might consider the intention of the act as universality, but compromised by an exemption: Slavoj Žižek, *Living in the End Times* (London, 2011), pp. 18-19.

Table 1.1: Rank-distribution of lower inventory valuations, Lichfield diocese (nearest integer)

Summa totalis	1533-1553 inc.	1554-1600 inc.	1601-1639 inc.
Amount (£s)	Percent of all	Percent of all	Percent of all
<5	16	6	5
>5-10	25	12	9
>10-15	16	13	8
>15-20	13	11	9

Table 1.2: Descriptive statistics of inventory valuations, Lichfield diocese

Variable	1533-1553	1554-1600	1601-1639
Mean (£s)	18.4	34.6	61.1
Standard deviation	21.572	38.505	82.810
Median (£s)	12	23	35
5th percentile	2.4	4	5
95 percentile	52.7	102	188

Even then, nonetheless, the least wealthy are represented, if not strictly proportionately. In 1623, for example, the inventory of William Burd of Shrewsbury had a *summa totalis* of merely £1 1*s.* 5*d.*, amongst his personalty an old pot and kettle with a combined value of 2*s.* 8*d.* and an old kettle of 2*d.* In the end, we have to work as best we can with what is available.

The distribution of inventory valuations for the diocese of Salisbury between *c.*1584 and 1650 complements the Lichfield composition. Since the number of inventories before 1601 is fairly insignificant, the entire range of the inventories through to 1639 can be considered as one cohort. Just over 35 percent of the total valuations in inventories amounted to £20 or less. Bearing in mind the original level of exemption from compiling an inventory – *bona notabilia* of £5 – it is significant that even in the first half of the seventeenth century, almost seven percent of the inventories concluded with a total sum of £5 or less. Neighbours continued to produce inventories for personal estate below £5. If that original sum is (conservatively) doubled to allow for inflation, more than 16 percent of inventories covered a total sum of £10 or less. Again, if the inventories do not correlate directly to the economic status of local inhabitants, there is a representation.

As with the Lichfield material, the geographical distribution of the Salisbury documents is asymmetric. Fully 81 percent of the individuals belonged to Wiltshire, with merely 19 percent contained within the archdeaconry of Berkshire. In the Berkshire cohort, only nine parishes have ten or more probate documents, none as many as twenty. Although Reading and Abingdon were urban, the other places with ten or more documents were rural parishes: Speen; Winkfield; Shrivenham; Kintbury; Stratfield Mortimer; Tilehurst; and Upper Lambourn. For most parishes, only a few probate records are extant. The over-

all geographical coverage for the county is reasonable. By contrast, 29 parishes in Wiltshire are represented by ten or more probate documents. At the apex are the two market towns of Marlborough (more than 120) and Devizes (almost a hundred).[38] Although 51 exist for the City of Salisbury, the number is exceeded for the parish of Potterne with 74. The rural complement is enhanced by West ("Bishop") Lavington (41), followed by the market town of Melksham. The remainder represent equally rural and small urban parishes with ten or more documents. The overall geographical distribution is illustrated in Fig. 1.2 (p. 15). Although a peculiar jurisdiction, as commented in several documents, Trowbridge (with Studley, then within the parish) is represented by just over twenty documents.[39] Wills were proved and inventories exhibited peripatetically in particular market towns: in Berkshire archdeaconry in Abingdon, Newbury and Reading; and in Wiltshire in Chippenham, Devizes, Marlborough, Salisbury and Trowbridge, and, very rarely, Warminster.[40]

One of the distinctive features of the Lichfield probate material is its content about debts.[41] Most wills contain columns at the foot where a record is made that the testator "confessed" his debts.[42] Usually, there is a column for debts owed to the testator and another listing those owed by the testator. An example is the will of the yeoman Thomas Bagshaw (Wetton, 1624), which itemized in one column at the foot four debts owed to him to the total tune of £53 5*s.* 7*d.*, and in another column six which he owed to the extent of £77 12*s.* 0*d.* The poorer husbandman, Thomas Buxstones (Calton, 1624), announced in his will that he owed four debts totalling £2 18*s.* 8*d.*, but expected to receive £6 6*s.* 8*d.* A Birmingham tanner informed his neighbours of the debts which he owed in 1610:

> Item the sayde Hughe Bennet Confessed that he did owe and was indebted to certayne persones as by a particuler note thereof appearethe aboute the Summe of v li. iiij s. viij d.[43]

Small debts were declared in wills too. The will of Henry Bott, whose estate was very modest, announced two debts owed by him to the amount of 30*s.* and three to him to the total of 28*s.*[44] Equally, inventories itemize debts owed to the deceased and there are sufficient records in inventories of debts owed by the deceased to conclude – if circumspectly – that the inventories represent an accurate statement of the actual economic position of the deceased. This point may perhaps be illustrated by an extreme example. The appraisers of the

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[38] *Marlborough Probate Inventories, 1591-1775*, ed. Lorelei Williams and Sally Thomson (Wiltshire Record Society 59, 2007).

[39] For the notation in probate documents that it was a peculiar or liberty, for example, WSRO P1/S78.

[40] For Warminster, WSRO P1/S113.

[41] Compare Muldrew, *Economy of Obligation*.

[42] "debtes which he confessed were oweinge him when he lay upon his death bed ..." LRO B/C/11 James Bennett, Stone (Fulford), 1615.

[43] LRO B/C/11 Hugh Bennet, Birmingham, 1610.

[44] LRO B/C/11 Anthony Bott, Ellaston (Stanton), 1621 (*summa totalis* £14 15*s.* 8*d.* plus unvalued apparel).

inventory of George Barbour, gentleman of Drayton Bassett in 1621, arrived at a total valuation of £233 16*s.* 6*d.* They then considered his credit position. Four debts, totalling £319, were due to him, but conversely thirteen debts were owed by him, amounting to £866 1*s.* 6*d.* They thus concluded: "Owing more then <his> his goodes & debtes extend to 313 li. 5 s." Although exceptional because of his status, the inclusion of debts out as well as in was not unusual. Although John Bouthe of Whitfield (Glossop, 1615) referred to himself as a yeoman in his will, his personal estate amounted only to £7 16*s.* 2*d.* When the appraisers balanced his inventory, they exhibited their concerns.

> Summa vij li. xvj s. ij d. out of the Whiche Summe he oweth lvj li. iiij s. viij d. as in his will & Testament more playnlye appeareth & so his Debtes exceede his goods to the value or Summe of xlviij li. viij s. vj d.

At the lower socio-economic level, for example, the carpenter John Bradeley alias Bowlas (Eyton, 1618), possessed personal estate appraised at £12 2*s.* 8*d.*, but the appraisers commented on his debts out as well as those owed to him: "Hee oweth as appeareth by specialties and sufficient testimonie xvij li. - 0 - 0". If we consider examples from the "middling sort", after calculating the value of his personal estate at £132 1*s.* 8*d.*, the appraisers of Thomas Boulton (Condover, 1618) listed six debts owing to him, amounting to £23 12*s.* 0*d.*, compared with three owed by him, totalling £34 19*s.* 4*d.*[45] The appraisers of another yeoman, of Darley Abbey, deducted the debts which he owed, advising: "So his debtes amount to more then his estate by 84 li. 9s. 6d."[46] As an example of a husbandman, the very affluent William Bishop (Wetton, 1621) was deemed by his appraisers to have a personal estate of £709 9*s.* 2*d.*, including twenty-three debts owed to him amounting to £282 17*s.* 10*d.*, diminished by three debts which he owed to the extent of £54. At the lowest end of the social scale, the personal estate of William Browne (Barrow-upon-Trent, 1630), a labourer, was appraised at £16 13*s.* 4*d.*, but the appraisers deducted the ten debts which he had accumulated, which almost equalled his personal estate at £16 7*s.* 2*d.* A similar condition obtained with another labourer, Nicholas Burton (Sutton Coldfield, 1631), whose personal estate of £19 6*s.* 10*d.* was diminished in his inventory by ten debts with which he was encumbered for £13 8*s.* 4*d.* The inventory of the yeoman Thomas Beighton (Chilvers Coton, 1625) recorded the debts which he owed, which amounted to £31 6*s.* 8*d.*, almost equivalent to the valuation of his personal estate.

In the cases of yeomen, too, small debts were recorded in the inventories, as the single debt for 10*s.* owed by German Buxton (Brassington, 1621). The consequence was that some personal estate was eradicated by debts at death, as in the case of Richard Bayley (Great Dawley, 1632), a blacksmith, who owed nine debts amounting to £13 8*s.* 8*d.*, but had personal estate appraised at only

[45]For the middling sort of people, Henry French, *The Middle Sort of People in Provincial England 1600-1750* (Oxford, 2007).
[46]LRO B/C/11 Nicholas Bradburie, Darley Abbey, 1624.

£8 1*s.* 6*d.* So too, the inventory of Thomas Benit (Alfreton, 1634), whilst recording his personal estate of £10 2*s.* 2*d.*, also certified the eleven debts which he owed vastly exceeding his resources – the subtraction amounting to £30 10*s.* 0*d.* Whilst the husbandman James Beardmore (Foston in Sutton, 1639) according to the appraisers, had personal estate valued at £41 14*s.* 0*d.*, the same appraisers listed specialties and other debts by which he was indebted to the tune of £95 16*s.* 8*d.* The personal estate of Thomas Bladen (Newton Solney) in 1639 (£65 13*s.* 4*d.*) was, the appraisers noted, exceeded drastically by the debts which he owed (twelve amounting in all to £110 17*s.* 8*d.*). The appraisers of the husbandman Richard Bromer (Muckleston, 1639) recorded the debts which he owed on specialties, a combined total of £18 13*s.* 0*d.*, in comparison with his personal estate valued in all at £13 5*s.* 6*d.* Perhaps more the norm in the respective proportions, however, was the inventory of Henry Brownell, a scythesmith of Jordanthorpe (Norton, 1634), which itemized thirteen debts owed to the deceased (£62 14*s.* 10*d.*) and nine owed by him (£20 17*s.* 10*d.*).[47]

Occasionally, the testators and appraisers were categorical that no debts were involved. Thus, the appraisers of Roger Briscoe (Berrington, 1621) responded about debts owed to the deceased: "nonne", although he owed four debts valued at £8 12*s.* 0*d.* Whilst adducing a debt in of 18*s.*, the appraisers of Richard Bradley, a labourer, responded about debts that he might owe: "wee knowe none".[48] Those who compiled the inventory of William Boult of Muckleston in 1612 commented: "Debtes owing to him non" (although they itemized thirteen debts which he owed).

Some consideration is also necessary about the quality of the debts. In some instances, perhaps isolated and infrequent, the debt actually contributed to capital formation. The debt of the gentleman, Robert Butterton of Butterton in Stoke on Trent (1639), extended to £420, whilst his personal estate amounted to £497 8*s.* 2*d.* This considerable debt, however, was contracted for the purchase of land. It is accordingly quite possible that most of these fiduciary issues are eliminated.

Table 1.3 illustrates the proportion of Lichfield inventories which recorded debts owed to and by the deceased. In the cohorts of 1553-1614, almost a third of inventories accounted for debts owed to the dead person. The percentage increased to 41.3 percent in 1615-1630. By the 1630s, debts in were mentioned in 44.5 percent of inventories, although debts owed by the deceased in only 12.2 percent. During this decade too, 42 percent of the inventories recording debts in included debts owed to the deceased by specialties. Conversely, and perhaps counterintuitively, the proportion of inventories containing debts owed by the deceased, declined consistently between 1553 and 1639, despite the confession of debts in testaments.

To a considerable extent, the inclusion of debts in wills and inventories compensates for the dearth of probate accounts. Amongst the corpus of Lichfield

[47]For debts owing by the deceased itemized at the end of the inventory, *Surrey Probate Inventories, 1558 - 1603*, ed. D. M. Herridge (Surrey Record Society 39, 2005), *passim*.

[48]LRO B/C/11 Richard Bradley, Wolston (Brandon), 1639.

Table 1.3: Debts in inventories, Lichfield diocese

Cohort	Debts in (% all inventories)	Debts out (% all inventories)
1554-1600	29.5	22.7
1601-1614	28.1	17.4
1615-1630	41.3	19.2
1631-1639	44.5	12.2

material examined, few probate accounts are extant. The most significant, which reveals the problems encountered by some yeomen towards the middle of the seventeenth century, was submitted by Mary, the widow and administrator of the estate of Thomas Byrch, yeoman, late of Wheaton Astley in the parish of Lapley, in 1639, which confirmed negative equity of £15 5*s.* 0*d.*, largely resulting from the pursuit of Mary to redeem specialties to which her late husband had become obliged, exacerbated by £10 expended on his funeral and three heriots totalling £16 10*s.* 0*d.*

The probate material from the diocese of Salisbury has a slightly more ambiguous content for debts, but it is quite possible that some of these fiduciary issues are mitigated. Some wills contain lists of debts owed by testators, accounting for just 3.5 percent of all wills.[49] The possibility that testators were asked about their debts can perhaps be deduced from a memorandum at the foot of a will in 1614: "The testator owed nothinge as he sayd".[50] Otherwise, debts were more often listed at the foot of the inventory, comprising 5.3 percent of all inventories.[51]

Numerous wills contain lists of debts owed by testators - their "confession" or acknowledgement of their debts.[52] The protocol is exemplified by the will of Robert Davis, yeoman of Charlton, in 1614, which contains at its foot: "my debts that I owe", comprising seven debts amounting to £20 10*s.* 0*d.*[53] The foot of another will contains the memorandum: "Debtes owed and confessed by the testator".[54] Otherwise, debts were often listed at the foot of the inventory.[55] The formula is illustrated by an inventory which appraised the personal estate at £354 3*s.* 4*d.*, but after the *summa totalis* listed debts of £108, £33, £20, £10, £4, £4 13*s.* 4*d.*, £28 5*s.* 0*d.*, £10, and £5.[56] Some inventories even accounted for the payment of the debts: "Sum totall all Debtes Discharged is xxx li. xj s. x d."[57] Similarly, the appraisers for the late Robert Cheslett

[49] For examples, WSRO P1/C5, C6, C35, C51, C77, C93, H48, H62, H156, L7, M46, P49, S31, as incidental amongst myriad references.

[50] WSRO P1/W54.

[51] For examples, WSRO P1/C4, C8, C29, C44, C57, C69, C97, C92, C120, C132, C165, S80, S99, S174, S201, T39.

[52] As fn. 46.

[53] WSRO P1/D31.

[54] WSRO P1/O23.

[55] As fn. 48.

[56] WSRO P1/C29.

[57] WSRO P1/C116 Edmund Carter, husbandman, 1625; for further examples of debts deducted and a new balance in inventories, R36, S254, W65.

concluded their inventory: "That which he Dyd ow being Deducted he was clearlye worth when he Dyed xxj li. viijs. xd".[58]The appraisers were occasionally more elaborate in their explanation of the debts: "Thes debtes are acknowledged that the said William Stevens did owe at the tyme of his death."[59] In some cases, the appraisers ostensibly referred to the testator's confession of debts, as after the *summa* of one inventory are encountered the words: "Debts which I did owe at my decease" with a list of the creditors and the amounts.[60] The appraisers of an inventory similarly remarked: "Debtes which George Slade did confesse to owe".[61] Debts were occasionally cancelled by crossing out, presumably as they had been acquitted.[62]Incidentally, the appraisers might produce a signed declaration of debts owed by the deceased, as the memorandum signed by Peter Edson listing nine debts which he owed totalling £5 and sixpence: "Anno domini 1637 the first daye of march peeter yeedson did Confess these debtes as following ..."

In the first chapter, on the distribution of wealth in the early sixteenth century, much dependence is placed on the statistical evidence of the Gini coefficient extrapolated from tax data. The context is, however, explored through the medium of the revival of eclogue, if it had been submerged, and politically-motivated as well as less partial critique. Chapters two to four extend the reliance on quantitative data, but in a more traditional vein of descriptive or summary statistics and aggregates. Chapters five to seven contain more qualitative material, more hermeneutic approach and interpretation, and extrapolation from both material sources and the contemporary discursive intentions of and responses to dramatic literature (comedy to the exclusion of tragedy).

[58]WSRO P1/C97.
[59]WSRO P1/S181 (1628).
[60]WSRO P1/P100.
[61]WSRO P1/S34.
[62]WSRO P1/S168.

Figure 1.1: Distribution of inventories, Lichfield diocese

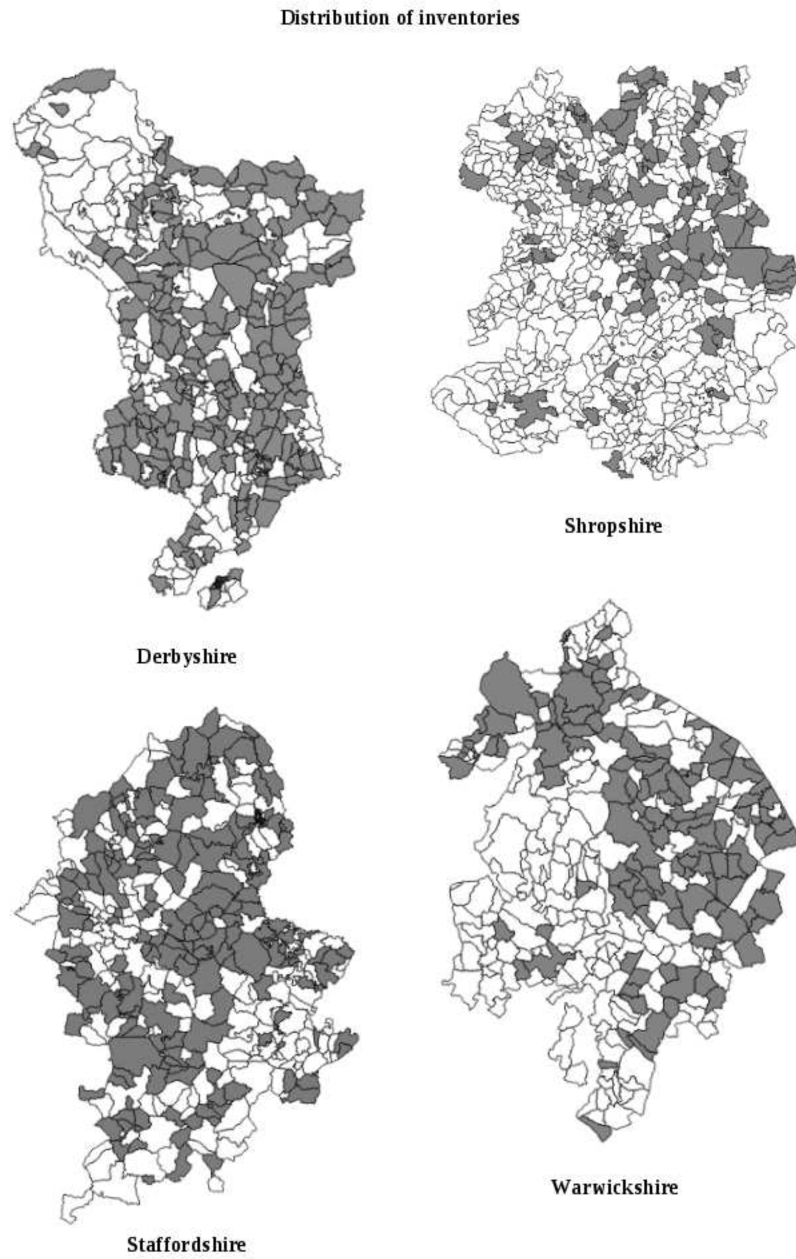


Figure 1.2: Wiltshire: distribution of probate material

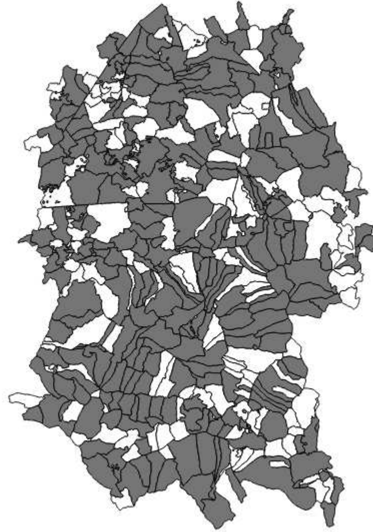
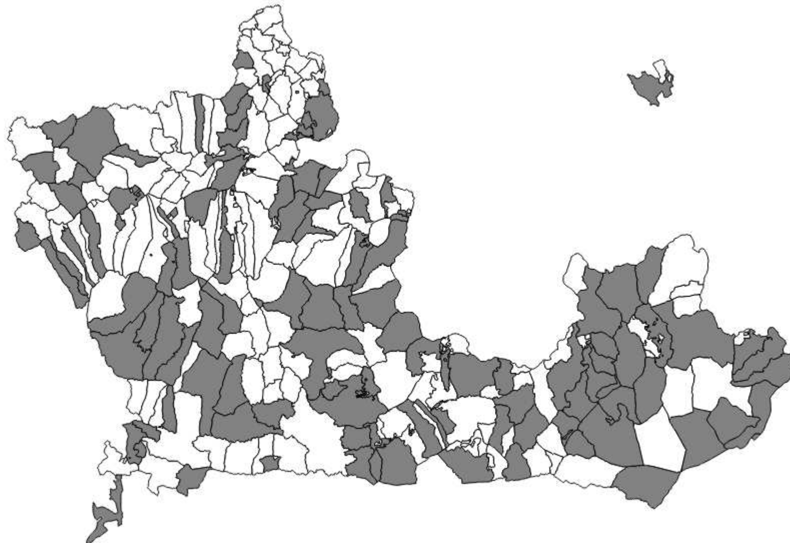


Figure 1.3: Berkshire: distribution of inventories



Chapter 2

Inequality

Once conceived as an unremitting and gloomy recession, if not depression, the later middle ages have subsequently been construed as an "age of ambition" and even more recently as "an age of transition".[1] We are no longer preoccupied by Postan's collapse of the economy. The downturn, it is now suggested, presented some peasants greater opportunities and the exercise of greater agency.[2] That interpretation, although less ideological than Brenner's notion of the formation of "agrarian capitalism", is supportive of one of the main conclusions of Robert Brenner that the conflict of interest of peasants and lords was accommodated by a compromise, by which some gentry and some peasants were able to engage in a more robust husbandry and agrarian regime.[3] The dislocation of customary tenures, the transition to copyhold tenures, and then leases, was convenient for agrarian enterprise. Nor are the later middle ages now considered culturally a "great divide", as recent research has proposed more continuous development through the later middle ages, for example in the matters of social disorder and misbehaviour and the confirmation of ideas of commonwealth.[4] Here, however, it is the economy which is foregrounded. In view of those transitions in the later middle ages, what can we deduce about the extent of inequality in the early sixteenth century? Had the conditions of the later middle ages compressed the rungs on the socio-economic ladder? What were the economic conditions

[1] F. R. H. DuBoulay, *An Age of Ambition: English Society in the Late Middle Ages* (London, 1970); C. Dyer, *An Age of Transition?: Economy and Society in England in the Later Middle Ages* (Oxford, 2007);

[2] Dyer, *An Age of Transition?*

[3] Originally proposed by Robert Brenner, "Agrarian class structure and economic development in pre-industrial Europe", *Past & Present* 70 (1976), pp. 30-75; explored in *The Brenner Debate: Agrarian Class Structure and Economic Development in Pre-Industrial Europe*, ed. Trevor Aston and C. H. E. Philpin (Cambridge, 1985).

[4] Marjorie K. McIntosh, *Controlling Misbehavior in England, 1370-1600* (Cambridge, 1998); McIntosh, *Poor Relief in England 1350-1600* (Cambridge, 2012); David Rollison, *A Commonwealth of the People: Popular Politics and England's Long Social Revolution, 1066-1649* (Cambridge, 2010). For the question of cultural continuity – in writing about rural society and labour – Katherine C. Little, *Transforming Work: Early Modern Pastoral and Late Medieval Poetry* (Notre Dame, IN, 2013), pp. 1-14.

of society in the early sixteenth century before the impact shortly thereafter of demographic expansion and the concomitant inflation which endured through the sixteenth century?

The context of the 1520s

The 1520s have recently been defined as the final decade of relative stability at the end of the middle ages. "Between around 1530 and 1533, poverty intensified and the forms of relief changed significantly".[5] "Between 1530 and the late 1550s, objective problems with poverty became more severe and were distributed more widely throughout the country".[6] The deterioration involved both structural poverty and conjunctural poverty, chronic and acute conditions.[7] Urban poverty had, indeed, been recognized before 1530, a precursor of the dissemination of the issue more widely.[8] Intimations of rural poverty had occurred in earlier decades of the sixteenth century, but without a cohesive response.[9] Accordingly, some of the complaints entered into the new printed literature of the time.

> They [the commons/commonalty] are in suche grette penury
> That thay cane nether sell ner bye
> Such ys there extreme powertey
> Experyens dothe it veryfye.[10]

In a sort of precursor of the complaint literature which became more extensive in the later sixteenth century, the anonymous *Vox Populi, Vox Dei*, printed in the 1540s, deplored the social and economic division and bifurcation which was reducing the commons to poverty.[11] The "grett mens transgressyon", perpetrated by "upstart gentylmen", resulted in the immiseration of the commonalty.[12] Although not composed by Skelton, the *Vox Populi* echoed some of Skelton's distinctive tropes as well as the Skeltonic form. It has been suggested that

[5] McIntosh, *Poor Relief in England*, pp. 1, 41, n. 5.
[6] McIntosh, *Poor Relief in England*, p. 19.
[7] McIntosh, *Poor Relief in England*, pp. 18-19, n. 47.
[8] McIntosh, *Poor Relief in England*, p. 40.
[9] McIntosh, *Poor Relief in England*, p. 44 and n. 14.
[10] *John Skelton, Vox Populi Vox Dei, A Complaint of The Comons against Taxes* (originally printed in 1547; repr. London, 1821), p. 2. Rollison, *Commonwealth of the People*.
[11] It is generally now accepted, however, that *Vox Populi* was a later composition by one of those authors who adopted the "Skeltonic form" in the 1540s: J. Griffiths, *John Skelton and Poetic Authority* (Oxford, 2006), pp. 160, 162 (*colonus*, clout), 165, and, generally, 160-70 for the appropriation of "The Skeltonic as Protest"; for a Marxist interpretation of this complaint literature, R. Halpern, *The Poetics of Primitive Accumulation: Renaissance Culture and the Genealogy of Capitalism* (Ithaca, NY, 1991), p. 134 (social ills were attributed by Skelton entirely to the delegated autocracy of Wolsey), and, for More's *Utopia*, ch. 4 (pp. 136-75); for Skelton's motivation, Greg Walker, *John Skelton and the Politics of the 1520s* (Cambridge, 1988), pp. 53-123 (chapter 3: the need for patronage); for clerical complaint literature half a century later, Brodie Waddell, "Economic immorality and social reformation in English popular preaching, 1585-1625", *Cultural and Social History* 5 (2008), pp. 165-82, but Skelton's clerical status was less important than his courtly position.
[12] *Vox Populi Vox Dei*, pp. 8, 12. For the notion of the commonwealth, subsuming the commonalty, Rollison, *Commonwealth of the People*.

Colin Clout and *Why Come Ye Nat to Courte* by Skelton assumed the persona of the "exploited and oppressed ... honest labouring folk" to attack Wolsey, continuing a "long tradition of estates satire based on the oppositional figure of the noble English ploughman". [13] In constructing the proponent, *Colin Clout*, Skelton explicitly adapted the Latin "colonus" (farmer) and the Middle English "clout" (rags). Skelton and the *Vox Populi* therefore both projected the plight of impoverished rural society in the first half of the sixteenth century, Skelton more directly concurrent with the taxations of the 1520s. Whilst Skelton's critique was entirely *ad hominem*, directed at Wolsey as personally responsible for the country's ills, not least through the taxations from 1513 to 1525, his rhetorical animadversions identified the incipiently parlous conditions of some of England's population, a perception confirmed by his contemporary, Thomas More. The difference between Skelton and the others was, however, that Skelton's work, although conscious of the issues, was confined to manuscript circulation.[14] The other contributors made their condemnations more widely available through the new print medium. All, however, adopted a ventriloquism in which they professed to hear the "common voice" and merely reported that discontent.[15] As Alexander Barclay intimated, the rich and poor are always with us. In 1509 was printed by Pynson, Barclay's translation and adaptation of Brandt's *The Ship of Fools*. The discussion "Of ryches unprofytable" refers not only to charity to the poor, but implicates the excessive consumption of the affluent.

> The ryche ar rewarded with gyftis of dyuerse sorte
> With Capons and Conyes delycious of sent
> But the pore caytyf abydeth without confort
> Though he moste nede haue : none doth hym present
> The fat pygge is baast, the lene cony is brent
> He that nought hathe, shall so always byde pore
> But he that ouer muche hath, yet shall haue more.[16]

Although proffering a perhaps well-worn trope, the *Ship of Fools* fits into a new context of heightened significance of debate about affluence and poverty, stimulated by the advent of the printing press. Barclay's excursus belonged to a new formulation of "writing rural England", which owed much to a late-medieval tradition, but also reflected a new sensibility.[17] The traditionalism is here contrasted with the late eclogues which drew more directly on the rediscovered classical eclogue. Both revivalism and continuity, this reversion to the eclogue owed more to a late-medieval pastoral critique, yet was formulated in the context of rapid agrarian transition in the early sixteenth century.[18]

[13] Andrew Hadfield, "The Nation in the Renaissance", in *Reading the Nation in English Literature: A Critical Reader*, ed. E. Sauer and J. M. Wright, (London, 2010), p. 136.

[14] Walker, *John Skelton and the Politics*, pp. 119-23 for "the circulation of the satires".

[15] Griffiths, *John Skelton and Poetic Authority*, pp. 160-70.

[16] *The Ship of Fools Translated by Alexander Barclay* (London, 1874), p. 100.

[17] Little, *Transforming Work*, pp. 49-81

[18] Little, *Transforming Work*, pp. 83-110, reflecting on the prescience of Tawney's combination of contemporary literature and the agrarian problem, now problematized as Brenner's

The debate between Raphael Hythloday with the lawyer and the Cardinal, in More's *Utopia*. contains the well-recited passage about the metaphorically carnivorous sheep and the counterproductive social effects of enclosure for sheep-farming.[19] In the same rhetorical utterances, Raphael also castigated the tendency to sumptuous apparel of the noble estate which some in the lower estate attempted to emulate. As a consequence, the desires of consumption eclipsed the imperative or necessity of production (husbandry and tillage). Although More's critique is retrospectively considered profoundly significant, it was directed "for an assumed public of humanist intellectuals".[20] Another aspect which *Vox Populi* identified was the impact on the "market".[21]

> Whiche maketh the markett now soe dere
> That there bye fewe that makes good chere.[22]

What *Vox Populi* was deploring here was the interruption of normalcy in the exchange of commodities, the expectation of a regulated and social market.[23] In modern economic interpretation, More had identified the economic diminishing marginal utility of consumption – economic by contrast with the satisfaction rating of the marginal utility of consumption.[24] Several implications can be derived from the inequality which More observed: first, it induced the affluent to spend on Jack Fisher's "conspicuous consumption" which sucked in imported goods; second, and in a consequential way, the expenditure of the rich had a smaller "multiplier" effect in this country.[25] When those on the lower social scale

agrarian capitalism. For recent discussion of Tawney's contribution, *Landlords and Tenants in Britain, 1440-1660: Tawney's Agrarian Problem Revisited*, ed. Jane Whittle (Woodbridge, 2013).

[19]See Appendix 1. For the argument that the conversion to sheep-farming was a response to a structural change in the economy – a consequence of depopulation rather than its cause – C. Dyer, "Deserted medieval villages in the West Midlands", *Economic History Review* 2nd ser. xxxv (1982), pp. 19-34; this explanation is probably apposite for the East Midlands on the wolds and uplands which had been settled late, remained sparsely populated, and by the early sixteenth century were probably epitomized by decayed markets and small gentry estates: H. S. A. Fox, "The people of the wolds in English settlement history", in *The Rural Settlements of Medieval England: Studies Dedicated to Maurice Beresford and John Hurst*, ed. M. Aston, D. Austin and C. Dyer (Oxford, 1989), pp. 77-101.

[20]Andrew McRae, *God Speed the Plough*: *The Representation of Rural England, 1500-1660* (Cambridge, 1996), p. 24.

[21]For the early origin and persistence of the market, David Graeber, *Debt: The First 5,000 Years* (New York, 2012), passim, but esp. pp. 114-15, 130, 238-9. For the immediate context of the image of the sheep devouring men, McRae, *God Speed the Plough*, p. 10.

[22]*Vox Populi*, p. 22.

[23]R. H. Britnell, "Price-setting in English borough markets, 1349-1500" and "Urban economic regulation and economic morality in medieval England", in Britnell, *Markets, Trade and Economic Development in England and Europe, 1050-1550* (Farnham, 2009).

[24]For MUC as an index of happiness, satisfaction or welfare, Avner Offer, *The Challenge of Affluence: Self-control and Well-being in the United States and Britain Since 1950* (Oxford, 2006; repr. 2011), p. 59.

[25]F. J. Fisher, "The development of London as a centre for conspicuous consumption in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries", *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 4th series 30 (1948), repr. in *Essays in Economic History volume 2*, ed. E. M. Carus-Wilson (London, 1962), pp. 197-207; for the multiplier in general, R. Lipsey and A. Chrystal, *Economics* (11th edn, Oxford, 2007), pp. 376-9.

have funds, they are compelled to spend locally on basics: necessary spending. Large-scale discretionary spending is restricted for them. The impact on the local economy is radical with a multiplier effect. The discretionary spend of the more affluent has a lesser impact on the local economy and consequently on employment.[26] The entire critique of More can be distilled in these terms.[27] *Vox Populi* implicated a further variable, the dislocation of the market. His sensibilities can be associated with two modern economic propositions: asymmetry of information in the market place (Stiglitz *et al.*) and problems of distribution and "capability deprivation" (Sen) by the 1540s. Since it is here impossible to explore all these variances, the intention is to concentrate on the distribution of income, a principal component identified by *Vox Populi* and More.[28] In other words, this exegesis is mainly economic, without full reference to the "social imaginary" of the time.[29] The distribution of income thus assumes some importance for the efficiency of the economy as well as its inherent moral conundra about social justice, both elements contained within More's critique.[30] A distinction is made here between the functional distribution of income and the size distribution of income. The situation was, however, complex: although the extent of land, labour and capital was to some degree aligned according to

[26]The "drag" effect of inequality on economic growth was articulated by Keynes; for a more accessible account, Stewart Lansley, *The Cost of Inequality: Why Economic Equality is Essential for Recovery* (London, 2012), esp. pp. 164-79.

[27]*Sir Thomas More, Utopia* translated by Ralph Robinson with an introduction by Mishtooni Bose (Ware, 1997), pp. 31-6. For the origins, inter-textuality and nuances of Utopia, J. C. Davis, "Thomas More's Utopia: sources, legacy and interpretation", in *The Cambridge Companion to Utopian Literature*, ed. Gregory Claes (Cambridge, 2010), pp. 28-50, and, at pp. 40-1, More's critique of "emulative competition".

[28]The most comprehensive and substantive analysis remains, of course, Julian Cornwall's *Wealth and Society in Early Sixteenth Century England* (London, 1988), still under-estimated and under-cited. My mitigation for re-examining the issues is first a difference of technique and second the posing of different questions. A. Sen, *Development as Freedom* (Oxford, 1999) is a re-statement of his earlier pronouncements: pp. 163 (exchange conditions), 163-4 (price equilibrium of foodstuffs), 164 ("entitlement failure" in famines), 164 ff ("economic entitlements"), 167 ("entitlement losses"), 167 (competing demand – urban provision). For the issue of the extent of (geographical) integration of the market, John Walter and Roger Schofield, "Famine, disease and crisis mortality in early modern society", in *Famine, Disease and the Social Order in Early Modern Society*, ed. Walter and Schofield (Cambridge, 1989), pp. 9-10 and succinctly Keith Wrightson, *Earthly Necessities: Economic Lives in Early Modern Britain* (New Haven, 2000), pp. 108-12; Walter and Schofield were influenced by Sen's notion of "entitlement" and its derogation: pp. 14-15. The published papers of Stiglitz and his colleagues (resulting in the award of the Nobel Prize in 2001) are too numerous to cite, but perhaps commenced with: "Monopoly, non-linear pricing, and imperfect information: the insurance market", *Review of Economic Studies* 44 (1977), pp. 407-430, and Stiglitz and A. Weiss, "Credit rationing in markets with imperfect information", *American Economic Review* 71 (1981), pp. 393-410.

[29]D. Dworkin, *Class Struggles* (Harlow, 2007), p. 35; Andy Wood, *Riot, Rebellion and Popular Politics in Early Modern England* (Basingstoke, 2002).

[30]For an explanation of "Engel's Law" on the pattern of consumption, Gregory Clark, *A Farewell to Alms: A Brief Economic History of the World* (Princeton, 2007), pp. 52-5. For a wide consideration of notions of famine, S. Millman and R. W. Kates, "Toward understanding hunger", in *Hunger in History: Food Shortage, Poverty, and Deprivation*, ed. L. F. Newman, et al. (Oxford, 1990), pp. 3-24.

the three estates, all estates had some interest in all three resources.[31] More conceived of his critique in the first decade of the sixteenth century, appearing first in printed format in 1516 – incidentally just before the harvest dislocations of 1519-21. Profound transformations were about to occur, with the expansion of population and price inflation. It is perhaps then an apposite conjuncture to consider the state of inequality. We can undertake such an analysis from the lay subsidy returns of 1524-5.[32]

The taxation of 1524-5

It is generally assumed that the taxation of 1524 and 1525, collected in two instalments, was reasonably comprehensive, with few lacunae, omissions and little evasion. Whilst that presumption of completeness has some rationale, it is necessary to examine some potential issues. The 5,000 to 6,000 inmates of hospitals and almshouses were excluded.[33] These supported "poor" are thus absent from the analysis below. The minimum criterion for inclusion in the taxation was £1 in wages, but it is likely that a proportion of people existed on irregular sources of income, tantamount to voluntary provision for welfare, thus, in economists' considerations, "externalities".[34] It has been suggested that, at least in remoter countryside, with dispersed settlement of multiple hamlets in large parishes, with access to upland transhumance, concealment of livestock was possible.[35] The issue of the extremely wealthy is perhaps intractable. The Anticipation of 1523 remains a conundrum, sometimes available, other times not.[36] Restricting the analysis to the returns for 1524-5 may represent the norm. Finally, with experience, the second collection in 1525 might have involved more evasion – at the margins – which affects the analysis below to a slight extent, for, where the 1524 return is missing, recourse has been made to that of 1525. Hoskins concluded that the era of the tax exaction coincided with good harvests, 1522-6.[37] That perception is perhaps somewhat optimistic, for the lingering repercussions of the poor run of 1519-21 might have been a persistent challenge. In the assessment for the Aylesbury Hundreds in 1525, about 40 percent of the taxpayers assessed on income of more than £3 requested allowances for decay of corn (and cattle in some cases).[38] Sen has suggested that "famine" is not

[31] Lipsey and Chrystal, *Economics*, p. 208.

[32] For the constancy of the poor and poor relief by diverse methods, McIntosh, *Poor Relief in England*; C. Dyer, "Poverty and its relief in late medieval England", *Past & Present* 216 (2012), pp. 41-78.

[33] McIntosh, *Poor Relief in England*, p. 59.

[34] McIntosh, *Poor Relief in England*, pp. 30-1.

[35] Harold Fox, *Dartmoor's Alluring Uplands: Transhumance and Pastoral Management in the Middle Ages* (Exeter, 2012), p. 68.

[36] I am grateful for advice from Richard Hoyle, although I may not have satisfied his misgivings. See Appendix 3.

[37] Hoskins, "Harvest fluctuations", pp. 31, 33-4.

[38] *Subsidy Roll for the County of Buckingham Anno 1524*, ed. A. C. Chibnall and A. V. Woodman, (Buckinghamshire Record Society 8, 1950 for 1944), pp. 1-10. The return for this hundred is for the second year, 1525. Of the 286 taxpayers assessed on income of

primarily caused by harvest failure, but through the dislocation of distribution. Harvest failure depresses the food supply at the margin, around 5 percent, but "famine" is a consequence of the diversion from normal distribution. In the context of the 1520s, there is some uncertainty whether heavier mortality occurred through harvest failure or epidemic sickness in 1519-1521 and 1527-8.[39] We know, for example, that grain prices returned by the leet juries in Lincoln almost doubled in the summer of 1520.[40] Hoskins in 1964 referred to the dislocation of the market of grain in the early sixteenth century, the diversion of grain from its normal destinations.[41] The effect of the harvest failures might, however, have been mitigated by the improvement in the standard of living of some during the more benevolent later middle ages.[42]

The subsequent Amicable Grant proposed in 1525 produced complaints of poverty. This clamour might have constituted a strategy to resist the demand without refusing to contribute. A dearth of coin might also have incited the reaction. The successive exactions between 1513 (when Wolsey reintroduced taxation levied on the individual) and 1525 had probably exhausted both patience and resources.[43] Outright revolt ensued in the textile centres of Suffolk, which might reflect on the analysis below of the lay subsidy for that county.[44] Since no other returns for the taxation provide such evidence about reductions for depreciation, there is a conundrum about the reliability of the taxation. If such allowances were made elsewhere, but not recorded, then the taxation of 1524-5 may represent an under-assessment at a point of severe dislocation of the economy. We cannot compensate for that potential distortion. Indeed, some of the allowances might have consisted of tax evasion by the wealthiest farmers on the pretext of agricultural dislocation. When, however, we consider below the comparative Gini coefficient, we can assume that the wealthiest have constantly been able to avoid the full disclosure of their income, especially in the recent decades. The lay subsidy of 1524-5 assessed the income of individuals.[45] The

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more than £3, 114 were allowed a reduction for this reason. The threshold of £3 and above is assumed to exclude those who depended on wages for their income (20*s.* or 40*s.*). The reductions were allowed in Aylesbury, Aston Clinton, Donington, Hadingham, Great Kimble, Great Missenden, Monksborough, Princes Risborough, Stoke Mandeville, Walton, Wendover and Weston Turvile.

[39] Walter and Schofield, "Famine, disease and crisis mortality", p. 81. For the dearth of these years, W. G. Hoskins, "Harvest fluctuations and English economic history, 1480-1619", *Agricultural History Review* 12 (1964), pp. 28-46; despite the later revisions of the data, the general conclusions of Hoskins about the 1520s remain.

[40] J. W. F. Hill, *Tudor and Stuart Lincoln* (Cambridge, 1956), p. 222.

[41] Hoskins, "Harvest fluctuations", pp. 34-5.

[42] McIntosh, *Poor Relief in England*, pp. 18-19.

[43] G. W. Bernard, *War, Taxation and Rebellion in Early Tudor England: Henry VIII, Wolsey and the Amicable Grant of 1525* (Brighton, 1986), pp. 114-17, 124.

[44] Bernard, *War, Taxation and Rebellion*, pp. 136-49 (chapter 6: "The Amicable Grant and disturbances in the textile towns of Suffolk").

[45] There has, of course, been considerable debate about the comprehensiveness of the taxation returns by Bridbury, Hadwin, Rigby, Goose et al. My position is that they must be employed *faute de mieux*. Bruce M. S. Campbell, "The population of early Tudor England: a re-evaluation of the 1522 muster returns and 1524 and 1525 lay subsidies", *Journal of Historical Geography* 7 (1981), pp. 145-154.

distribution of wealth and income was more complicated, nonetheless, for the taxation does not comprehend the household economy.[46] A further stage of this research will therefore involve wealth in probate inventories, although that wealth does not correspond with annual income and pertains to a specific stage in the life-course, at death, which might, however, have occurred at various ages.

Measuring inequality

Currently, we apply two measures of relative poverty and inequality: the Gini coefficient (with the Lorenz curve) and the poverty line, assumed until recently to obtain at the 60th percentile of the median wage.[47] More contention has surrounded the latter indicator; indeed, it is being revised in the UK right now.[48] The poverty line has its place because the price mechanism of commodities is influenced by this divergence. Here, however, consideration is confined to the Gini coefficient.[49] The dilemma, as rehearsed above, for historians is the criticism that we have incomplete data, even in historical tax assessments. The rejoinder, as also noticed above, is that we will nonetheless probably always have defective data, especially in recent decades with the potential for concealing earned and unearned income where assets are not fixed.[50] Without entering into the precise computation of the coefficient, we can succinctly observe that it measures the extent of equality/inequality from 0 (absolute equality) to 1 (absolute inequality). To place it into a comprehensible context, the Gini coefficient increased in the US from 0.38 in 1968 to 0.43 in 1992, as inequality advanced in the "Great U-Turn". A corresponding increase in the coefficient occurred in the UK, with a proportionate advance in inequality, measuring 0.34.[51] Table 2.1 (p. 35) relates to the Gini coefficient and Lorenz curve for sample counties in England in 1524-5.[52] For clarification, the data comprise the tax assessment for

[46]Greg Clark emphasized this difference at a session of the Economic History Society in Cambridge.

[47]Stephen P. Jenkins and Philippe Van Kerm, "The measurement of economic inequality", in *The Oxford Handbook of Inequality*, ed. Wiemer Salverda, Brian Nolan, and Timothy M. Smeeding (Oxford, 2009), pp. 49-53; for the range of approaches – including "multi-dimensional" assessments, Stephen P. Jenkins and John Micklewright, "New directions in the analysis of inequality and poverty", in *Inequality and Poverty Re-examined*, ed. Jenkins and Micklewright (Oxford, 2007), pp. 3-33. "There is now much more information not only about how many people are poor at a given time, but also how long individuals remain poor, and about the repetition of poverty spells" (p. 11) – an intriguing agendum for historians.

[48]For the poverty line and the "poverty gap", Joseph Stiglitz, *The Price of Inequality* (London, 2012), p. 20.

[49]"The most popular measure of income inequality is the Gini coefficient ..." Offer, *The Challenge of Affluence*, p. 271.

[50]Andrew Leigh, "Top incomes", in *Oxford Handbook of Inequality*, pp. 153-4.

[51]Offer, *The Challenge of Affluence*, p. 271.

[52]The sources: *Tudor Rutland: The County Community under Henry VIII*, ed. Julian Cornwall (Rutland Record Series 1, 1980); *Suffolk in 1524, Being the Return for a Subsidy Granted in 1523* (Suffolk Green Books 10, Woodbridge, 1910); *Devon Lay Subsidy Rolls 1524-7*, ed. T. L. Stoate (Bristol, 1979); *Dorset Tudor Subsidies Granted in 1523, 1543, 1593*, ed. T. L. Stoate (Bristol, 1982); *Worcestershire Taxes in the 1520s: the Military Survey and Forced Loans of 1522-3 and the Lay Subsidy of 1524-7*, ed. M. A. Faraday (Worcestershire

one year, usually 1524, but where that annual return does not survive, for the second year, 1525. That difference presents another complication: the potential for losses between the first and second years and for higher avoidance/evasion in the second year. The data do not take into account regional and intra-regional differences in standards of living and income. For example, the Breckland is noticeably different in levels of wealth at all levels from the rest of Suffolk.[53] Some regions were probably characterized by poor gentry families at their upper echelon.[54] The data contain inherent discrepancies and present only a crude overview. We cannot also compensate for payments in kind which might have influenced gross income.[55]

Table 2.2 (p. 35) separates off some urban places, cities and boroughs. The data for these places are not included in the analysis in Table 2.1. The decision to treat an urban place differently was predicated on the number of taxpayers: a critical mass of taxpayers to make a meaningful analysis. Felicitously, however, the places also represent quite faithfully an urban hierarchy: from small ports (Bridport), small market town (Milton Abbas), small county capital (Lewes, Dorchester), larger county borough (Shrewsbury, Chichester) and (former) great City and county of the City (Coventry, whether its demise has been greatly exaggerated or not).[56] Returning to Table 2.1, which principally represents rural parishes and small towns, the Gini coefficient is high, denoting considerable inequality. It is, however, fairly consistent, within a predominantly narrow and defined range: around 0.61 and 0.62 for Dorset, Suffolk and Rutland. In Devon, with a considerably larger taxable population, the Gini coefficient for rural parishes was somewhat lower at 0.58. There appears, nonetheless, a noticeable difference in the West Midlands, where the coefficient is flatter and lower: 0.54 in Shropshire and 0.57 in Worcestershire. Although that level still indicates a high relative inequality, the differentiation in the West Midlands is less severe: it seems that inequality was abated in these two counties. Inequality was thus even more evident in the nucleated, face-to-face settlements of the open-field system than in the dispersed settlement pattern of the more pastoral localities.[57]

When we turn our attention to the urban places, the extent of differentiation

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Historical Society 19, 2003); *The Lay Subsidy for Shropshire 1524-7*, ed. M. A. Faraday (Shropshire Record Series 3, 1999); *The Lay Subsidy Rolls for the County of Sussex, 1524-25*, ed. Julian C. Cornwall (Sussex Record Society 56, 1956); *Coventry and its People in the 1520s*, ed. M. H. Hulton (Dugdale Society 38, 1999).

[53]For the specialized economy of the Breckland and its inter-relationship with other *pays* in Suffolk, M. Bailey, *A Marginal Economy? East Anglian Breckland in the Later Middle Ages* (Cambridge, 1989); Bailey, *Medieval Suffolk: An Economic and Social History, 1200-1500* (Woodbridge, 2010).

[54]Felicity Heal and Clive Holmes, *The Gentry in England and Wales 1500-1700* (Basingstoke, 1994), pp. 12-13.

[55]Donald Woodward, *Men at Work: Labourers and Building Craftsmen in the Towns of Northern England, 1450-1750* (Cambridge, 1995), p. 12.

[56]Charles V. Phythian-Adams, *Desolation of a City: Coventry and the Urban Crisis of the Later Middle Ages* (Cambridge, 1979).

[57]For differences between these two broad regions, Ann Kussmaul, *A General View of the Rural Economy of England, 1538-1840* (Cambridge, 1990), summarizing much previous research by Hoskins, Thirsk, Hey et al.

is more remarkable. At the apex, the apparent level of inequality in the largest urban place, Coventry, was almost inconceivable: 0.82 – radical differences in income, the still high affluence of some citizens raising the Gini coefficient to an inordinate level. Quite extraordinarily, the county town of Dorchester exhibits the same extreme – 0.85. A high level of the coefficient marked Plymouth in Devon, a new port town, at 0.74. Another developing port town in Devon, Dartmouth, had a Gini coefficient of 0.68. Bridport, a commercial urban place on the Dorset coast, is distinct with a Gini coefficient of 0.67. By comparison with its county, the City of Worcester had a comparatively high coefficient of 0.69. Perhaps surprisingly, a lower coefficient marked Exeter, a port and regional capital, at 0.66.[58] The City of Chichester and the county town of Lewes have lower levels of inequality, but still as high as 0.64, comparable with the levels of the highest county coefficients. Shrewsbury, perhaps commensurate with the lower levels of inequality in its county, has a lower Gini coefficient at 0.60. The small town of Milton Abbas accords with the generality of rural inequality at 0.59. All urban places in Devon, of whatever character and rank in the urban hierarchy, had coefficients above 0.6. Another geographical distribution can be detected, as below.

The lowest levels of the coefficient, indicative of local societies less divided by wealth, were located outside the generally-acknowledged distribution of the common-field or open-field system. Conversely the highest levels of the coefficient, reflecting more extreme inequality, obtained inside the common-field or open-field boundary. Those areas often regarded as the poorest also exhibited lower levels of inequality. Following that implication further, the Gini coefficient has been calculated for two *pays* or "regions" generally assumed to be less affluent: the (Suffolk part of the) Breckland and the Forest of Dean in Gloucestershire.[59] In the Breckland, the coefficient of the contributions of the 569 taxpayers belonged to the lower grouping at 0.57, whilst in the Forest of Dean a considerably larger number of taxpayers (999) produced an even lower coefficient of 0.53.

In a sense, those data remain somewhat meaningless outwith a wider context. A secular trend has been proposed by Simon Kuznets, the eponymous "Kuznets curve", a parabola which involves rising inequality during developmental phases of an economy, after which stability of equality is attained once a critical stage of development is achieved – an inverse U-shaped curve. Broadly, rural economies have an inherent degree of equality, whilst urbanizing and industrializing economies pass through initial stages of increasing inequality. That disparity is smoothed in the later stages of industrial and urban development by "externalities" such as interventions in welfare, education, and redistribution. As a result of the last three to four decades, the recent end of the parabola has been

[58] Maryanne Kowaleski, *Local Markets and Regional Trade in Medieval Exeter* (Cambridge, 1995); Wallace T. McCaffrey, *Exeter, 1540-1640: The Growth of an English County Town* (Cambridge, MA, 1958).

[59] For the wider regional distribution of wealth at a different level, John Sheail, *The Regional Distribution of Wealth in England as Indicated in the 1524/5 Lay Subsidy Returns*, ed. Richard Hoyle (London: List & Index Society 28, 1998).

discredited, of course, by a resurgence of inequality in post-industrial economies. Until recently, the more distant end of the parabola has received little attention from social and economic historians, but there have been some incisive recent comments in a pioneering article by Van Zanden and by Alfani.[60] Van Zanden adopted a rather scatter-gun approach, collating available data from widely dispersed locations in continental Europe, although including a brief nod to Norwich in 1525.[61] His analysis largely consisted of comparative urban rental data rather than incomes. Alfani's *locus* was more focused and his conclusions derived from taxation data.

Another question remains whether the fiscal phenomena observed here were new in the early sixteenth century or already embedded in the socio-economic "structure" – "structure" in the sense of features over the *longue durée* of the *Annales* school. The difficulty here is that most of the earlier taxation data are not comparable. We have to return to the lay subsidies of the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries before we have fiscal levies on individuals. The inherent problem is that a much wider proportion of the population was omitted in these assessments.[62] For the sake of comparison, the Rutland data for the subsidy of 1296-7 have been subjected to the same calculation. We discover a considerable difference in the Gini coefficient, but this variance is almost certainly a consequence of the more exclusive capture of the earlier taxation, omitting a large underbelly of exempted people.

Where we can make an instructive comparison is for some boroughs in which internal subsidies were levied intermittently in the late middle ages. Nottingham is an apposite example, for there exists an internal subsidy of 1473 and the lay subsidy of 1524-5. In 1473, 153 townspeople were assessed, with a Gini coefficient of 0.638988; in 1524, the 295 taxpayers were differentiated by a Gini coefficient of 0.777102.[63] There is both a discrepancy in the number of taxpayers and in the level of the coefficient, but we can remark that the coefficient was already very high in the late fifteenth century and that it was probably an underestimate because of the exclusion of some of the poorest in the borough in 1473. One obvious observation is that there is a difference in the data sources interrogated here which might lead to different conclusions, which is, indeed, one of the debating points of Alfani with Van Zanden. The conclusion which we can confirm in England is the difference in inequality between the countryside and the big civic centres. What we cannot state categorically, of course, is whether that difference was new: whether it was a consequence of late-medieval developments or inhered in the economic structure previously. What appears different about England – and is significantly divergent from Kuznets theory – is the rather high level of inequality in the countryside exhibited in the taxation

[60] J. L. Van Zanden, "Tracing the beginning of Kuznets curve: western Europe during the early modern period", *Economic History Review* 2nd ser. 48 (1995), pp. 643-64; Guido Alfani, "Wealth inequalities and population dynamics in early modern northern Italy", *Journal of Interdisciplinary History 40* (2010), pp. 513-49.

[61] Van Zanden, "Tracing the beginning", p. 645.

[62] See the Appendix below.

[63] *Records of the Borough of Nottingham*, ed. W. H. Stephenson (4 vols, Nottingham, 1882-1899), II, pp. 285-96, III, pp. 162-80.

returns. Indeed, what we notice is the similarity of the Gini coefficient in rural England with the high coefficient now in the under-developed world in parts of South America and Africa.[64]

England was already an highly differentiated society in the early sixteenth century. The levels of inequality were higher in the urban centres than in the countryside for the general populace. With the ensuing inflation from the 1540s, the economic differences would be exacerbated as some were able to take advantage of the opportunities for capital accumulation and retention. Investment in the new finance capitalism developing the late sixteenth century and the response to consumer demand in some crafts and industries augmented economic differences.

[64] <http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Gini_Coefficient_World_Human_Development_Report_2007-2008.png> consulted 28 May 2014

Appendix 1: More's *UTOPIA*

[For the original language and the significance of the complaint – "perhaps the single most influential complaint about agrarian change ever published in England" – McRae, *God Speed the Plough*, p. 23.]

> "Forsooth my lord" (quoth I), "your sheep that were wont to be so meek and tame and so small eaters, now, as I hear say, be become so great devourers and so wild that they eat up and swallow down the very men themselves. They consume, destroy, and devour whole fields, houses, and cities. For look in what parts of the realm doth grow the finest, and therefore dearest wool, there noblemen and gentlemen, yea, and certain abbots, holy men, no doubt, not contenting themselves with the yearly revenues and profits that were wont to grow to their forefathers and predecessors of their lands, nor being content that they live in rest and pleasure nothing profiting, yea much annoying the weal public, leave no ground for tillage, they enclose all into pastures; they throw down houses; they pluck down towns, and leave nothing standing, but only the church to be made a sheephouse. And as though you lost no small quantity of ground by forests, chases, lands, and parks, those good holy men turn all dwelling-places and all glebeland into desolation and wilderness. Therefore that one covetous and unsatiable cormorant and very plague of his native country may compass about and enclose many thousand acres of ground together with one pale or hedge, the husbandmen be thrust out of their own, or else either by covin and fraud, or by violent oppression they be put beside it, or by wrongs and injuries they be so wearied that they be compelled to sell all: by one means, therefore, or by other, either by hook or crook they must needs depart away, poor, silly, wretched souls, men, women, husbands, wives, fatherless children, widows, woeful mothers with their young babes, and their whole household, small in substance and much in number, as husbandry requireth many hands. Away they trudge, I say, out of their known and accustomed houses, finding no place to rest in. All their household stuff, which is very little worth, though it might well abide the sale; yet being suddenly thrust out, they be constrained to sell it for a thing of naught. And when they have wandered abroad till that be spent, what can they then else do but steal, and then justly pardy be hanged, or else go about a-begging. And yet then also they be cast in prison as vagabonds, because they go about and work not, whom no man will set a-work, though they never so willingly proffer themselves thereto. For one shepherd or herdman is enough to eat up that ground with cattle, to the occupying whereof about husbandry many hands were requisite. And this is also the cause why victuals be now in many places dearer.

Yea, besides this, the price of wool is so risen, that poor folks, which were wont to work it, and make cloth thereof, be now able to buy none at all. And by this means very many be forced to forsake work, and to give themselves to idleness. For after that so much ground was enclosed for pasture, an infinite multitude of sheep died of the rot, such vengeance God took of their inordinate and unsociable covetousness, sending among the sheep that pestiferous murrain, which much more justly should have fallen on the sheepmasters' own heads. And though the number of sheep increase ever so fast, yet the price falleth not one mite, because there be so few sellers. For they be almost all come into a few rich men's hands, whom no need forceth to sell before they list, and they list not before they may sell as dear as they list. Now the same cause bringeth in like dearth of the other kinds of cattle, yea, and that so much the more, because that after farms plucked down, and husbandry decayed, there is no man that passeth for the breeding of young store. For these rich men bring not up the young ones of great cattle as they do lambs. But first they buy them abroad very cheap, and afterwards when they are fatted in their pastures, they sell them again exceeding dear. And therefore (as I suppose) the whole incommodity hereof is not yet felt. For yet they make dearth only in those places where they sell. But when they shall fetch them away from thence where they be bred faster than they can be brought up, then shall there be felt great dearth, store beginning there to fail where the ware is bought. Thus the unreasonable covetousness of the few hath turned that thing to the utter undoing of your island, in the which thing the chief felicity of your realm did consist. For this great dearth of victuals causeth men to keep as little houses, and as small hospitality as they possibly may, and to put away their servants: whether, I pray you, but a-begging, or else (which the gentle bloods and stout stomachs will sooner set their minds unto) a-stealing. Now to amend the matter, to this wretched beggary and miserable poverty is joined great wantonness, importune superfluity, and excessive riot. For not only gentlemen's servants, but also handicraftsmen, yea, and almost the ploughmen of the country, with all other sorts of people, use much strange and newfangledness in their apparel, and too much prodigal riot and sumptuous fare at their table ... Cast out these pernicious abominations, make a law that they which plucked down farms and towns of husbandry shall re-edify them, or else yield and uprender the possession thereof to such as will go to the cost of building them anew. Suffer not these rich men to buy all up, to engross, and forestall, and with their monopoly to keep the market alone as pleases them. Let not so many be brought up in idleness, let husbandry and tillage be restored ..."

Appendix 2: the non-feasibility of Gini coefficients from earlier taxation

Ideally, it would be desirable to compare the Gini coefficient from taxation records in the early sixteenth century with the level produced by earlier taxation records. The subsidies of the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries were levied on individuals, so that theoretically a comparison could be suggested. There are, however, substantial problems which inhere in the earlier subsidy returns. Although until 1332 the taxation was assessed on individuals (altered to a collective quota on the vill in 1334), the assessed assets excluded materials necessary for subsistence. The taxation was levied only on personal estate – chattels – and excluded those whose personalty was considered to be below 10*s.*, the minimum for inclusion. Various estimates have thus suggested that a substantial proportion of the wider population was omitted, so that in some places the taxation only captured 40 percent or less of the local adult population.[65] This earlier taxation is thus much less comprehensive than the assessments of 1524-5. Since the lowest echelons are omitted, the expectation would be that the Gini coefficient extracted from these earlier data would be artificially low – and so it turns out. Simply for proof of concept, the taxation data for Rutland in 1296-7 have been analyzed in two tranches: the essentially rural locations; and the two market towns of Oakham and Uppingham, although it should be borne in mind that Oakham had a considerable rural component too.[66] For rural Rutland, the Gini coefficient for the 1, 690 taxpayers consists of 0.413338; for the two urban places (138 contributors) 0.392605. It seems pretty decisive that we cannot project the Gini coefficient back because of the deficiencies of the earlier taxation.

Appendix 3 The problem of the Anticipation

For Gloucestershire, the impact of the Anticipation on the Gini coefficient can be vaguely calculated. If the contributors to the Anticipation are included, the coefficient for the county increases dramatically to 0.67 for a total of 5, 099 taxpayers. Following the same procedure for Cirencester and Tewkesbury, two boroughs in the county, would elevate their taxpayers to 129 and 176 respectively and the coefficient accordingly to 0.76 and 0.66. Finally, implementing the

[65] C. Dyer, *Lords and Peasants in a Changing Society: the Estates of the Bishopric of Worcester 680-1540* (Cambridge, 1980), p. 109; B. Harvey, "The population trend in England between 1300 and 1348", *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 5th ser. xvi (1966), p. 28; *The Taxation of 1297*, ed. A. T. Gaydon (Bedfordshire Historical Record Society 39, 1959 for 1958), p. xxxiii; A. Jones, "Caddington, Kensworth, and Dunstable in 1297", *Economic History Review* 2nd ser. xxxii (1979), p. 324; J. F. Willard, *Parliamentary Taxes on Personal Property 1290-1334: A Study in Medieval English Financial Administration* (Cambridge, MA, 1934), pp. 81-5; J. R. Maddicott, "The English peasantry and the demands of the Crown 1294-1341", repr. in *Landlords, Peasants and Politics in England*, ed. Trevor H. Aston (Cambridge, 1987), p. 302.

[66] TNA E179/165/1.

revision for the Forest of Dean would augment the number of taxpayers to 1, 006 and the Gini upwards to 0.58. The inference is therefore that the coefficients constructed on the basis of the "regular" taxpayers to the subsidy in 1524-5 are lower than the global disposition of wealth, but there is still an arguable case for omitting the contributors to the Anticipation because: first, the net coefficient indicates a general level of differentiation; second, the vagaries of the returns for the Anticipation prevent a comprehensive introduction of the data into the calculations; and, finally, the top wealth is constantly under-represented.

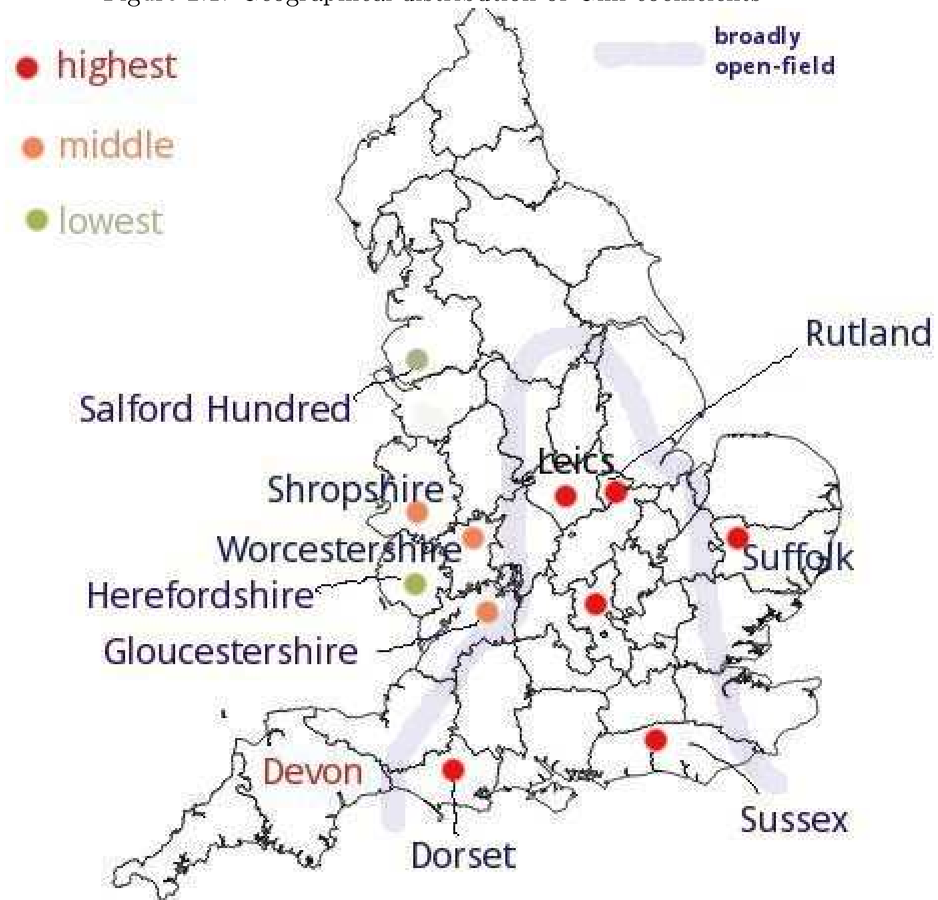
Table 2.1: Gini coefficients (rural), 1524-5

County (rural)	N of contributors	Gini coefficient
Sussex	10,928	0.637414
Suffolk	15,439	0.623740
Dorset	7,294	0.608311
Rutland	1,701	0.603511
Buckinghamshire	7,414	0.600378
Devon	23,675	0.578549
Worcestershire	3,885	0.573525
Shropshire	2,348	0.535138

Table 2.2: Gini coefficients (urban), 1524-5

Place	Urban status	N of contributors	Gini coefficient
Dorchester	County borough	135	0.844707
Coventry	Regional capital	657	0.814986
Totnes (Devon)	Market borough	217	0.778424
Nottingham	County borough	295	0.777102
Bristol	Major port	1,089	0.756066
Plymouth	New port	307	0.744071
Gloucester	County borough	393	0.735554
Bury St Edmunds	Monastic borough	647	0.712916
Worcester	City	564	0.691074
Dartmouth (Devon)	New port	156	0.680185
Bridport	Small port	120	0.665381
Tavistock (Devon)	Monastic borough	132	0.662380
Exeter (Devon)	Regional capital/port	225	0.660797
Ashburton (Devon)	Stannary town	77	0.648920
Plympton (Devon)	Monastic borough	278	0.646094
Chichester	City	300	0.639644
Lewes	County borough	217	0.635242
Aylesbury	Market borough	201	0.621568
Barnstaple (Devon)	Port	231	0.618114
Shrewsbury	County borough	359	0.603007
Crediton (Devon)	Former see, market town	433	0.597352
Milton Abbas	Market town	124	0.591879

Figure 2.1: Geographical distribution of Gini coefficients



Chapter 3

New liquidity and provincial credit

Risk, morality, and the expansion of credit: those are current concerns about the "financialization" of society since the mid-1980s.[1] Perhaps it is an anachronistic comparison, but concern of similar proportion was expressed in the dramatic literature of the early seventeenth century, particularly in the comic mode, in the sub-genre recognized as "City comedy". Massinger's *A New Way to Pay Old Debts* epitomized the ambiguity of the cultural response to an apparently novel economic and social predicament. The concentration of the plays on the cupidity of financiers enticed Theodore Leinwand into construing this literature in terms of "credit crunch", "debt restructuring", and "venture capital".[2] In the grand scheme of the "New Historicism", the transition from "feudalism" to "capitalism", from trust and personal credit, to contract, has already occurred. The theatre represents these changes back to the audience, whilst itself belonging to that commercial world.[3] Before the end of the sixteenth century, the greedy usurer, morally defective, has been supplanted on the stage by the patriarchal moneylender, who then, in the early seventeenth century, transmuted into the "social climber".[4] The stage thus reflected back the social imperative of borrowing, but upon loans without collateral, and an acceptance of interest, a prescribed usury.[5] More recently, however, criticism has been directed at

[1]For example, Randy Martin, *The Financialization Of Daily Life* (Philadelphia, PA, 2002).

[2]Theodore B. Leinwand, *Theatre, Finance and Society in Early Modern England* (Cambridge, 1999),

[3]Jean-Christophe Agnew, *Worlds Apart: The Market and the Theater in Anglo-American Thought, 1550-1570* (Cambridge, 1986).

[4]Laura C. Stevenson, *Praise and Paradox: Merchants and Craftsmen in Elizabethan Popular Literature* (Cambridge, 1964).

[5]For the economy which was socially embedded, Karl Polanyi, *The Great Transformation: The Political and Economic Origins of Our Time* (Boston, MA, 2001 edn; originally published sixty years previously); for an introduction to Polanyi's notion of "embeddedness", Gareth Dale, *Karl Polanyi* (Cambridge, 2010), pp. 188-206.

these attempts to elicit ideological positions from comedic literature.[6] We are exhorted to return to the purpose of genre, to recognize that satire is both a dramatic device and exaggerates. One particular incidence at issue is the apparent ease with which Easy, the Essex gentleman, naïve in the ways of London on his first visit, enters into a bond with the unscrupulous Quomodo.[7] We cannot, it is maintained, assume that this arrangement is more than a heightened dramatic device which bears no relationship to the dramatic realism which has been perceived in some aspects of the stage.[8]

As "City comedy", of course, these works critique only the metropolitan financial market.[9] Two problems can then be identified: what was the actual context for this literature; and did it, if it was transformational, extend outside London? Liquidity through credit has been associated with the introduction of equity of redemption in mortgages in the early seventeenth century. Specialties – written instruments of credit such as bonds – have only been examined in so far as plaintiffs initiated legislation on them in the central courts.[10] The emphasis in the description of provincial credit has been on parole debts, those based on oral undertakings or embedded in book debts or "reckonings". We seem then to be ignoring two influences in the expansion of credit and liquidity in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The development of a standard rate of interest has been well documented from the perspective of the gradual acceptance of a limited form of usury through the Usury Acts of 1545 (revoked by Edward VI), 1571 and 1624 (initially by Norman Jones, more recently by Hawkes and Leinwand).[11] What has been less well explored is its impact on the loosening of credit.

A second development in the sixteenth century, associated with that normative acculturation of usury, was the expansion of specialties in relationships of credit. An important element evolved from 1532 when statutes merchant were

[6]Robert D. Hume, "The socio-politics of London comedy from Jonson to Steele", *Huntington Library Quarterly* 74 (2011), pp. 187-217.

[7]Contemporary cynicism is here exemplified in Thomas Middleton's *Michaelmas Term*, in which Quomodo with the collusion of his associates, attempts to divest Master Easy, the Essex gentleman, of his lands through a loan of money on bond, consummately contrived in Act 2, scene 3: *Thomas Middleton: The Collected Works*, ed. G. Taylor and J. Lavagnino (Oxford, 2007), pp. 347-52.

[8]Subha Mukherji, "Women, law and dramatic realism in early modern England", *English Literary Renaissance* 35 (2005), pp. 248-72.

[9]Robert Ashton, *Crown and the Money Market, 1603-40* (Oxford, 1960).

[10]Christopher W. Brooks, *Pettyfoggers and Vipers of the Commonwealth: The Lower Branch of the Legal Profession in Early Modern England* (Cambridge, 1986), pp. 96-101; Craig Muldrew, *The Economy of Obligation: The Culture of Credit and Social Relations in Early Modern England* (Basingstoke, 1998), passim; William A. Champion, "Litigation in the boroughs: the Shrewsbury Curia Parva, 1480-1730", *Legal History* 15 (1994), pp. 201-22. For perceptions of worth and self-worth, Alexandra Shepard, "Poverty, labour, and the language of social description in early modern England", *Past & Present* 201 (2008), pp. 51-95; Shepard and Judith Spicksley, "Worth, age, and social status in early modern England", *Economic History Review* 2nd ser. 64 (2011), pp. 493-530.

[11]David Hawkes, *The Culture of Usury in Renaissance England* (Basingstoke, 2010), p. 107, for contemporary recognition that annuities might disguise usury, important, for example, in the transactions by Archdeacon Johnson below.

transformed. Originally conceived to facilitate commercial transactions, and thus restricted in use to merchants in certified boroughs, the statute merchant was extended in 1532 to all classes of person and all types of credit arrangement in London. In effect, the statute merely confirmed a tendency for statutes merchant to be expanded informally to all categories of people in all statute staple courts. These special bonds were certified before clerks of the statute in authorized borough courts, with removal (certification) into Chancery should the conusor (obligor) default.

Before equity of redemption, credit became available through the liberalization of these instruments, both expanding liquidity and providing security. In exploring those questions, we can concentrate on three institutional changes which altered risk. Although risk is not necessarily coterminous with certainty/uncertainty, the suggestion here is that these institutional introductions had the effect of reducing risk and so allowed a new type of liquidity in the provincial money market. To clarify, the institutional instruments involved: the Usury Acts between 1543 and 1624; the formal liberalization of statutes merchant or staple; and the expansion of bonds or letters obligatory without collateral. The intention here is to consider the overall impact on a provincial money market. The convoluted development of the Usury Acts has been explained in profound depth since the work of Norman Jones, culminating recently in the exploration of the "culture of usury" in "Renaissance England" by David Hawkes. Despite some contention, particularly around the 1571 Act, and despite the negative intention of the acts to outlaw usury above the prescribed level of interest, it is recognized that the effect by the early seventeenth century was to legitimize loans at interest. This acceptance of a statutory rate of interest, moreover, facilitated the extension of loans, because the agreement around interest reduced risk and added security. The usury acts of 1545, 1571 (and later, 1624), which promulgated that rate, amounted to a not insubstantial fiduciary change in the sixteenth century which improved the liquidity and security of private financial transactions.[12]

"Statutes": bonds

The recognition of interest would not have made such impact, however, without the expansion of the specialty, the written instrument recording financial arrangements, especially the bond.[13] One specialty which especially assisted

[12] Norman Jones, *God and the Moneylenders: Usury and Law in Early Modern England* (Oxford, 1989), pp. 160-3; Deborah Valenze, *The Social Life of Money in the English Past* (Cambridge, 2006), pp. 97-8; Hawkes, *Culture of Usury*; commencing with An Acte Agaynst Usurie (37 Henry VIII, c. 9), the first in a process which came to recognize the exaction of a standard rate of interest.

[13] Throughout, it is impossible not to employ the technical and contemporary terms conusor and conusee, for brevity. The conusor was the person who became the obligor in the bond (or statute) and the conusee was the obligee, so the conusor was bound to the conusee in a penal sum (usually, but not consistently) twice the amount actually at issue or involved, so that, for example, a conusor might be bound to a conusee in £200 to redeem a debt of £100 (complicated by the exaction of interest). Whilst it is not comprehensively accurate to do so,

liquidity in the money market in the Midlands was the statute merchant. By 23 Henry VIII c.6 (1532), statute merchant bonds became available to all types of creditors and debtors in London, merely confirming what had been occurring in statute staple courts. Originally, under the statutes of Acton Burnell (1283) and *de Mercatoribus* (1285), this instrument had been restricted to the commercial arrangements of merchants. Nottingham, like some other incorporated boroughs or towns with significant fairs, had acquired the privilege of registering statute merchant bonds, originally as an integral part of commercial activity.[14] Through the extension of the statutes merchant in 1532, the borough developed into an institution for the administration of local credit arrangements for higher amounts. This local registration provided security which was enhanced by the statutory requirement that obligations not satisfied had to be certified into Chancery by the Mayor.[15] A memorandum of the certification was also entered in the local record. Only a small proportion of the statutes was certified into Chancery, so the locally registered statutes provide a much wider perspective than Chancery inscriptions of the organization of local credit for larger sums. The statute merchant thus, like other bonds, contained a penal sum for default, involved interest at the statute rate, and was enforceable in Chancery. Risk was reduced.

For this purpose, we can examine the liquidity in the money market functioning through the statute staple court in Nottingham, one of the twelve boroughs with the privilege of the status of a statute staple. Between 1575 and 1660, 1, 084 bonds were registered before the Mayor and Statute Clerk in Nottingham, encompassing a total penal sum of £567, 194. These letters obligatory could, of course, provide security or act as collateral for a wide range of transactions: security for legacies and marriage portions or jointures, performance of covenants in conveyances, and so on. From the intermittent description of the defeazances by the statute clerk, however, we can perceive that a large proportion concerned money lending.

To illustrate the development of this provincial money market, we can invoke the financial transactions of some of the frequent lenders through this forum. Two residents of the borough entered into the local credit market through statutes staple registered in the local statute court. The gentleman, Robert Wood, acted as creditor (conusee) in twenty-one statutes, with a mean value per statute of £127 (standard deviation 99.66) and median of £120 (first and third quartiles £60 and £120). The fishmonger, William Nixe, mayor and alderman, stood as conusee in ten statutes, with a mean value of £154 (sd 127.55) and median £100 (first and third quartiles £65 and £237 10*s*.).

The most prolific extension of credit on statutes came, however, from the archdeacon of Leicester, Robert Johnson, who resided at North Luffenham in

for the purposes of this paper it might be worth considering the conusor as debtor and the conusee as creditor.

[14]Nottingham was added along with York and Newcastle upon Tyne for counties north of the Trent under 5 Edward II (1311), c.33.

[15]TNA C241.

Rutland.[16] One hundred and nineteen statutes were registered for Johnson at the Nottingham statute court, with a mean value of £190 (sd 257.23) and median of £110.[17] The averages are skewed, however, by some of his twenty-four statutes for conusors of gentle status, with a maximum amount of £2, 000. In fact, his debtors were predominantly of "middling" status, yeomen with a smaller number of husbandmen.[18] Figure 3.2 (p. 50) reveals the geographical distribution of yeomen accepting bonds at Nottingham, including Johnson's clients. Restricting the analysis to these "middling" debtors in 95 statutes produces a mean of £110 (sd 61.322) and median of £90 (minimum of £20 and maximum of £300). Between 1604 and 1624, Johnson established a clientele of debtors in the farming regions of north-west Leicestershire, south Lincolnshire and south Nottinghamshire, registering their debts by statute staple in Nottingham.[19]The distribution is illustrated in Figure 3.1 (p. 50). The total obligation involved in the 119 statutes amounted to more than £22, 000. Usually, the penal sum in bonds doubled the amount of the actual debt or principal, so that the statutes might represent at least £11, 000 of actual credit extended by Johnson. In the case of statutes, however, the penal sum did not always equate to double the actual debt or obligation. The amount stated in the statute sometimes equalled exactly the actual amount owed (see below) rather than being a penal sum for the condition, so that the total value of Johnson's statutes might well have exceeded £11, 000 by some distance, succinct testimony to his wealth. It is possible too that some of the statutes did not represent debts, but other agreements. Here is an additional complication. We can, nevertheless, be fairly certain that, by their nature, most of the transactions by Johnson did represent real encumbrances and debts as a result of loans extended by him. Where, after 1608, the Clerk of the Statutes annotated the registered statutes, we have information about the defeazances, that is, the real conditions of the statutes which would annul the obligation. This annotation is important because it had been established at common law that only the bond might be registered before the mayor, not the conditions as mayors have no authority to receive conditions.[20] Referring back to Johnson, he acquired considerable affluence, not only through his livings, but also through his advantageous marriages. Testimony to his financial status was his numerous educational endowments. Whilst not so well resourced, Nixe and Wood probably had significant disposable income.

[16]Terry Y. Cocks, "The archdeacons of Leicester, 1092-1992", *Transactions of the Leicestershire Archaeological and Historical Society* lxvii (1993), pp. 34-5; C. S. Knighton, "Johnson, Robert", *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford, 2004), s.v. Johnson.

[17]The data for Johnson have been extracted from: NA CA 3385-3395 ("Mayor's books" and "Hall books", 1604-1620, but I have also examined all of these volumes from *c.*1575 to 1660, although there was a hiatus in 1643-5. The details of all the data can be examined at: <http://www.historicalresources.myzen.co.uk/BONDS/statutes.html>).

[18]For the whole concept of "middling" and "middle sort", see now Henry French, *The Middle Sort of People in Provincial England 1600-1750* (Oxford, 2007).

[19]Compare, Barry Holderness, "The clergy as money-lenders in England, 1550-1700", in *Princes and Paupers in the English Church*, ed. Rosemary O'Day and Felicity Heal (London, 1981), pp. 195-209 (derived from probate inventories of clergy).

[20]*The Notebook of Sir John Port*, ed. John H. Baker, (Selden Society 85 and 102, 1986), p. 177 (no. 101).

The acceptance of a uniform rate of interest and the existence of the statute staple at Nottingham thus reduced risk for the debtor by standardising the rate of interest and for the creditor by security through privileged legal enforcement. Through the last two decades of the sixteenth and the first half of the seventeenth century, a local credit market developed around the Nottingham statute staple.

Letters obligatory: bonds 1

Obligations by statutes had exceptional qualities denied to other forms of letters obligatory, which, however, still had recourse to law as a last resort. For assessing the impact of bonds as letters obligatory, more than 2, 400 probate inventories have been examined, from the diocese of Salisbury, between *c.*1591 and 1651.[21] The diocese comprised Wiltshire and part of Berkshire. Exemplifying this engagement with finance capitalism is William Archard, a yeoman of Lacock in Wiltshire, whose inventory was appraised on 17 February 1633/4.[22] His entire personal estate amounted to £83 15*s.* 8*d.*, but it was composed almost completely by seventeen bonds for debts owed to him, amounting in total to £79 1*s.* 0*d.* Half a dozen of the bonds were contracted with other inhabitants of Lacock, but the obligors derived from eight other villages. The amount in the bonds ranged from £1 1*s.* 0*d.* to £10, but fourteen involved £5 or less.[23] The personal estate of Thomas Caudell, a husbandman of Fovent in the same county, was appraised to the total value of just over £476. In one of his coffers, the appraisers discovered not only his gold and silver, amounting to £104, but also fifteen bonds for more than £300 which he had loaned.[24] The extent of his husbandry, as might be deduced from the amounts, was very limited.

Here are the global statistics. The total of inventories which included debts owing on specialties, almost exclusively bonds, but with a sprinkling of bills, numbered 276 (11.4 percent of all inventories). Overall, the debts contained in the bonds amounted to a total value of £14, 923 17*s.* 3*d.* The mean total value of the debts on specialty in an inventory with such debts was £54 (standard deviation at 93.76) and the median £24. We have to be clear about what constitutes these averages. The averages concern only those inventories which contained debts on specialties, not divided across all inventories with or without debts on specialties; the average concerns the total of those debts in each inventory, not each bond. Analysing the composition of those debts on bonds further, 58 percent of the inventories with specialties concerned total debts in the inventory of less than £30, consisting of 26 percent below £10, 21 percent between £11 and £20, and 11 percent between £21 and £30. Numerically, then, the debts on specialties preponderantly related to modest amounts. In terms

[21] WSRO P1.

[22] WSRO P1/A65

[23] See further below for these yeomen and husbandmen who had no husbandry and whose personal estate was invested in specialties.

[24] WSRO P1/C122: the amount here refers to the money loaned, not the penal sum in the bond.

of the total value of the debts on bonds, however, the 58 percent accounted for merely £2,092 (14 percent of the total value of debts on bonds). By comparison, the 38 inventories containing debts on specialties exceeding £100, amounted to a total value of debts on bonds of £8,598 (56 percent of the total value of all debts on bonds).[25] What the "Salisbury" inventories seem to indicate is that contracting debts on bonds had intruded some way into the local credit market and that bonds preponderated numerically for modest debts, although the smaller number of larger debts on bonds constituted the greater value.

This finance capitalism had penetrated into the diocese of Lichfield too. Written instruments to record debt were not novel, but infrequent before the 1580s. Twenty marks were borrowed by Mr Henry Eyton in 1536 "as apperith by writing".[26] Vincent Lowe had credit for £2 on tallies and £2 3*s.* 0*d.* on a bill which he wrote, in 1557.[27] By 1567, even a labourer could invest his accumulated capital in specialties, accounting for £9 of his total personal estate of £14.[28] When George Bostocke was killed as a mustered soldier in Scotland in 1560, his inventory included a bond for £40.[29] Specialties were frequent components of inventories. Written instruments of debt intruded slowly into credit relationships in the diocese. In 1581, appraisers noted that a gentleman owed an inhabitant of Shrewsbury £12 13*s.* 4*d.*, by a specialty.[30] A Shropshire yeoman seems to have subsisted on the income from a specialty, for he had no husbandry according to his inventory, and his personal estate of £37 12*s.* 8*d.* was composed predominantly of a specialty for £35.[31] The schedule of debts appended to an inventory of John Asberie, husbandman of Coton Clanford, in 1584 includes two by bond (*per obligacionem*) (comprising £2 and £7 8*s.* 4*d.*), six by bill (*per billam*) (15*s.* to £7), and one by specialty (*per espec'*) (£9 5*s.* 0*d.*), some of which instruments were exhibited for probate.[32] The appraisers of a Shrewsbury baker in the same year associated desperate debts owed to the deceased as those not on written instruments.[33] Significantly, in 1585, some appraisers, recording the debts owed by the deceased, divided the debts into those by specialty and those without.[34] Other appraisers in 1581 had referred

[25]Spearman's rank correlation between amount of specialty and total of inventory = 0.6985488.

[26]LRO B/C/11 Ralph Boycote, Leighton, 1536.

[27]LRO B/C/11 John Badcocke, Denby, 1557: "The same Vyncent as it appeyrythe bye certen talyes"; "The same vyncent as it appeyrethe bye a byll of his owne hande".

[28]LRO B/C/11 William Brown, Great Armington in Tamworth parish, 1567: "Debtes owinge to the sayd William Browne as ytt appearyth by sundrye obligacions and Bylles ix li."

[29]LRO B/C/11 George Bostocke, Hodnet, 1560: "Inprimis an oblygacion of Wylliam bentley xl li."

[30]LRO B/C/11 Roger Adams, Shrewsbury, 1581 (*summa totalis* £54 13*s.* 10*d.*): "Item an obligation of Richard Woulton gentleman where in he stoode bounde to the aboue named Roger Adams for the Paymente of xij li. xiij s. iiij d."

[31]LRO B/C/11 Thomas Atcherley of Stanton in the Field in Baschurch, 1583: "Inprimis one obligacion of xxxv li. Due to be Paid in the feast Day of St Michaell tharcangell in the yeare of our Lord god one thowsand fyve hundred fowre skore and fyve ..."

[32]Reminder: LRO probate references comprise the surname, forename, place and date.

[33]LRO B/C/11 Hugh apLewisLloyd, Shrewsbury, 1584: "Debtes owinge to the testatour without specialtie and desperatt."

[34]LRO B/C/11 Richard Asteley alias Smyth, Steepleton, 1585: (i) "Inprimis by specialltie

Table 3.1: Composition of debts, 1553-1639: Lichfield diocese inventories

Cohorts	Debts in on bonds	Debts out on bonds	No debts
1553-1600	5.8 percent	2.3 percent	62.6 percent
1601-1614	15.2 percent	3.2 percent	39.1 percent
1615-1630	30.1 percent	9.5 percent	49.4 percent

to debts owed by specialty and without.[35]

Another method of illustrating the development of the specialty is to consider the composition of debts between 1553 and 1639 in Lichfield diocesan inventories, summarised in Table 3.1. The Table requires some explanation. The cohorts are devised to reflect the increasing importance of specialties. It is intuitively noticeable that the proportion of bonds and bills accelerated in the course of the early seventeenth century. During 1553 to 1600, the appearance of bonds is less significant. The three decades after 1600 are thus divided into two cohorts: 1601-1614; and 1615-1630. Within each cohort, column three (number of debts as a percentage of all inventories) summarizes the percentage of inventories which did not include any debts. The bins in Column 1 represent the percentage of inventories with debts owed to the deceased which included specialties amongst those debts. Similarly, the second column is concerned with the percentage of inventories which record debts owed by the testator which contain specialties amongst those debts.

At their apogee, between 1615 and 1639, at least eighteen percent of inventories included specialties. The specialties amounted to £11, 611 14*s.* 7½*d.*, with a mean of £41.6 (standard deviation 65.342) and median of £20. Additionally, 98 other inventories mentioned debts without specialties, indicating that the norm was to specify how debts were secured (or not). At the apex, yeoman directed their spare capital into bonds. Almost half of the personal estate of Thomas Bradley, yeoman of Kingswinford in 1634, consisted of debts owed to him on specialties: £50 of £114 1*s.* 2*d.* Robert Bentley, of Stockingford in Nuneaton, possessed personal possessions valued at £101 0*s.* 9*d.*, but £42 5*s.* 9*d.* consisted of debts to him on written instruments. A few years later (1632), Thomas Buxton, a yeoman in Caverswall, had £50 out on bonds, part of his total personal estate of £93 6*s.* 0*d.* About the same time (1633), George Bettson of Abbots Bromley, variously described as yeoman and husbandman, had £106 invested in bills and bonds as part of his personal estate of just over £285. In Shropshire, William Brome, another husbandman, had apparently almost retired from husbandry, for his personal estate of £92 7*s.* 6*d.* was largely constituted of debts owed to him on specialties (£37 5*s.* 6*d.*) and without specialties (£32 8*s.* 3*d.*). By the early 1630s, it had become the norm to indicate whether there were any

unto John Maulle x li."; (ii) "Item without specialty."

[35]LRO B/C/11 William Bathowe, Condover, 1581; for the same istuation in inventories for Surrey people, *Surrey Probate Inventories, 1558-1603*, ed. D. M. Herridge (Surrey Record Society 39, 2005), pp. 158 (no. 165), 177 (no. 184)..

bonds on specialties. The appraisers of the Warwickshire (Nuthurst) gentleman, Thomas Butler, thus divulged in 1632: "Ittem dettes by Specialty non".

Letters obligatory: bonds 2

Finally, we can invoke some case papers from the borough court of Newark to illuminate the character of specialties in the court of a small borough. This cache of extant case papers, comprising depositions, responses, exceptions and demurrers, mainly relates to contested suits. Just over seventy cases were associated with bonds. The count explains that the parties put their seals to a bond to secure a debt of a certain amount which has not been liquidated such that the plaintiff has suffered damages of x pounds. There is one case which involves a debt of £90, but which does not state the amount of damages, so that, although it is the highest amount, it must be discounted here. The cases thus refer to 71 bonds, for debts extending from under one pound (15*s.* 8*d.* with damages of 10*s.*) to one hundred marks. Importantly, however, a quarter of the bonds comprised less than £5 of debt and another quarter debts between £5 and £9, so that half the bonds contained debts of less than £10. The mean amount of debt consisted of just over £14 (standard deviation 13.16), the median £10, with first and third quartiles at just over £4 and £20. Examining the amount of damages demanded, again over a quarter pertained to less than £5 and another quarter for between £5 and £9, so half less than £10 again. The mean amount of damage claimed was £9 (standard deviation 9.77) and median £8, with first and third quartiles at £4 and £10. Several aspects can be deduced from these statistics. First, the debts involved on bond comprehended in general very small sums, not significant amounts. Secondly, the bonds allowed the plaintiffs to request damages which were of the order of the amount of debt. Whilst the debts in the bonds totalled just more than £1,000, the damages claimed extended to about £650. The Spearman rank correlation coefficient between debts and damages is 0.78, reflecting a general association between amount of debt and amount of damages. The damages demanded might not, of course, have been awarded. The bonds, nonetheless, permitted the plaintiffs' presumption. It should be explained also that the damages were additional to the principal of the debt, since the amount of some debts exceeded the amount of the damages.[36]

Certainty

When the appraisers concluded the probate inventory of William Babb, an ironmonger of Southam in Warwickshire in 1625, they included:

[36] NA DC/NW/7/1/2/2-3, 6, 12-14, 16, 18, 21, 26, 29, 36, 38, 40-1, 46, 67, 73, 81, 87, 101, 124, 130, 135, 138-9, 141, 143, 148, 150, 155-6, 171-3, 175-7, 181, 189, 193, 196-7, 200, 202-3, 207, 211-12, 218, 221, 224, 229, 231-4, 238-9, 244, 249-50, 259-60, 263, 267, 276-7, 285, 289, 290-1.

> A note taken out of the shoppe booke of desperate debtes, the some is xvij li. v s. iiij d.

A subsequent comment indicated, however, that most of thee debts had been denied by the alleged debtors, who reckoned the debts had been liquidated in Babb's lifetime. The appraisers of the inventory of Richard Browne, a miller of Coleshill, experienced a similar problem in 1626. They commented:

> Item certayne Desperate & uncertayne Debtes supposed to be oweinge by reason they[y] stande uncrost in a note booke he kepte of money which was oweinge him for corne he solde wherein many Debtes are croste and these supposed Debtes standinge uncroste <all> not all but the most parte of them denied vij li. xij s. ijd.

The appraisers might also resist demands for the repayment of debts owed by the deceased, so that the neighbours who appraised the inventory of Laurence Boller, of Staveley in Dronfield in 1626, recorded £10 "in chardges of suits about the same" [debts owed by the deceased]. The debts of a quite wealthy gentleman, with a personal estate of £365 10*s.* 0*d.* in 1577, caused the appraisers some anxiety: "Item ther is owinge unto hym asperithe by his Det boke with other certen bylles of Det how much is desperate or recuperable we know not ...", amounting to £88 11*s.* 6*d.*[37] The appraisers of John Boothe, a gentleman, seemed to indicate a difference between oral debts and debts in writing: "Item in desperate debtes & Certen other debtes uppon specialties".[38] The same implication obtained in the inventory of a Duffield blacksmith in 1599, in which twenty-five debts amounting to almost £6 were regarded either as desperate or without specialty.[39] This association of desperate debts with oral debts, lacking security, is implicit also in the eighteen small debts owed to a Wellington butcher in 1613: "Desperat Debtes without specialtie owinge to the Testatour".[40] The astronomical credit extended by the bachelor of Trentham, Richard Astbury (1621), illustrate the associations spectacularly. His appraisers recorded "good Debtes oweinge by specialtie" amounting to £600 and, in contrast, desperate debts, which extended to £200. The appraisers of the estate of Toby Budworth of Hanbury (1623) took the same precaution of separating debts with and without specialty. Twenty-five debts amounting to over £139 were accounted simply: "All theise upon specialty". They apparently expected more difficulty with the debts without specialty: "For other Debtes without specialty the certentie whereof we know not as yet". Again, the appraisers of the chattels of a Whitwell husbandman itemized the bonds and bills first, succeeded by the much smaller amount "In debts owing unto him without securitye".[41] Perhaps there was some trepidation in the "confession" of debts owed to him when Edward Alcocke, a tailor, enunciated "Debtes which I haue noe specialtie for".[42]

[37] LRO B/C/11 James Asheton, Killamarsh, 1577.
[38] LRO B/C/11 John Boothe, Aldridge, 1600.
[39] LRO B/C/11 John Alton, Duffield, 1599.
[40] LRO B/C/11 Richard Arroesmyth, Wellington, 1613.
[41] LRO B/C/11 Richard Atkin, Whitwell, 1627.
[42] LRO B/C/11 Edward Alcocke, Cheddleton (Rownall), 1631.

The same anxiety might have surrounded the two debts owing to the spinster, Ann Arnould, "which said two summes are oweinge by simple contracts not by specialty".[43] Debts not on specialty were considered insecure, so that the appraisers of the chattels of the affluent Ashbourne husbandman, Richard Brounte (1622), as well as noting the debts of more than £80 owed to him on bills and obligations, separated off the debts not on specialties. Initially, they inscribed these thirteen debts as without specialty, but replaced the term specialty with security: "Deptes without <special – cancelled> securitie". More than £21 owed to a labourer were described as "uppon security", tantamount to specialties.[44]

When oral debts were concerned, the onus lay on the appraisers to secure an acknowledgement from the debtors, as manipulated by those neighbours who compiled the inventory of a local cleric in 1589. They divided the debts into "Debtes with specialties" (three amounting to £36) and "Debtes withowt specialties but confessed to be dew debt by the parties themselues" (another three totalling £17 1*s.* 6*d.*).[45] Similarly, the appraisers assured themselves of the certainty of debts due to Roger Foljambe in 1613 by the debtors' acknowledgement.[46] The appraisers of the substantial debts owed to a mason in 1629 remarked: "Item in debts as appeareth by bonds & otherwise acknowledged".[47] Whilst, for the most part, debts on writings and debts on promise were separately identified as with specialties and without specialties, occasionally an alternative form is applied which illustrates their advantage. The appraisers of the inventory of the yeoman of Alton, Hugh Bestweeke (1627), thus ascribed his debts as with security and without security. When the yeoman, Richard Brett of Seighford (1598), itemized his debts in and out in his will, as was the custom in the diocese, he appended: "All other my debtes which are owinge unto me the said Richard Brette which I haue assured unto me by wrytinge are xv li. & which is expressed in the Inventorie". He was confident in having secured the debts on specialty and he had indicated to his neighbours where to locate the writings. The £90 outstanding to an esquire of Audley in 1628 were identified as *ipso facto* certain to be recovered.[48] In that year, other appraisers associated debts on specialties as "certaine Money" (£17).[49]

Principally, desperate debts usually consisted of oral debts. Occasionally, nonetheless, debts on specialties are included in that category of unexpected repayment. One inventory recounted desperate debts on specialty of £5.[50] Another included amongst its desperate debts a more serious amount of £120 on

[43]LRO B/C/11 Ann Arnould, Abbots Bromley, 1631.

[44]LRO B/C/11 Francis Baule, Coventry Holy Trinity, 1621.

[45]LRO B/C/11 Richard Bourne, Blithfield, 1589.

[46]LRO B/C/11 Roger Fuliambe alias Buckeley, Shirland, 1613: "Debtes owinge to the said Roger Buckeley, as himselfe acknowledge, and are apparant by the parties confession and specialties".

[47]LRO B/C/11 William Addams, Wolstanton, 1629.

[48]LRO B/C/11 William Abnet, Audley, 1628: "Item debtes owinge by specialties which are reputed good debtes".

[49]LRO B/C/11 Henry Atkins, Long Lawford, husbandman, 1628: "Item certaine Money upon specialties".

[50]LRO B/C/11 Stephen Banbery, Wappenbury, 1631.

a bond.[51] Specialties did not ensure the debts owed to Anthony Bowyer, a draper in Coventry. The desperate debts owed to him included thirteen bills and bonds, the amounts of debt varying from 6*s.* on one bill to £2 on a bond. The appraisers were inclined to conclude that the specialties would not be redeemed. Another Coventry inhabitant, the yeoman Thomas Byrde, was owed £38 on bonds which the appraisers were not sanguine would be recovered.[52] A yeoman's appraisers in 1631 divided the debts owed to him into two categories: sperate and desperate. Thirty-one of the specialties, they assumed, were strong, but another three, although contained in bonds, were likely not to be redeemed.[53]

> Item diuers other bounds and bills that are not to be praised as we think by reason that the partyes are dead and some of them dyed at the Kings bench which boundes and bylls are to be seene.[54]

The appraisers of a poor yeoman of Coton in Hanbury decided to write off a debt on a bill because it was so long since it was contracted.[55] For the same reason there is a hint of desperation in the voice of Robert apThomas, of Wem, in 1617, enumerating his debts on his deathbed: "William Haicocke oweth me xix s. which is ramayning unpayd to me for a bill of iij li. saueing j s." Another voice of resignation sighed: "Due by specialty, but a desperate Debt 3 li."[56] Debts amounting to £19 were assessed in a Shrewsbury inventory as: "Despratte Debtes by Specialties".[57] An Audley blacksmith possessed a "desperate" bond for £4 6*s.* 4*d.*[58] The appraisers of a glover in the Abbey Foregate in Shrewsbury were perhaps more disappointed in recording "9 seuerall billes at 5s. a bill, and likewise one bond of Twelve poundes both of them desperate debt".[59]

When debtors were not in a position to redeem specialties, then, occasional difficulties occurred. In these circumstances, even if the complainant received some sort of judgement of default, forfeiture was not assured in exceptional cases. Thus a clerk indebted to a widow in the large parish of Stoke on Trent, unable to repay the amount, absconded. It seems unlikely that she recovered the forfeited penal sum.[60] Debts on specialties were thus not entirely unproblematic.

[51]LRO B/C/11 Laurence Boller, Dronfield, 1626.

[52]LRO B/C/11 Thomas Byrde, Coventry, 1617: "Item in Debtes desperate by bondes being not rec [MS blot] receaued xxxviij li."

[53]LRO B/C/11 John Alcock, Newborough in Hanbury, 1631: "Sperate debts and credites due to the said deceased John Alcock upon speciallties ..." and "Debts and credites due to the said deceased John Alcock [upon bond] supposed to be desperate".

[54]LRO B/C/11 Anthony Bowyer, Coventry, 1632.

[55]LRO B/C/11 John Alcocke, Hanbury, 1617: "Item a Doubtfull Debte by bill Due by John Cooper of Draycott longe since"; unfortunately, at £7, it exceeded the total of Alcocke's remaining personal estate.

[56]LRO B/C/11 John Byssell, Whitnash, 1622.

[57]LRO B/C/11 John apRichard, Shrewsbury, 1630.

[58]LRO B/C/11 Robert Addam, Audley, 1638.

[59]LRO B/C/11 George Adderton alias Atherton, Shrewsbury, 1638.

[60]LRO B/C/11 Elizabeth Boothes, Stoke on Trent, 1617: "Gilbert Ward clerke beinge departed the countrey & unable to paie ytt by obligacion of xv li. for payment of vij li. x s. at a daie beinge since past the forfeyrment xv li."

What they achieved was the certainty of the contraction of the debt. Specialties could not counteract, however, circumstances such as the inability to redeem the debt, the debtor absconding, or dying. These instruments provided, nonetheless, incontrovertible evidence that the debt had been contracted and could not be challenged or denied in other than the most extraordinary circumstances. A specialty also indicated the expectation of interest on the principal. As the norm in the diocese of Lichfield entailed the testator "confessing" debts in the will or on the deathbed, so Richard Brough, a very affluent yeoman of Windyates (1637), recited the debts owed to him in his testament. He restricted himself, however, to listing only four debts, totalling £17 6*s.* 0*d.* He declared of the four debts: "thies without spectiallty are ouing/ the rest ouing by bondes which I haue in my chest to show for". He recognized that he only needed to inform of his oral debts, for the appraisers would discover his written instruments in his chest. In fact, the appraisers recorded in his inventory total debts, on specialties and without, extending to £127 3*s.* 4*d.*, thus largely consisting of bonds.

Financialization and participation in the credit market

An interesting aspect of this new finance capital was its availability to a wide range of participants. Yeomen and husbandmen utilized written instruments for particular debts. As expanded below, moreover, yeomen and husbandmen, perhaps when they became infirm and aged, abandoned agricultural enterprise and invested in written financial transactions to secure their income – and perhaps that of their widows afterwards. To avoid repetition, details of the transactions by yeomen and husbandmen are reserved for Chapter 4 below.

It is recognized that singlewomen and spinsters were involved in this finance capitalism. Spinsters obtained a secure income by investing the proceeds of their legacies in bonds.[61] Singlewomen harboured their earnings to invest, not least because there was no other recourse for their liquid capital. Thus Helen Bourne, a singleton of Great Chell in Wolstanton (1632), whose estate was appraised at £22 18*s.* 0*d.*, had £19 6*s.* 0*d.* engaged in specialty. In 1637, two spinsters in Cheddleton who were sisters, had invested their money, perhaps from legacies, in specialties: Mary Alcocke had £18 10*s.* 0*d.* in bills and bonds and Catherine Alcocke £18 in the same instruments, out of their respective estates of £20 14*s.* 6*d.* and £19 19*s.* 0*d.* In an even greater commitment, the spinster of Starton in Stoneleigh (1610), Margery Browne, had an outstanding debt of £25 in her personal estate which amounted in all to £76 13*s.* 8*d.*, but the inventory also recorded:

> Item a debt owing from Josua Dunton of Kennelworth Tanner and From Thomas Dunton of Stoneley yeoman to her by specialtie

[61] Judith Spicksley, "Usury legislation, cash, and credit: the development of the female investor in the late Tudor and Stuart periods", *Economic History Review* 61 (2008), pp. 277-301

lviij li. x s.

Specialties secured £19 16*s.* 0*d.* of the debts owed to the singlewoman Isabel Badeley (Great Madeley, 1623), although desperate debts also constituted £7 10*s.* 8*d.* of her total inventory of £30 4*s.* 0*d.* Most of the personal estate of Joan Barlowe, a spinster, consisted of £15 owed to her on specialties.[62] Another spinster possessed apparel and household stuff valued at 5*s.* other than a bond for £8.[63]

Some widows engaged in written instruments to secure their credit. In some cases, they might have received the bonds from their late husbands who had diversified out of husbandry. A widow of Keele, Helen Blackborne (1625), had invested more heavily in three bonds which constituted £96 12*s.* 0*d.* of her personal estate of £103 2*s.* 0*d.* The yeoman, Edward Blackbourne, of Keele, had died some seven years previously (1618). His personal estate of more than £300 (£301 9*s.* 4*d.*) included no husbandry or dead or livestock, but "boundes, bills & writtinges price 246 6 0". Some of these specialties remained outstanding when Helen passed away. When the widow Helen Burton, of Cheswardine, died (1632), she made a nuncupative will. Her appraisers recorded her total personal estate as £93 18*s.* 0*d.*, £52 of which was secured on bonds, including one from her son-in-law for £30. Eleanor Barney, another widow (Albrighton, 1637), possessed three bonds worth £51 in her personal estate of £70 17*s.* 10*d.* Similarly the Widow Ashton's personal estate of £108 19*s.* 8*d.* was largely composed of specialties of £91 (Baggington, 1636). Elizabeth Beighton, a widow of Wirksworth (1625), was owed £22 on three bonds and one bill. Another widow, Elizabeth Bull, was apparently migrant. Her will recited that she was of Draycote in the Clay and Hanbury, but now resident in Hartshorne. Her will itemized the debts owed to her, including four bonds, for £6, £10, £2, and £20. No doubt such secured debts were important for a migrant woman.[64] The poor widow, Anne Burrie (Norton in Hales, 1621), relied on a specialty for £6 10*s.* 0*d.* for her income, for the rest of her estate amounted merely to 21*s.* 6*d.* If we consider the time of maximal investment in specialties, from 1615 to 1639, 12.9 percent of widows' inventories mentioned specialties. Not surprisingly, half appeared in the inventories with a total valuation of more than £50. Even so, almost half occurred in inventories with a *summa* below £50. The overall low proportion may be explained by the general low level of personal estate of widows, which perhaps ensued from a combination of reasons. Widows, although first legatees in the will, were not often the most beneficial legatees, and sometimes merely residuary legatees. In any case, the heir-at-law received the real estate and often with a provision for husbandry. Second, many poor widows received their legacy after the illness and incapacity of the husband had diminished or encumbered the estate.[65]

[62]LRO B/C/11 Joan Barlowe, Norton in the Moors (Woodhouses), 1623 (*summa totalis* £19 7*s.* 7*d.*).

[63]LRO B/C/11 Agnes Blake alias Glascott, Kingsbury, 1623.

[64]LRO B/C/11 Elizabeth Bull, Hanbury, 1633. There is no inventory.

[65]See, however, Amy Louise Erickson, *Women & Property in Early Modern England* (London, 1995).

Perhaps surprisingly, labourers too were able to participate in this utility. A labourer in Stockingford in Nuneaton, Nicholas Bell, in 1632 had personal estate of £31 2*s.* 4*d.*, £14 of which was contained in a debt to him on a specialty. Richard Barnes (1622), a labourer of Harthill in Mancetter, possessed bonds for £9 18*s.* 0*d.*, £17, £5 10*s.* 0*d.*, £7, amongst many debts owed to him.

By the early seventeenth century, investment in bonds had become a common way of assuring credit. Although not as extensive as oral debts, a substantial number of rural creditors and debtors engaged in this form of financial transaction. Whereas specialties had previously been occasionally used between this sort of clientele, during the late sixteenth century more rural inhabitants became accustomed to participating through written instruments. The use of bonds percolated through rural society, extending to singlewomen and even labourers. Written obligations provided security of the contract, if not always redemption and liquidation. In exceptional circumstances, default occurred. On the other hand, those who depended for their income on the advance of credit, through to the lowest in rural society, desired that security which only specialties could furnish. The return became attractive with the legal standard rate of interest.

Figure 3.1: Robert Johnson's statutes staple at Nottingham: geographical distribution

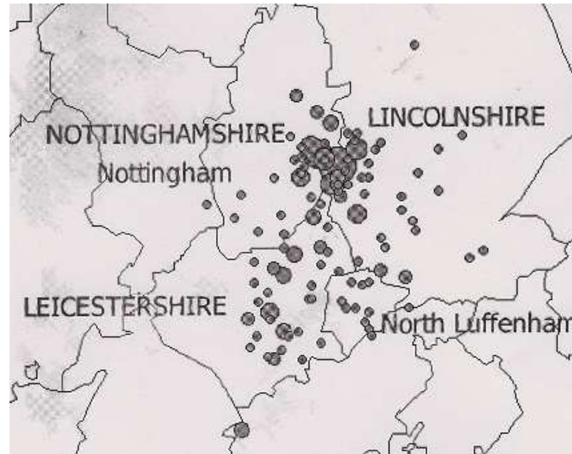
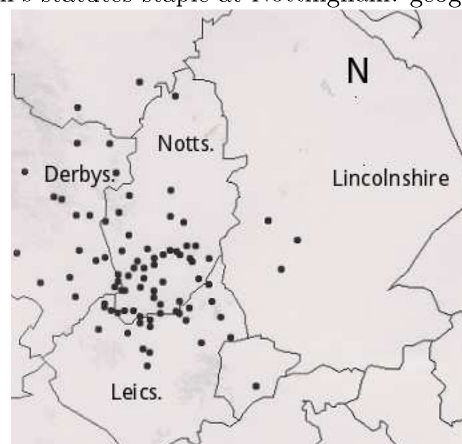


Figure 3.2: Yeomen's statutes staple at Nottingham: geographical distribution



Chapter 4

Elements of Agrarian Activity

> There seems little doubt here but that husbandman is used to denote the group of men next below the yeoman.
>
> This being the case, it is easy to see why the terms [husbandman and yeoman] sometimes were used loosely; and there are enough instances of overlapping to show that no social cleavage was inherent in their use. But as a group the yeomen in the country community ranked above the husbandmen and were next in position and importance to the gentlemen.[1]

Defining rural society

The traditional social degrees of the countryside were established on esteem, infused to some extent by economic condition.[2] Self-perception and the perceptions of neighbours broadly coincided, but confusion sometimes occurred. The differences are revealed by the contrasting self-descriptions and attributions in will and inventory. In the cohort between 1554 and 1600 in Lichfield diocese, there are merely four occurrences when self-description in the will and accreditation in the inventory by the appraisers differed: yeoman in one and husbandman in the other. In all four cases, the total valuation in the inventory was modest. Between 1601 and 1639, twenty-five instances of different ascriptions occurred in Lichfield probate materials, extending across a range from a little over £10 to more than £280. The ambiguity is perhaps reflected in the inventory of Francis Blackeman of Whitgreave, whose personal estate in 1604 was valued at £119 7*s.* 4*d.*, the original attribution of "husbandman" expunged and replaced in su-

[1] Mildred Campbell, *The English Yeoman Under Elizabeth and the Early Stuarts* (New Haven, 1942), pp. 30, 33.

[2] Keith Wrightson, "Aspects of social differentiation in rural England, *c.* 1580-1660", *Journal of Peasant Studies* 5 (1977), pp. 33-47; Alexandra Shepard, "Poverty, labour and the language of social description in early modern England", *Past & Present* 201 (2008), pp. 51-95.

perscript by "yeoman".[3] In the converse direction, Richard Smith of Hilmorton in the Warwickshire extent of the diocese of Lichfield, was downgraded from "yeoman" to "husbandman" in a contemporary case in Star Chamber.[4]

Some of these alterations can be explained by the affiliation of the deceased with yeoman families. Randulph Boughey of Audley illustrates this association. When he died in 1620, his personal estate was appraised at a modest £40 4*s.* 0*d.* His self-description in his will as husbandman was transformed by the appraisers in the inventory to yeoman. The Bougheys had existed in the parish for at least a century, represented by the probate documents of Thomas Boughey of Audley in 1537, with its most affluent member Richard Boughey, whose personal estate was assessed in 1598 at £118 16*s.* 0*d.*[5] Similarly, Richard Blackburne of Drayton in Hales described himself in his will as husbandman, but the appraisers dignified him as yeoman. He was associated with a yeoman family, if one of modest estate by this date.[6]

Other transfers of status or degree are more opaque. In his will, George Bettson of Abbots Bromley (1633) allowed himself the status of yeomen, but his appraisers reduced him to husbandman in the inventory, despite his personal estate of £285 5*s.* 10*d.* Perhaps the debts owed to him on bills and bonds, amounting to £106, influenced their decision. William Boddington (Churchover, 1628), with personal estate appraised at £147 7*s.* 0*d.*, was diminished in the same way from yeoman to husbandman. It seems that their neighbours traduced their attempts to fashion themselves through their self-representation in their wills. Conversely, it is difficult to comprehend why William Bamforde of Ilam (1609), who had personal estate extending not further than a measly £12 11*s.* 6*d.*, was elevated from husbandman in his will to yeoman in his inventory. It is possible that he had reduced his estate by *inter vivos* transfers, but his diminished status induced him to describe himself as a husbandman.

Sometimes, moreover, the status of the deceased is perplexing. In his nuncupative will, made orally on his death bed, Eustace Bonell of Sheldon (1623), acceded to the description of husbandman. His appraisers assigned to him the status of yeoman. The total valuation of his inventory, nonetheless, amounted to merely £35 15*s.* 4*d.* Although the inventory recounted the ten debts owed to him, totalling £31 2*s.* 0*d.*, yet it also accounted for the seven debts which he owed, a matter of £15 2s. 8d.

Similar confusions appeared in probate materials in Salisbury diocese, at least fifteen instances.[7] In nine cases, a self-description as a yeoman in a will was diminished to husbandman by the appraisers in the inventory; in the other six, the appraisers elevated the deceased from husbandman in the will to yeo-

[3]Reminder: LRO B/C/11 references comprise the surname, forename, place and date.

[4]Campbell, *English Yeoman*, p. 25.

[5]LRO B/C/11 Thomas Boughey, Audley, 1537; Richard Boughey, Audley, 1598; Randulph Boughey, Audley, 1620. There are probate records for other Bougheys of Audley. See Campbell, *English Yeoman*, p. 32.

[6]LRO B/C/11 Richard Blackburne, Drayton in Hales, 1620; Richard Blackburne, Drayton in Hales, 1623, yeoman.

[7]WSRO P1/C45, G83, H107, H217, H220, H240, J31, K24, M107, R68, R78, S138, S205, T103, W176.

man in the inventory. Some of the transformations can be easily explained. The reduction of the status of Henry Hellyer of Devizes from yeoman (will) to husbandman (inventory) no doubt accorded with his inventory valuation of merely £9 6*s.* 4*d.* The similar diminution of John Remnam of Warfield in 1631 is also consonant with an inventory total of £7 4*s.* 4*d.* Movement in the converse direction, from husbandman in the will to yeoman in the inventory, reflects personal estate: thus Thomas Godfree of Great Coxwell (£82 18*s.* 2*d.*); Ralph Keate (£127 13*s.* 6*d.*); John Roberts alias Hayward (£94 4*s.* 10*d.*).

Such rationale did not, however, explain all the instances, nor should it be expected, for more than wealth was concerned. Status was informed by rural honour too, so that, as noted below, some retained the status of yeoman despite their apparent end-of-life poverty, whilst others remained husbandmen despite their accumulated wealth. For example, William Selman of Christian Malford addressed himself as yeoman in his will, but was downgraded to husbandman in his inventory, although the appraisers estimated his personal estate at £131 16*s.* 2*d.* What can be discounted is a substantial change in wealth between will and inventory, for the distance between the two is in all cases only a matter of months. In this regard, for example, John Remnam's will was composed on 18 April 1631, and his inventory compiled within a week on the 23 April.[8] Hellyer's inventory personal estate was appraised within two days in November 1634.[9] The only aberration was William Cook, of Hampstead Norris, whose will was written in 1609 (yeoman), but his inventory not until 1611/12 (husbandman; £39 3*s.* 0*d.*).[10]

Occasionally, the appraisers can be seen deliberating about status: in the preamble of an inventory in 1625, yeoman is cancelled and husbandman added in superscript in the hand of the first appraiser.[11] The appraisers of an inventory with a total valuation of just over £21 cancelled the description husbandman and added yeoman in superscript[12]. Confusion of status at other levels was infrequent. In his will in June 1620, Anthony Baker was allocated the status of labourer, but his appraisers in August regarded him as a husbandman, assessing his personal estate at £34 8*s.* 4*d.*[13] The urban context provided another opportunity for misconception: the will of Arthur Harrison of Devizes attributed to him the status of gentleman on 31 December 1639, but the appraisers on 15 May 1640 demoted him to yeoman. He was evidently an urban wholesale dealer in malt for £56 of his total personal estate (£67 10*s.* 0*d.*) consisted of debts to him for that commodity.[14] His urban merchant status might have conferred on him the title of Master, yet there remained some scepticism amongst his appraisers who considered him yet an urban yeoman.

There remain, of course, salutary reminders that the social status of local

[8] WSRO P1/R68.
[9] WSRO P1/H217.
[10] WSRO P1/C45.
[11] WSRO P1/E30 (£11 14*s.* 0*d.*).
[12] WSRO P1/B55.
[13] WSRO P1/B168.
[14] WSRO P1/H245; as also S120.

inhabitants did not necessarily reflect their economic condition. Nicholas Bradburie of Darley Abbey, a yeoman with personal estate reckoned to be worth £178 4*s.* 1*d.* in 1624, owed nevertheless a total of £269 13*s.* 7*d.*, including on bonds for £120, £40 and £30 (two). The appraisers thus concluded: "So his debtes amount to more then his estate by 84 li. 9s. 6d." Although designated a yeoman, Thomas Beighton of Chilvers Coton had personal estate appraised modestly at £34 9*s.* 4*d.* in 1625, but the appraisers recognised in the inventory debts owed by Thomas amounting to £31 6*s.* 8*d.*

The appraisers of the personal estate of Francis Bott, husbandman (Withybrook, 1625), arrived at a value of £31 17*s.* 8*d.*, but noted also in the inventory that Bott's outstanding thirteen debts to others amounted to £28 0*s.* 6*d.*, so that, in economic terms, he was no better placed than a labourer. His status was maintained by the land which he held by comparison with the landless or near-landless labourer. What is perhaps more surprising is the occasional confusion of husbandman and labourer in will and inventory. These cases may represent an absolute decline in status. In this ambiguous category of husbandman/labourer appears Thomas Barett, of High Ercall, with personal estate extending in 1613 to no more than £5 16*s.* 2*d.*, Thomas Alcock of Dilhorne in 1632 with merely £14 14*s* 0*d.*, and William Becke of Edensor with, in 1638, £10 19*s.* 6*d.* Whereas William Wisdom's will portrayed him as a husbandman, the appraisers concluded in his will that he was a labourer. Almost a year had elapsed between will (1 May 1633) and inventory (6 April 1634), so his decline might have been absolute.[15]

Comparative agrarian wealth

Lichfield diocese

One of the features of the distribution of wealth of the yeomen and husbandmen is the complexity and complication. One unusual characteristic was the number of yeomen with modest means, in some cases derisory amounts. In Lichfield diocese, for example, John Bromall of Kingsbury was designated yeoman in both his will and inventory, but possessed personal estate of no more than £24 13*s.* 8*d.*, in 1625. Even his status possession had depreciated badly and was out of fashion: "one olde little silver spone" worth no more than 2s., less than half the value of the current model. William Bredbury of Kinder in Glossop described himself as yeoman in his will, but his personal estate was appraised at only £18 13*s.* 10*d.* (1626). His position was so lowly that his brassware consisted merely of two little kettles appraised at 4*s.* Thomas Barrett (Penkhill, 1631) was described in both will and inventory as yeoman, but his personal estate did not exceed £28 7*s.* 0*d.*, which included £9 in ready money and a debt of £10 owed to him, so that it seems that he had withdrawn from husbandry. Similar apparently impoverished yeoman inhabited Wiltshire. In

[15] WSRO P1/W147.

Table 4.1: Inventory valuations: yeomen and husbandmen, Lichfield diocese 1554-1600

Value	Husbandmen	Yeomen
Mean (£s)	36.1	63.1
stdv	30.148	50.036
Median (£s)	30	51
5th percentile (£s)	7	9.7
95th percentile	83.7	174.3
<£30 (%)	51.9	28.7
>£30-50 (%)	26.7	20.8
>£50-100 (%)	19.0	34.4
>£100-200 (%)	2.1	13.5
>£200-500 (%)	0.3	2.6

his nuncupative will, John Hyem was described as yeoman, a status reiterated by his appraisers in his inventory, but they calculated his total personal estate at only £16 0*s.* 4*d.*[16] Although endowed with personal estate of merely £12 12s. 6d., John Davys the younger was afforded the title of yeoman in 1594, reflecting, perhaps, his lineage rather than his economic position.[17] Another Wiltshire yeoman owned even less at his death in 1612, personal estate of £7 3*s.* 2*d.*[18] Secondly, some husbandmen acquired quite extensive personal estate. Anthony Bright, husbandman of Woodthorpe in Dronfield, had personal estate at his death (1625) extending to £311 6*s.* 4*d.*, which he had accumulated through diversification. He leased his house and land, valued at £60. Additionally, he leased a cutler's wheel and leadmill in Dore, in the same parish. Debts owed to him on specialties amounted to £73 18*s.* 4*d.*

When we consider the overall structure of wealth of yeomen and husbandmen, some basic characteristics thus appear. Yeomen were as likely as husbandmen to be poor at the end of life. The numbers in both categories were small, but yeomen as well as husbandmen were susceptible. It is possible that in this category, both had passed their personal estate on to their successors, a distribution *inter vivos*, but some were undoubtedly impoverished and indigent. In the middling levels of wealth, there is much comparability between yeomen and husbandmen. Both could acquire personal estate ranging from the modest £30 through to £200. The difference is the higher proportion of husbandmen in the lower reaches of £30 to £50. Although some husbandmen accumulated larger personal estate, more than £200, this pinnacle was more likely to be achieved by yeomen. The position was therefore more complex than simply assuming that yeomen were wealthier than husbandmen.

Little requires adding for the comparative distribution in the diocese of Sal-

[16]WSRO P1/H191 (1630/1)
[17]WSRO P1/D6.
[18]WSRO P1/C54.

Table 4.2: Inventory valuations: yeomen and husbandmen, Lichfield diocese, 1601-1639

Value	Husbandmen	Yeomen
Mean (£s)	61.7	100.4
stdv	65.341	96.113
Median (£s)	44	70
5th percentile (£s)	8	9.2
95th percentile (£s)	165.7	300.2
<£30 (%)	35.9	20.1
>£30-50 (%)	20.9	17.0
>£50-100 (%)	27.1	26.6
>£100-200 (%)	14.2	25.2
>£200-500 (%)	1.5	10.2
>£500 (%)	0.4	0.9

Table 4.3: Inventory valuations: yeomen and husbandmen, Salisbury diocese, 1591-1639

Value	Husbandmen	Yeomen
Mean (£s)	54	112
stdv	63.652	123.00
Median (£s)	34	72
<£30 (%)	45	16
>£30-50 (%)	21	18
>£50-100 (%)	23	35
>£100-200 (%)	8	16
>£200-500 (%)	3	12
>£500 (%)	0	3

isbury, for it reproduces extremely closely the pattern in Lichfield diocese, as illustrated in Table 4.3.

Diversification and finance capitalism

The conundrum of old age is that agrarian capital accumulation is at its zenith, but infirmity impedes its exploitation. The solution for some yeomen and husbandmen was the abandonment of husbandry and investment of the proceeds into finance capitalism. This solution absolved the aged men of the hard task of husbandry, provided more certainty and liquidity in emergency, and accrued a regular income. One of the most explicit examples of retreat from husbandry into finance capitalism was John Alsibrooke, a yeoman of Overton in Ashover, whose personal estate in 1617 was estimated to be worth £701 5*s.* 4*d.* In fact, it consisted largely of specialties for debts owed to him to the tune of £600: "Item

debts oweinge unto the saide John Alsibrooke by bills bounds wryteings and other specialties ..." As another example, John Besford of Wem, at his death had £30 5*s.* 4*d.* owed to him on four bills and another £27 1*s.* 4*d.* on three bonds. Additonally, he had £38 "in one Frendes hande". Although he had a lease valued at £20, he had assigned it. Those elements constituted almost the whole of his inventory valuation of £126 11*s.* 0*d.* The inventory listed no husbandry, live or dead stock. The only livestock possessed by Richard Brough, yeoman of Grinley in Stowe, comprised residually two cows and a stirk appraised at £7. The total valuation of his personal estate in 1631 amounted to £143 8*s.* 5*d.*, mostly contained in a separate section of the inventory marked "speacialltys", which enumerated fourteen bonds for a total of £111 5*s.* 1*d.* Almost all of the personal estate of John Barton (Calcott, 1632), designated a yeoman in both his will and inventory, derived from debts owed to him on specialties: £41 12*s.* 0*d.* of a total amount of £43 12*s.* 0*d.* This condition is perhaps represented by William Blore, a yeoman of Keele, in 1632, described in his will as "oulde and diseasede". Through the years, he had accumulated personal estate valued at £201 3*s.* 4*d.* In his old age, however, he had converted much of it into some liquid capital, silver and gold amounting to £12 15*s.* 0*d.*, and a regular income from £129 invested in "bondes & spetialties".

The same obtained for some husbandmen, an occupational description which presumes agricultural activity. The personal estate of William Bullocke, husbandman of Stoneycliffe in Leek, amounted in 1628 to £28 18*s.* 1*d.*, but it was mostly composed by a bond for £10, an obligation for the same amount, and another debt of £4. Leonard Byfeild (Long Itchington [Bascote], 1631) was another husbandman in this condition. Whilst he had personal estate valued at £30 5*s.* 8*d.*, it was constituted by his apparel and money in his purses (£11 6*s.* 8*d.*), a debt owed to him on a specialty (£12 19*s.* 0*d.*), and another debt to him of £4 10*s.* 0*d.* A Berkshire yeoman had personal estate of £211 9*s.* 4*d.*, but it was mostly composed (£200) of bonds, bills and other debts.[19]

Other yeomen, not ostensibly incapacitated, still diversified their capital, perhaps because of limited opportunities to expand their husbandry. In north-west Derbyshire, the yeoman Ralph Bowdon (Glossop, 1632) had flourished, with accumulated personal estate of £245 1*s.* 8*d.* Of this total, however, £55 was out on bonds and he no doubt had some liquid capital as his purse, apparel, girdle and money had a combined valuation of £20.

Leases

Expansion of husbandry depended on the terms of tenures and estates. The acquisition of multiple copyholds enabled increase of husbandry, but incurred social concern and was difficult. An alternative was the recourse to leasehold land, not a tenure, but an estate, and included in inventories as personal estate. Leasehold could be derived from several sources: from the conversion of copyhold

[19] WSRO P1/B20.

tenures to leasehold; from the disintegration of demesne land; and from subletting. The first and last seem to have somewhat restricted in these localities.[20]

Leases in Lichfield diocese

The paucity of references to leases in Lichfield inventories in the first half of the sixteenth century may reflect either lack of recording and interest or the actual situation.[21] It is quite possible that before the middle of the sixteenth century leases were sporadic. [Inventories are not, of course, an accurate representation of the development of leasehold, but merely an indicator, a one-dimensional source which would, in microstudies, be complemented by surveys and rentals.]. Hardly any leases are itemized in the inventories, although as estates but not tenures, they were categorized as personal estate. Their occurrence also seems exceptional in their circumstance. Thus, one of the few instances involved William Adamson of Swynnerton, in 1551, with his meagre total personal estate of £5 5s 4d., only just above the *bona notabilia* of £5 for the production of an inventory, but who possessed half of a lease of a "mese" valued at £2 6*s.* 8*d.* When leases begin to appear more frequently in the 1560s, some of them relate to substantial amounts. William Askereicke of Birmingham (1566) held "Item certayne leases to be thought to be worth C li.", just more than forty percent of his total personal estate. Thomas Austyn (place not known) in 1566 had in his personal estate: "In primis a lease of a tenement of xls. Rent and xix yeres unexpired of the same leace xxx li.", which constituted three quarters of his inventory total.

By the 1570s, however, the character of the norm of leases had been transformed, exemplified by the two leases of Thomas Alkinton (1570) of Tilstock in Whitchurch, the one valued at £3 and the other at 10*s.*, in his personal estate of £47 2*s.* 11*d.* High-value leases persisted, such as the "certaine leases of grounde" appraised at £30 which comprised a quarter of the personal estate of the husbandman Robert Alcotte of Stockingford in Nuneaton in 1589. Smaller leases which allowed flexibility in husbandry, however, became numerically important. For example, in 1585, the husbandman William Boley of Melbourne, whose per-

[20]The conversion of copyhold to leasehold is a principal component of the Brenner debate: Robert Brenner, "Agrarian class structure and economic development in pre-industrial Europe", *Past & Present* 70 (1976), pp. 30-75; *The Brenner Debate: Agrarian Class Structure and Economic Development in Pre-Industrial Europe*, ed. Trevor Aston and C. H. E. Philpin (Cambridge, 1985); for the regulation of leases on ecclesiastical and collegiate estates from 1571, Jean Morrin, "The transfer to leasehold on Durham Cathedral estate, 1541-1626", in *Landlords and Tenants in Britain, 1440-1660: Tawney's Agrarian Problem Revisited*, ed. Jane Whittle (Woodbridge, 2013), pp. 117-32; for the ambiguous relationship between customary tenures and leasehold on some Crown lands, Richard W. Hoyle, "Customary tenure on the Elizabethan estates", in *The Estates of the English Crown, 1558-1640*, ed. Hoyle (Cambridge, 1992), pp. 196-201. For a counter-argument about the conversion of copyhold to leasehold, Hoyle, "Tenure and the land market in earlv modern England: or a late contribution to the Brenner debate", *Economic History Review*, 2nd ser., xliii (1990), pp. 1-20 For a recent discussion, Jane Whittle, *The Development of Agrarian Capitalism: Land and Labour in Norfolk, 1440-1580* (Oxford, 2000).

[21]The position is similar for inventories in Surrey: *Surrey Probate Inventories, 1558 - 1603*, ed. D. M. Herridge (Surrey Record Society 39, 2005), p. 79 (no. 73): a lease for fourteen years remaining.

sonal estate extended to more than £60, held a lease for 17 years to come valued at £5. It is probable that this lease comprised the lease of demesne land valued at £5 in 1589 held at his death by Henry Boleye of Melbourne, whose status was yeoman. Also in 1585, the yeoman John Baker, held in Worfield leases valued at £2 5*s*. 0*d*., although his total personal estate approached £150.

Some examples from the early seventeenth century will clarify the preponderant leases which added ground for flexibility in husbandry. In his inventory of 1612, John Aldridge, yeoman of Warton in Polesworth, had leases valued at £4 in his total estate of almost £153. William Adams of Norton in the Moors (1613) had taken a lease of lands for five years "houlden uppon the racke worth over and beseedes the yearly rent" £8. Thirty shillings was considered the value in 1622 of the lease of four acres for five years to come acquired by Thomas Adams, a husbandman of Shenstone. Thirty butts were held for a term of three years by John Bossely, husbandman of Leek, in 1607, the lease considered to be worth £3 6*s*. 8*d*. in his personal estate totalling just over £150.

A second aspect of leasing was the interest in reversions of leases. In 1615, thus, Francis Adenby, a husbandman of Childs Ercall, had an interest of £10 in the reversion of a lease. The reversion of a lease of Westcroft accounted for £3 in the inventory of Richard Atkin, husbandman of Whitwell, whose personal estate in 1627 amounted to more than £393. [Occasionally, the appraisers record the yield to the executors or administrators for their management of the estate for year or year and a half; in this case, they estimated "The benefite of the farme for j yeare & di[midio]" £10]. The number of reversions suggests some competition and demand for leases of smaller amounts of land for flexibility in husbandry.

As much as farmers, those engaged in crafts had a propensity to take leases to facilitate their occupation and perhaps for some subsistence. In this regard, the shoemaker of Wirksworth, James Aspinall, had in 1616 "groundes taken & paid for as may appeare by the spetialities", appraised at £18. Another Wirksworth craftsman, the blacksmith John Alsopp (1620) had contracted a lease for years of half a close called the Riddinge, appraised at £6. Also a blacksmith, John Alton of Duffield (1599) possessed a lease for a term of years in a parcel called Twiforde Field, valued at £10. The wealthy tanner, John Archer of Snelston (1624), with more than £500 in personal estate, assumed two leases valued at £60 to improve his business. One of the few prosperous weeavers with his own narrow weaving shop, Denis Atkins of Kinver (1624), took leases of his cottage house (£1), Clombrokmeddow for one life (£2), arable for the term of "on ould womans lif" (10*s*.), Dudley Croft comprising one acre for nine years to come (10*s*.), the pasture Mearscroft for fourteen years to come (£20), and the pasture called the Grey Fields for eight years to come (£10). A coverlet weaver in Matlock, with vastly inferior personal estate, Thomas Aspinall (1598), acquired leases of the Long Croft for 11 years (£3) and another acre for 14 years (£2).

Undoubtedly, some tenures were being converted into leases (estates), but the transformation appears to have been erratic and incremental. In 1589, the appraisers totalled the personal estate of Richard Ashe in Stoke on Trent at £34 13*s*. 4*d*., £30 of which was accounted "Item on lese Wher in he deyde

Sesyd". An entire yardland was leased for a term of years to Henry Atkins, husbandman of Bubbenhall (1599), although only valued at £6 in his total personal estate of just over £103. The widow Frances Addams of Edgmond (1630) had received the lease of a moiety of a tenement for six years to come valued at £39. More demonstrably, Walter Ashton of Bradley (1636) occupied his farm by a lease appraised at £75, to which he added leases worth £6 13*s.* 4*d.*, £20, and £20, consolidating his personal estate at more than £236, an aberrant example, perhaps, of "agrarian capitalism" through expansion of land by lease. The successful agrarian enterprises required some additional land on lease to provide flexibility. The personal estate of John Brincknell, a yeoman of Clifton on Dunsmore, extended to almost £510, amongst which was a lease of the Rye Close, estimated value £20, and of other land, £50.

The problem of some earlier and beneficial leases persisted into the late sixteenth century. The inventory of the husbandman of High Ercall, William Arnewey, recorded in 1597:

> Item the leasse of his howse for 100 yeares yf Rycharde Arneway and Thomas Wood so long do lyue xxs. yearely the rent discharged.

Confusion abounded about the contractual arrangements between the dissolved Shrewsbury Abbey and its tenant, the lease remaining to the elder Thomas Adderton, draper of the Abbey Foregate in Shrewsbury, whose appraisers in 1598, complained that "the lease is lost and the term not known" for the leases of tithes called "Punche sheves", tithes of Prior's Mill, herbage, and 24 lands (24 acres) in Abbey Foregate; so they considered the sale value at a measly £1. Relatively impecunious, Christopher Almon of Dronfield (1637), retained two leases of land for terms of 800 years with a nominal rent of 1*d.* p.a. A lease for 81 years was enumerated in the inventory of Thomas Bache of Lullington in 1613. In contrast, some landlords of lay estates had adopted the custom of 21-year leases, for the labourer Thomas Allibone of Ladbrooke (inventory 1633), received such a lease from Lady Alice Dudley in 1626, valued in his inventory at £2 (see below, p. 65).

The quality of the leases remains a conundrum. Rarely is much information provided about the contractual arrangement. It is therefore difficult to be explicit about the extent and nature of leases. The tables below attempt to elicit some of the characteristics to quantify the qualitative examples above. The varying attributes can be illustrated by the (perhaps exasperated) comment by the appraisers of Nicholas Allyn's personal estate in Great Packington in 1604: "Item a Lease hardly worth xs." In comparison in the same year, the leases of Richard Atcherley, a tanner in Baschurch, received valuations of respectively £40, £10 and £8. A lease for certain years of land valued at £4 per annum was estimated by the appraisers to be worth £21.[22] Strangely, meadow does not appear frequently, the few exceptions represented by the piece of meadow appraised at £3 and the close of meadow at £2, both in the hand of Richard Averell, yeoman of Morney, in 1631. The acquisition of beast gates was also

[22] LRO B/C/11 Edward Alcocke, Cheddleton, tailor, 1631.

Table 4.4: Status of lessees, 1554-1639: Lichfield diocese

Status	1554-1600	1601-1639
husbandman	18	77
yeoman	18	51
craft	10	39
other	12	49
not defined	51	64

only occasionally remarked, as the three assigned for a term of years to James Ashton, yeoman of Wyaston (1634), appraised at £10 6*s.* 8*d.* Earlier, in 1587, George Betonson, a yeoman of Stone, held a lease of beast gates evaluated at £10.

The examples above provide some illustrations of the impact of leases from the 1570s onwards. Quantification is problematical because of the paucity of detail about the leases. Some attempt must be made, nonetheless. To reiterate, few leases are enumerated in inventories between 1533 and 1553. From 1554 to 1600, 5.4 percent of inventories contain leases, a proportion which doubles to 11.3 percent between 1601 and 1639. Table 4.4 represents the status of those whose inventories contained leases.[23]

Some additional explanation is necessary. The table includes reversions of leases, but excludes lessees of homesteads or houses. Over a quarter of the lessees expected reversions of leases. About 76 percent of the reversions were evaluated at £10 or less. Indeed, the little intake on the waste which would revert to Ralph Burne, a singleman of Wolstanton (1616) was appraised at merely 2*s.*

Significantly, too, leases of homesteads were prominent in the inventories. The inventory of Thomas Anslye of The Hill in Leamington Hastings in 1618 included as its first item: "Inprimis the Leasse or tacke of his house", valued at £10. To the leases for land must, therefore, be added one hundred leases of houses, 82 percent of which were valued at £10 or less. Again, few details are supplied about the character of the leases of houses. A lease of a house for fourteen years was valued at £5; another for one year at £2; one for four and a half years at £6 6*s.* 8*d.*; another for five years at £15; one for eight years at £1 4*s.* 0*d.*; a cottage for 16 years at £6; a house for twelve years at £5. Obviously, there was much variety and discretion according to circumstance. What is clear is that leases of houses without land were significant for smallholders, labourers and crafts, assuming also that these houses had not been constructed on waste with five acres of land under the Cottages Act of 1589, that is, they were older tenancies. These leaseholds were replicated in the diocese of Salisbury, in which 85 of the perused inventories contained a lease of a house or cottage, almost comprehensively valued at £10 or less.

If we examine more closely the content of the leases, about nine percent refer to "farms", dispersed in different localities. The character of the "farms" is rarely

[23]The data are for surnames B; "other" comprises gentle status, widows, singletons, and labourers.

explicated. A "coppe for certayn yeres" was held by Ralph Bradshaw in Duffield in 1594, valued at £4 6*s.* 8*d.* Further north in Hathersage, George Brownell in 1608 held a lease of a copyhold tenement appraised at £31. The "farm", comprising one and a half oxgangs leased to Thomas Bushopp, a husbandman of Wetton, was appraised at £21 (1625). On the other hand, Francis Browne, a cooper of Eckington, had arranged for the reversion of a lease of a farm, but the estimated value was merely £1 in the inventory in 1639. The value of these leases of "farms" extended from £2 to £160, obviously dependent on the remaining years in the lease. The mean value of these leases of "farms" amounted to £28 (sd 30.772), with the median at £20.[24] If, to continue this analysis, we consider standard holdings seemingly separated from their messuages, only eight inventories refer to leases of yardlands or parts of yardlands, amounting in total to eight yardlands, three of which were consolidated in the hands of Thomas Buswell of Leamington Hastings (1597).

More significant, however, might be the proportion of personal estate represented by leases, as indicated in Table 4.5. To explain, in the inventories which mentioned leases, in five percent of these inventories the value of the leases was one percent or less of the total valuation of the personal estate; in eighteen percent, the value of the leases extended between two and five percent of the total value of the personal estate. In 39 percent, therefore, the appraisal of the leases accounted for ten percent or less of the *summa totalis* of the inventory. Conversely, in nine percent of these inventories, the leases provided between 51 and 91 percent of the total appraisal of the personal estate. The context is as follows: the higher percentages of the value of leases were associated with aggregate personal estate which was low, the lease consisting of the principal personal estate, with few other assets than household goods and apparel. The personnel here were a mixture of crafts, labourers, and husbandmen who seem to have dispensed with husbandry. Where the leases comprised a low percentage of the total personal estate, the person was usually affluent, with a high value of other assets. In this latter case, the leaseholds complemented the main tenure and provided flexibility at the margins.

Leases in Salisbury diocese

In the diocese of Salisbury, comprising the counties of Wiltshire and Berkshire, nine percent of the inventories between *c.*1591 and 1640 contained leases of land and a further six percent leases of houses and cottages. The total value of these combined leases amount to almost £16, 000. The highest-value leases, however, were contracted by some inhabitants of gentle status, including two rectories farmed for £1, 200 and £1, 000.[25] Other lessees of gentle status possessed terms in land appraised at £200, £300, £400 and £720.[26] These gentlemen are eliminated from the following analysis. Excluding these gentlemen, the highest-value leases were in the hands of yeomen: £534, £400, £385, £340, £300.[27]

[24] If we remove the outlier of £160, the mean is reduced to £25, whilst the median remains at £20.

[25] WSRO P1/G157 and T102.

[26] WSRO P1/A82, B172, H225, H228, P68 (the last, the Clerk of the Green Cloth).

[27] WSRO P1/B151, B340, C115, P194, R78. The status of two lessees of terms valued at

Table 4.5: The value of leases as a proportion of total personal estate, Lichfield diocese

Percentage of personal estate	Percentage of inventories
<1/1	5
2-5	18
6-10	16
11-20	23
21-30	16
31-50	13
51-70	4
71-95	5

Table 4.6: Value of leases in inventories, Salisbury diocese.

Values of leases (£s)	Percentage of all leases
<1 and 1	5
2-5	15
6-10	12
11-20	16
21-30	11
31-50	16
51-100	10
101-150	8
151-534	7

Five other yeomen had arranged leases valued between £100 and £180.[28] Only two husbandman were identiifed by status, with leases appraised at £130 and £180.[29] The overall distribution by value is represented in Table 4.6.

Returning to the terms in houses, more than half of the leases were valued at £5 (nine, indeed, below £1) or less and another quarter between £6 and £10.

In some circumstances, the value of leases was associated with an apparent retreat from husbandry. A (perhaps exceptional) example was Crispin Cotterill, a yeoman of Warfield in Berkshire, whose inventory in 1625 contained no live-stock, a single hen, and half an acre of wheat, yet the total valuation amounteed to £627 17*s.* 6*d.*, substantially £334 for two leases of lands in his parish and £200 for a lease of land in Easthamstead and Binfield.[30] Another yeoman, John Comyn, had a chattel lease valued at £150, but no husbandry and total personal estate of £185 2*s.* 6*d.*[31] The total personal estate of a Wiltshire husbandman,

£300 each is not provided.

[28] WSRO P1/A81, M123, R44, T85, T101, but many possessors of similar terms are not identified by status.

[29] WSRO P1/M87, P65, but again there are many similar leases in inventories of persons of unidentified status.

[30] WSRO P1/C115.

[31] WSRO P1/C179.

Tristram Dredge, anounted to £158 18s. 2d., but consisted of a chattel lease of a tenement in Corton valued at £150, on which, however, he grazed sheep and one cow worth only £6 6*s.* 8*d.*[32] It's also possible that leases were elusive and not always or immediately detected by the appraisers, although presumably an indenture existed in the deceased's household. The appraisers of one inventory, nonetheless, revised their total valuation by adding with hindsight a lease: "More to be added to this Inventory a Lease of one yeard land praised att 50 li."[33]

Some leases did involve standard holdings or tenements. The Wiltshire yeoman, William Baldwyn, had amongst his personal estate appraised at £708 a chattel lease valued at £300, his livestock and husbandry accordingly extensive.[34] Another Wiltshire yeoman, Robert Flower, possessed a chattel lease which comprised his main tenement: "Item for 17 yeares (or there abouts) of the lease of the tenement whereof he dyed possessed being a chattel CC li."[35] A lease for 21 years in Wiltshire had a fairly modest valuation place on it: "Item one Chattell Lease of xxj yeares made & graunted by Mary Wilson & John <Wis> Wilson of certen Landes in Quidhampton whereupon Eight yeares & better is to come x li."[36]

Although leases of standard holdings had developed, the norm was for smaller leases, adding flexibility at the margins. Robert Cave, a butcher, thus in 1616 held a term for two lives in eight acres.[37] As well as a lease of a "small Tenement" (estimated value £1 13*s.* 4*d.*), Robert Corderey of Devizes possessed in 1626 a lease of four acres (for which he had an indenture) for a term of years (appraised at £8), and a term in a barn (£6).[38] In Norton Bavant, John Edwards contracted a lease of a five acres in the common field for a term of seven years, valued at merely £2.[39] Merely £2 was also considered the value of a lease for seven years of five acres in the common field of Norton Bavant.[40] A chattel lease held by a husbandman and valued at £10 comprised a little close and three ridges with a cow lease (gate) for some years to come.[41] "Item his state of the Close at East Kynnet called West Close ij li.": recognized the status of an estate as opposed to tenure.[42] Labourers who enjoyed leases as sub-tenants had perhaps a precarious position: the labourer, John Vincent of Stockton had made provision for security: "Item a bond for the quiet enioyinge of Moytie in his house to him & his During the life of his Landladie Joane Maton widow xiiij li."[43]

[32]WSRO P1/D67.
[33]WSRO P1/C165.
[34]WSRO P1/B151.
[35]WSRO P1/F25 (1610/11) (*summa totalis* £371 5*s.* 6*d.*).
[36]WSRO P1/T77 (1631).
[37]WSRO P1/C78.
[38]WSRO P1/C167.
[39]WSRO P1/E5 (1605/6): "Item a lease of v acres of land in the commene Felde for seaven yeare..."
[40]WSRO P1/E5.
[41]WSRO P1/M119.
[42]WSRO P1/P132.
[43]WSRO P1/U-V6: his personal estate extended to £69 1*s.* 10*d.*

Some yeomen constructed composite leasehold additions, such as the farmer in Devizes in 1612 who had the demise of a house valued at £5, another house which another tenant inhabited (£2), thirty acres in the old park "Determinable upon three lives" (£20), and another 5a. in the old park leased at a rack rent (£5).[44] Another yeoman in North Wraxall had "chattel indentures" for the Ould Leys (about 20a.) in the common fields (value £20), a close of arable called Gostlie (12a), East Meade (about 2a.), agricultural buildings, and the Westmeade (collectively £40), and three other closes (£70).[45] In Letcombe Regis, a husbandman held 3a. with three years remaining (valued at 30*s.*), another 3a. with two years (10*s.*), one butt with 18 years (£1), eight years in 39 sheep gates (£4), four years in 18 more sheep gates (£1), and a lease of land and commons for life or years (sic) (£5).[46]

As in the diocese of Lichfield, remainders in long leases persisted into the early seventeenth century, such as that itemised in the inventory of Henry Collins, a Berkshire yeoman, in 1628: "Item the lease of his house & twenty acres of land for 90 yeares yf his wife shall soe longe lyve xxx li."[47] A lease of 4a. was destined to endure for 1, 099 years (apparently valued at £37 because of its term) and one for 2½a. for 60 years.[48] Such extended terms usually and accordingly commanded a high value: "Item the Lease of a Messuage A Tenement with the landes there unto Belongeing lyeing in Purton Stoke aforesaid being of the yearelie value of Fifteene poundes and Seaventie yeares yet to come in the said Lease is worth to bee soulde in ready money Clxxx li."[49] A chattel lease of a parcel for 99 years had an estimated value of £30.[50]These exceptional terms probably originated in the disintegration of demesnes in the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, as landlords demised the outlying lands which they had formerly kept in hand.[51] By the later sixteenth century, more landlords were adopting the 21-year lease mandated for religious and collegiate landowners by an Act of 1571.[52]

Agrarian income?

Agrarian accounts, although they exist, are unusual and may be exceptional not only in their production but also their typicality for the tenantry. Some insight into the return on husbandry might be revealed by the income from the execu-

[44]WSRO P1/M43.

[45]WSRO P1/H201.

[46]WSRO P1/A27.

[47]WSRO P1/C129.

[48]WSRO P1/D33, D47.

[49]WSRO P1/T101.

[50]WSRO P1/26: "A Chattellease granted from Sir John Mallard knight of certaine ground lyinge in Norwraxelles parishe for fower score & ninetene yeares yf, [sic] ij lives so longe live valued at xxx li."

[51]John Hare, *A Prospering Society: Wiltshire in the Later Middle Ages* (Hatfield, 2011).

[52]Eric Kerridge, "The movement of rent, 1540-1640", repr. in *Essays in Economic History Volume Two*, ed. Eleanor M. Carus-Wilson (London, 1962), p. 212; *Ecclesiastical Leases Act* (1571 c.10, 13 Elizabeth I; repealed 1998).

tor's year in the premises, although it might not be representative of typical years. Just over sixty inventories mention the executor's year in the land. The income extends from £1 in a house and garden to £60 for three copyholds.[53] The latter is extraordinary in several senses. First, the engrossing of three copyholds was unusual; second, the occupant was a female tenant, Frideswide Stratton; and third, the inventory omitted any livestock or grain, thus suggesting that she had recently retired from husbandry. The appraisers nonetheless concluded their inventory for her personal estate in Bremhill ("Bremble") in 1619: "Item Executours yere of her three coppyeholdes lx li." Even including this statistical outlier, however, the mean return amounted to £10 (sd 10.344) and median £7.[54]As might be expected, the details are usually cryptic, with only the occasional revelation about the character of the land or the income. In a few instances, the income is described as "the proffits of the executor yeare".[55] Income from copyhold tenements was included: "Item the profitt of the Copyhould untill Michelmas next unto the Executor valewed worth xviij li."[56] The appraisers' calculated that £21 was an expected return for the executor's year in $36\frac{1}{2}$ acres of arable, four closes of pasture, a house with orchards, and eight beast gates in the common.[57]A quarter of a yardland was expected to yield £2 16*s.* 8*d.* during the executor's year.[58] The executor's year in half a yardland with corn on the ground was calculated as £12.[59]

Conclusion

The perceived differentiation of rural society into yeomen, husbandman and labourers was more complex. The last were usually distinct from the other categories in being landless, but successful labourers could acquire some land with minimal husbandry. The difference between the two landholding groups, yeoman and husbandman, has often been attributed to the different extent of landholding. Yeomen as well as husbandmen might, however, belong to the smallholders, although more husbandmen than yeomen were vulnerable. Yeomen tended to congregate more in the middling levels of landholding, although husbandmen belonged in this group too. Yeomen were, nonetheless, more likely to be the

[53]WSRO P1/W48 (house and garden) and S122 (three copyholds).

[54]WSRO P1/A22 (copyhold), B139 ("the benefitte" of the executor's year), B186 (copyhold), B210, B213, B262 (the "commodity" of the executor's year), B262, C44, C78, C95, C113, C130, C142, C188, F22, F75, G80, G85 ("the Sector yeare"), G104, G108, G110, G116, H10, H55, H132, H218, I-J5, I-J30, I-J42, I-J59, I-J60, K32, L66, L93, L99, L102, M90, P53, P80, P94, P128, P129, P132, P150, R56, R59, R78, S213, S235, S122, T39, T55, T82, T99 ("the benefitt"), V15, W48, W80, W106, W132, W170, W175, W181, Y8.

[55]WSRO P1/T55, W80; P150: "Item the profitt of her Liueing unto the end of the executors yeare valued att 26-13-8".

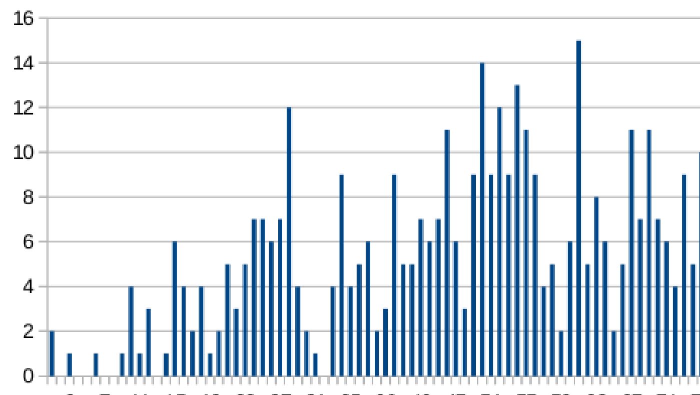
[56]WSRO P1/I59.

[57]WSRO P1/H10: "Item the Executours yeare that is xxxvj acres & a halfe of arable land fower Coses [sic] of pasture & the house & orchardes and eight beastes lease in the common tell the feast of St Michaell tharchangell next comming xxj li." Joan Jeffeyes [sic], widow, Cleeve Pepper, 1606; the inventory totalled £45 3*s.* 3*d.*, including the £21.

[58]WSRO P1/I60.

[59]WSRO P1/132.

Figure 4.1: Inventories with leases, 1565-1639: Lichfield diocese



really successful tenants who comprised the apogee of personal wealth. Their dominance was not, however, greatly assisted by a conversion of standard holdings to leasehold according to the evidence of probate inventories. Whilst in Wiltshire some standard holdings and tenements were held by leasehold, the numerical proportion was insignificant. In the diocese of both Lichfield and Salisbury, leasehold allowed the expansion of the holding at the margin, providing flexibility in management rather than a change of tenure. Conversely, indeed, some yeomen and husbandmen, perhaps towards the end of life, exchanged husbandry for finance capitalism, ostensibly relinquishing husbandry and investing in financial instruments. Again, the numbers were not extensive, but finance capitalism had become insinuated into rural society.

Chapter 5

Non-agrarian capital and labour

> COCLEDEMOY List then: a bawd, first for her profession or vocation, it is most worshipful of all the twelve companies; for as that trade is most honorable that sells the best commodities – as the draper is more worshipful than the pointmaker, the silkman more worshipful than the draper, and the goldsmith more honorable than both, little Mary – so the bawd above all. Her shop has the best ware; for where these sell but cloth, satin, and jewels, she sells divine virtues as virginity, modesty, and such rare gems, and those not like a petty chapman, by retail, but like a great merchant, by wholesale. Wa, ha, ho! And who are her customers? Not base corn-cutters or sowgelders, but most rare wealthy knights and most rare bountiful lords are her customers.[1]

Cocledemoy purports to disclose a hierarchy of crafts (and craftiness), trades and occupations. The pyramid of purveyors is constructed in this part of the quotation on two qualities: the quality of the goods and the method of sale (retail or wholesale). The third quality, not illustrated here, is the principle of the least harm and exploitation (by comparison, for example, with lawyers). The *locus* is, of course, the City. Perhaps too much attention has been directed to the City and we need to reconsider what was happening in the provinces.[2] Whether we concur with proto-industrialization or debate the extent of by-employments and dual occupations, there are plenty of reasons for refocusing on the provinces: the generation of agrarian capitalism and the genesis of the

[1] John Marston, *The Dutch Courtesan*, edited by M. L. Wine (London, 1965), p. 15 (Act I, scene ii, lines 29-41).

[2] Epitomised perhaps by *The Culture of Capital: Property, Cities, and Knowledge in Early Modern England*, ed. Henry Turner (London, 2002), with its principal focus on London. For the contemporary hierarchy of gilds in London, Steve Rappaport, *Worlds Within Worlds: Structures of Life in Sixteenth-century London* (Cambridge, 1989).

industrial revolution subsequently evolved there.[3] Here, then, the intention is to analyse in some detail the forms of capital formation and accumulation in provincial trade, craft and services broadly during "Tawney's century", 1540-1640.

If we, in classic manner, define the three components ("factors") of production as land, labour and capital, then perhaps it is an appropriate time to re-examine capital as an element.[4] Recently, the emphasis on labour productivity – the industrious revolution of de Vries and Muldrew – has investigated labour as both household production and a stimulus to aggregate demand (consumption).[5] Land and improvement have been revisited in recent years and one has the fine work of the late Katrina Honeyman on the origins of enterprise from rent.[6] The classic exposition of John Nef and the subsequent examinations of the lead- and coal-mining extractive industries have considered capital investment and formation in the landed and new industrial sector.[7] Here, therefore, the concentration is on capital formation and accumulation before 1640 through non-agrarian activity in the provinces. Where, however, productivity depended essentially on labour inputs by the entrepreneur, labour becomes a source of capital, as Locke presumed even in the state of nature before civil society.[8]

As usual, it is necessary to start with some more caveats. It is probably ambiguous, even a misconception, to define these crafts, trades and services as non-agrarian, even when the occupant inhabited an urban centre. Most of the occupants also engaged in husbandry, some marginally, others expansively. Indeed, for village society, Goubert designated these crafts *paysants plus*.[9] The raw materials were often derived from agricultural activity and the crafts were often engaged in servicing rural clients. As will be addressed below, too, some who made their profit through craft invested it in husbandry as fixed capital formation in their sector was limited and minimal. It is also appropriate, how-

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[3]For the latest assessment of dual occupations, Sebastian Keibek and Leigh Shaw-Taylor, "Early modern rural by-employments: a re-examination of the probate inventory evidence", *Agricultural History Review* 61 (2013), pp. 244-81; for the present context, Pauline Frost, "Yeomen and metalsmiths: livestock in the dual economy in south Staffordshire 1560-1720", *Agricultural History Review* 29 (1981), pp. 29-41.

[4]Joseph Schumpeter, *The Theory of Economic Development*, edited by John E. Elliott (London, 2012), pp. 17-18 ("factors" of production). For the potential impetus to capital investment in innovation given by comparatively high wages, Robert C. Allen, *The British Industrial Revolution in Global Perspective* (Cambridge, 2009), pp. 138-41.

[5]Jan de Vries, *The Industrious Revolution: Consumer Behaviour and Household Economy, 1650 to the Present* (Cambridge, 2008); Craig Muldrew, *Food, Energy and the Creation of Industriousness: Work and Material Culture in Agrarian England, 1550-1780* (Cambridge, 2011); aggregate demand as a Keynesian concept is too profusely documented to be cited here. To a large extent, Muldrew's material post-dates 1640.

[6]*Origins of Enterprise: Business Leadership in the Industrial Revolution* (Manchester, 1983).

[7]J. U. Nef, *The Rise of the British Coal Industry* (London, 1932); John Hatcher, *The History of the British Coal Industry Volume I Before 1700* (Oxford, 1993); David Kiernan, *The Derbyshire Lead Industry in the Sixteenth Century* (Derbyshire Record Society 14, 1989).

[8]*John Locke Second Treatise on Government*, ed. C. B. Macpherson, (Indianapolis, IN, 1980), pp. xvi-xvii. See also the propositions of Joan Robinson as explained by Geoff Harcourt and Prue Kerr in Robinson, *The Accumulation of Capital* (Basingstoke, 2013 edn), p. xv.

[9]Pierre Goubert, *Les Paysans Français au XVIIième Siècle* (Paris, 1998).

ever, to eschew the term "simple commodity production", because there was diversification in investment (and disinvestment) of capital.[10]

A second issue which must be confronted is the character of capital. It is conventional economics to distinguish between fixed capital – that is physical capital or capital stock – and circulating (financial) capital.[11] It has, indeed, been suggested that there was a formative recognition of the difference of fixed and circulating capital in the early seventeenth century.[12] Whilst that theoretical distinction obtained, as usual the situation on the workshop floor was prior. Capital stock consists of the processed goods used in the production of other goods, particularly fixed capital such as machinery. Our definition of capital formation and accumulation must be wider, nonetheless, to the extent of including a large component of personal estate.[13] One reason is that all personal possessions are, to a lesser or greater extent, potential capital. Numerous gages and pawns of household possessions and the existence of the second-hand, private market attest to the conversion of personal possessions into money.[14] The exchange depended on the ease of liquidity of various items, of course, but brass, pewter and household furniture all featured as pawns. Household stuff can thus be regarded as all of illiquid possession or potential liquid capital or capital disinvestment, although its degree of liquidity varied and it was perhaps susceptible to more rapid depreciation. Since pawns and gages will be discussed elsewhere, a few examples may suffice here.

> Item Mr Bolland received of me xlv s. for on salte and allso xvj s. for 4 spoones which he laide to gage to me, he had allso ten shillinges after of the same fower spoones ...[15]
>
> Item my brother Rycherde blakeman othe to me vj s. viij d. & in plegg of that I have j panne a twyllshete a bagg & ij lyttyll peuther dysshes & yf he brynge hys money to have then thys his stofe.[16]

[10] R. H. Hilton, "Medieval market towns and simple commodity production", *Past & Present* 109 (1985), pp. 3-23.

[11] Lipsey & Crystal, *Economics* (11th edn, Oxford, 2007), p. 251; Joan Robinson, *Accumulation of Capital*, p. 5 (for "stock of capital goods").

[12] For the philosophical realization of the metaphor of circulation, Carl Wennerlind, *Casualties of Credit: The English Financial Revolution, 1620-1720* (Cambridge, MA, 2011), but the practice preceded the discourse.

[13] For the murkiness of capital – as "a fund of purchasing power" – Schumpeter, *Theory of Economic Development*, pp. 115-23.

[14] I will consider elsewhere these gages of brass utensils in the inventories in the context of differentiation and lack. Skelton in his parody on the tunning of Eleanor Rummyng disparaged the local folk rushing to offer her gages of the pots and pans found as gages in the inventories. See Joan Robinson, *Accumulation of Capital*, p. 19, for the overcoat as both consumption and a store of purchasing power; a second-hand market in clothing existed in early-modern England and cloaks featured as pawns. Garthine Walker, *Crime, Gender and Social Order in Early Modern England* (Cambridge, 2003), pp. 171-3.. "Item Harry Blower hath borowed on a cloake 40s but if he pay within any reasonable tyme, he shall have his cloake againe": LRO B/C/11 John Barnes, Trentham, yeoman, 1609.

[15] LRO B/C/11 Ellis Allene, Derby, 1586

[16] LRO B/C/11 William Blakeman, Bradley, 1545.

Amongst the personal estate of Robert Allen, a Wirksworth husbandman, were enumerated pawns laid out consisting of a brass pot for 8*d.*, a coverlet for 3*s.* 4*d.*, and an iron "maule" for 2*s.*[17] The problem is, of course, that if all the personal effects were pawned or gaged, then the gagor would be effectively destitute, so we cannot sensibly regard the personal estate as a total stock of capital goods, but only contingently. Perhaps the only useful approach is then to adopt both narrow and wider definitions of capital formation and accumulation. We can attempt to define fixed capital (investment) – machinery such as looms for weavers and pits and equipment for tanners.[18] We can differentiate the costs of raw materials – particularly in the case of tanners, leather, bark and lime – which can figure as both costs of production and capital accumulation. We can consider the entire personal estate as capital accumulation – whether investment in husbandry as an alternative, or fiduciary arrangements such as loans on specialties (bonds and bills), or "disinvestment" in positional or status goods such as plate.[19] That overall personal estate also exhibits to some degree the net return on capital. The aggregate personal estate marginally (i.e. at the lowest estimate) reflects the net return on capital since the appraisers have already accounted for depreciation.

The evidential base analysed here consists only of probate inventories between c.1533 and 1640.[20] Technically, of course, probate inventories were compiled only for deceased who had personal estate which exceeded £5 – *bona notabilia.* In fact, in the diocese of Lichfield, a significant proportion of the inventories contain less than £5, even in the decades after the Probate and Mortuaries Act of 1529 before the impact of inflation.[21] Since some crafts and trades are represented by only a few inventories, the analysis is focused on those for which there exists a reasonable number of inventories, not all. Here also, the emphasis rests on the diocese of Coventry and Lichfield (hereafter Lichfield),

[17]LRO B/C/11 Robert Allen, Wirksworth, 1617.

[18]For the importance of leather crafts, Leslie Clarkson, "The leather crafts in Tudor and Stuart England", *Agricultural History Review* 14 (1966), pp. 25-39; for butchers and tanners in the urban context, W. G. Hoskins, *Provincial England: Essays in Social and Economic History* (London, 1965), pp. 79, 81, 95, 108-10.

[19]The classic description here is Jack Fisher's "conspicuous consumption", but, since position or status goods could also involve lesser personal effects before 1640, such as a few silver spoons or more brass and pewter, the more felicitous term is perhaps just the mundane positional or status good: Robert Skidelsky and Edward Skidelsky, *How Much is Enough? Money and the Good Life* (London, 2013 edn), pp. 34-7, 103-4. Veblen's emulation looks upwards; disparagement of those abject through lack looks downwards.

[20]The data have been divided into three cohorts: before 1553; 1554-1600; 1601-1640. Those categories have an arbitrary design, to some extent. The issue is accommodating a sufficient amount of data in each cohort. Generational cohorts would have better accommodated inflationary pressures, but resulted in insufficient data in each cohort. The compromise has been to adopt arbitrary, longer periods to contain a more significant amount of data. The split at 1553 is partly explained by the fiscal, financial and inflationary events at that time. As a result, however, the data before 1553 are desultory and largely provide only anecdotal evidence. For the local impact of the fall of money in 1551: "Item in monye after the old Ratte vjj [*sic*] li. x s. iiij d. of which was lost in the Falle of the monye halfe the Rest ys iij li. xv s. ij d.": LRO B/C/11 William Aspeshay, Drayton in Hales, 1552.

[21]Following Žižek, we might consider the intention of the act as universality, but compromised by an exemption: Slavoj Žižek, *Living in the End Times* (London, 2011), pp. 18-19.

Table 5.1: Inventory valuations for selected crafts/trades: Lichfield diocese

Cohort	Number	Mean (£s)	Sd	Median (£s)
Blacksmiths, 1554-1600	22	34.6	29.492	23.0
Blacksmiths, 1601-1639	47	42.2	36.009	31.0
Carpenters/joiners, 1554-1600	38	32.6	47.676	22.0
Carpenters/joiners, 1601-1639	10	68.9	81.345	49.5
Shoemakers, 1554-1600	19	42.7	50.737	26.0
Shoemakers, 1601-1639	42	54.3	40.087	49.0
Millers, 1554-1600	7	24.4	19.595	20.0
Millers, 1601-1639	22	40.0	27.831	35.5
Tailors, 1554-1600	16	27.6	28.591	18.0
Tailors, 1601-1639	34	29.4	24.185	23.5
Innholders, 1554-1600	6	78.8	89.839	59.5
Innholders, 1601-1639	11	86.4	99.186	42.0
Drapers/mercers/haberdashers 1	8	44.3	50.051	23.0
Drapers/mercers/haberdashers 2	19	98.4	157.12	47.0
Glovers, 1554-1600	9	34.2	37.426	22.0
Glovers, 1601-1639	13	50.9	43.335	33.0
Butchers, 1554-1600	5	36.8	49.736	14.0
Butchers, 1601-1639	12	36.3	48.199	16.0
Bakers, 1554-1600	10	26.0	54.330	7.0
Bakers, 1601-1639	8	58.6	59.042	41.5

which comprised the whole of the counties of Staffordshire and Derbyshire and parts of Shropshire and Warwickshire. Material is adduced occasionally from other probate jurisdictions to afforce the argument.

Textiles

Although woollen cloth production was concentrated in particular regions, weavers pervaded the countryside and towns throughout the diocese of Lichfield. Their quantity makes them, like Morgan, a suitable case for treatment. The analysis below is restricted to the inventories of those who are described in will or inventory as weaver or webster. It is undoubtedly an underestimate of the numbers of households engaged in weaving, not only because of the vagaries of the production of inventories, but also because of discrepancies of description or ascription of occupation and status. We can clarify this point by reference to the probate documents produced on the death of Richard Bathoe of Longslow in Drayton in Hales, Shropshire, in 1638.[22] His self-description in his will is yeoman; the ascription in his inventory is husbandman. His inventory includes,

[22] Reminder: probate documents at LRO are identified by surname, forename, place and date.

Table 5.2: Weavers' inventory valuations: dioceses of Lichfield and Durham

Cohort	Number	Mean (£s)	Stdv	Median (£s)
Lichfield				
1533-1553	12	16.6	11.619	13.5
1554-1600	29	30.1	37.947	18
1601-1639	74	36.2	46.091	22
Durham				
1569-1600	20	22.6	21.427	12.5
1601-1639	42	35.6	38.896	22.5

however, a webster's loom valued at 13*s.* 4*d.* Similarly, John Allen of Brookhouse in Stoke on Trent (1615), also attributed the designation of yeoman, with a personal estate of £249 1*s.* 6*d.*, possessed a weaving loom valued at merely 8*s.* Self-described in his will as a yeoman, John Bucknall of Muckleston had a weaver's loom amongst his small personal estate in 1633. Another yeoman, Roger Burch of Upton Magna (1633), possessed a weaving loom, warping bar, and warping trough, with a combined value of 23*s.* 4*d.* Four weavers' looms with gears worth £4 were in the ownership of Christopher Beardsley, a husbandman of South Wingfield (1611), perhaps contributing product to his total estate of £180. The husbandman, Edward Bourne, of Chell Heath in Wolstanton (1608), also possessed two weavers' looms valued at £1. They have been excluded from the analysis on the grounds that the category of weaver should encompass only those self-described or ascribed as weaver or webster.

Lichfield diocese

The averages (mean and median) for the total valuations in the inventories of weavers in Lichfield diocese disguise some wide divergence. In the cohort of 1554-1600, a quarter of the weavers had personal estate valued at £10 or less and 60 percent at £20 or less. In the succeeding cohort (1601-39), 20 percent owned such possessions appraised at £10 or less and 42 percent £20 or less. John Alcocke, a [broadloom] weaver of Tamworth (1627), subsisted with personal estate valued at only £2 11*s.* 8*d.* Amongst weavers, there was a massive divergence in their individual fortunes.[23] Some had a bare existence, whilst the successful apex attained prosperity. Location was not a determinant of success: poor and more affluent weavers inhabited both rural and urban places. Successful weavers in the early seventeenth century, with personal estate exceeding £100, inhabited, for example, Kinver, Kings Newton, Lea Marston, Norton in Hales, and the small market towns of Glossop and Leek, as well as the city of Coventry.

Nor were the overall economic characteristics radically different in the north-east. Here too there obtained a wide divergence in the fortunes of individual weavers. Seven of the twenty weavers' inventories between 1569 and 1600 con-

[23] Compare Michael Zell, *Industry in the Countryside: Wealden Society in the Sixteenth Century* (Cambridge, 1994), pp. 170-1, where 26 percent had personal estate below £20 and another 24 percent below £30.

tained personal estate valued at less than £10 and 13 below £20. Of 42 weavers who died between 1600 and 1639, a half dozen had possessions valued at £10 or less and almost a half £20 or less. Overall, the estimated wealth of weavers resembled quite closely the distribution of wealth amongst building workers in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century.[24]

Although the capital investment to establish weavers' shops was low, the return on capital was often very low, allowing only a marginal existence. The inventory of a weaver in the parish of St Michael, Coventry, in 1550 reveals the full extent of the equipment of a larger weaving shop: three broad looms, with five gears and two pair of shuttles, a "Carisley" loom with one shuttle, a warping bar and vat, two pin wheels, four spinning wheels, four pair of cards and a twisting wheel.[25] Only rarely do we obtain a glimpse of the costs of the raw materials. Another Coventry weaver, in the parish of St Michael in 1539, had two broad looms and a narrow loom, with, additionally, 13 stone of white wool, valued at £3 2*s.* 10*d.*, although his total estate was appraised at only £11 19*s.* 0*d.*[26]

On the whole, however, the principal capital investment specified was the loom with gears and other appendages. Broadlooms were more valuable than kersey looms.[27] By the time of the decease of the weaver, the depreciation might have been considerable, illustrating the lack of renewal and reinvestment. When Robert Bate, of Ellesmere, died in 1593, his equipment was described by the appraisers as: "Item twoo weving loomes, wher of the one is oulde & very Course", valued at only 8*s.* Presumably the other loom was more recent and in better condition, although his total personal estate did not exceed £8 12*s.* 7*d.*, so producing little overall return on capital. The modal valuation of looms and gears seems to have been about £1.[28] Older stock, but in reasonable condition, was valued at a mark (13*s.* 4*d.*), as the two old looms of an Abbots Bromley weaver in 1620.[29] The pair of weavers' looms and gears of William Bennion, of Hadley in Wellington, must have been in decrepit condition in 1639, valued at only 5*s.* and 3*s.* respectively.

More intensive capital input did not necessarily equate to higher personal estate. Whilst the contents of William Bratt's weaver's shop in Derrington (Seighford) were appraised in 1597 at £6 5*s.* 4*d.*, his total personal estate amounted to only £17 19*s.* 1*d.* Similarly, Richard Allen of Newton in Ryton on Dunsmore, had four looms with gears appraised at £5, but only a total valuation

[24] Donald Woodward, *Men at Work: Labourers and Building Craftsmen in the Towns of Northern England, 1450-1750* (Cambridge, 1995), pp. 245-6.

[25] LRO B/C/11 John Bonde, Coventry, 1550 (inventory total: £44 1*s.* 8*d.*)

[26] LRO B/C/11 Peter Brown, Coventry, 1539.

[27] Zell, *Industry in the Countryside*, p. 171.

[28] For example, LRO B/C/11: Agnes Boys(e), Rugby, 1544; Robert Able, Church Broughton, 1585; Richard Browne, Abbots Bromley, 1590; German Bruswood, Belper, 1611; Edward Bamford, Dronfield (Holmfirth), 1614; Richard Barber, Church Lawford, 1614.

[29] LRO B/C/11 John Beardesley alias Wood, Abbots Bromley, 1620; other examples of this valuation of weaving equipment: Nicholas Alen, Ashbourne (Clifton), 1599; William Bacon, Alton, 1610; John Birde, Norbury, 1618.

of £22 7*s.* 8*d.*[30] The five looms and gears of a Wishaw weaver, valued at £10, correlated with a total personal estate of £36 4*s.* 6*d.*[31] Exceptionally, the two looms of John Becke, appraised at £5, enabled him to amass a considerable personal estate valued at almost £170, including £28 17*s.* 8*d.* in wool and £3 in yarn, reflecting his productivity.[32] Although the two looms and gears of Thomas Beelande were worth only £2 in 1639, he had over the years accrued £69 10*s.* 0*d.* in personal estate.[33] These two weavers were unusual. The difference depended, no doubt, on whether the "weavers" were also broggers or intermediaries "putting out" work, in which case they had stocks of raw materials.

If we make a very arbitrary (and probably unrealistic) calculation of return on capital by comparing valuation of looms and gears with personal estate, a multiplier of about 21 results, but in real terms the personal estate was unsophisticated. Projects to establish the poor as weavers would thus have had contingent success, some hardly escaping poverty.[34] Francis Benett alias Tanner, of Uttoxeter, had at death in 1594 three looms, nine linen gears, two woollen gears, warp stocks, ring ratchets, which had deteriorated so much that they were valued at only 17*s.* 8*d.* in total, reflecting the total valuation of his personal estate at merely £1 6*s.* 5*d.* Several other weavers had accumulated personal estate appraised at less than £10 in the early seventeenth century.[35] In the north-east too, success did not correlate with location: urban and rural weavers experienced the same vicissitudes of poverty and the same contingency of success.

When weavers were successful, they deployed their capital into other resources. William Arnold of Kings Newton (1614), described as a weaver, but perhaps the employer of a small workforce with the five pair of looms in his workshop, amassed personal estate appraised at £321 1*s.* 4*d.* in 1614. It seems, however, that he reinvested little into the business, for his apparel and purse were valued at £10, debts owed to him at £58 13*s.* 4*d.*, but the most significant item in his inventory, comprising £189 7*s.* 4*d.*, ran: "Item in leases and Annuities". Arnold diverted his capital into husbandry and finance capital.

Declining regional textile industries resulted in poverty and lack of capital or capital stock. Casualties were the Coventry cappers and the Shrewsbury shearers.[36] Typical of the latter was John apRobart, a Shrewsbury shearman also

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[30]LRO B/C/11 Richard Allen, Ryton on Dunsmore, 1599, illustrating further that the Act of 1555 which proscribed more than two looms was not enforced: Zell, *Industry in the Countryside*, p. 171.

[31]LRO B/C/11 Edward Bennet, Wishaw, 1638 (no *summa totalis*, but addition by me).

[32]LRO B/C/11 John Becke, Coventry, 1634 (will = weaver; inventory = broadweaver).

[33]LRO B/C/11 Thomas Beelande, Stowe (Grinley), 1639.

[34]For a résumé, Steve Hindle, *On the Parish? The Micro-politics of Poor Relief in Rural England, c.1550-1750* (Oxford, 2004), pp. 171-226.

[35]For example, LRO B/C/11 Francis Benett alias Tanner, as above; William Bacon, Alton, 1610; Richard Barber, Church Lawford, 1614 (£4 8*s.* 0*d.*); John Alcocke, Tamworth, 1627 (£2 11*s.* 8*d*).

[36]Thomas Mendenhall, *The Shrewsbury Drapers and the Welsh Wool Trade in the XVI and XVII Centuries* (Oxford, 1953); Patrick Collinson, "The Shearmen's Tree and the Preacher: The Strange Death of Merry England in Shrewsbury and Beyond", in *The Reformation in English Towns, 1500-1640*, ed. Collinson and John Craig (Basingstoke, 1998).

given the appellation of clothworker, whose personal estate in 1614 amounted to only £5 11*s.* 8*d.* Richard Blore, another Shrewsbury clothworker (1612), had only £5 14*s.* 6*d.* in his inventory, including his shop tools valued at 10s. Another Shrewsbury clothworker, William apEvan (1618), probably involved in the finishing of cloth, had possessions four years later estimated at only a groat over £22. Perhaps paradoxically, one of the more successful shearmen, William Blakemere, inhabited Coventry (1563), where he acquired personal estate worth more than £58, including £24 in wool and cloth and ten pair of shears appraised at £4, so that more than half of his wealth was tied up in capital stock.

Salisbury diocese

The fixed capital equipment of Wiltshire weavers had greater cost than further north because it consisted of broad looms. The norm in the appraisals in inventories for these broad looms was £2.[37] Narrow looms, as used more extensively in Berkshire, had a lower valuation, comparable with further north. One Wiltshire weaver, consequently, owned a best loom valued at £2, an old loom (£1), an old kersey loom (10*s.*) and spinning equipment (15*s.*).[38] A poor weaver worked with only "j owlde narrowe Lome" worth 6*s.* 8*d.*[39] Few broadloom weavers in Wiltshire were successful enough to expand into husbandry, an exception being Edward Hancocke of Steeple Ashton, with his broadloom valued at £3 and his linen loom at 13*s.* 4*d.* Amassing personal estate appraised at more than £60, he arranged to take on lease three "grounds" and a beast gate valued at £9 for his sheep, horses and cattle.[40]

In Wiltshire also, weavers belonged to the lowest level of personal wealth. Here, the mean of personal estate of weavers' inventories was £23.4 (standard deviation 20.915) and the median £15 10*s.* 0*d.* The approximate return on capital was thus about 11 times over the lifetime.

Leather

Lichfield diocese

As with weavers, there remains some ambiguity about numbers of tanners, because of concealed descriptions. A husbandman in Glossop, Richard Bramall (1598), had a tenth of his estate invested in bark and leather (£4 6*s.* 8*d.*). In the same parish, William Benet (1564) was known as a yeoman of The Green, but his inventory enumerated also in his barkhouse leather and bark valued at £10 13*s.* 4*d.*, about 12 percent of his estate. A yeoman in Audley in 1608, Randulph Berkes (1608), had £20 14*s.* 8*d.* invested in tanned and untanned

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[37] WSRO P1/B277, H37, K9, L41, M39, N5, R15, T43; for lower valuations, G8 (13*s.* 4*d.*), G126 (broadloom £1, narrow loom 6*s.* 8*d.*), H2 (30*s.*), H 211 (30*s.*), H234 (30*s.*), H176 (£1), L3 (2 broadlooms £3), P3 (broadloom and narrow loom 33*s.* 4*d.*), R1 (£1); for higher valuations, F55 (£4), G119 (2 broadlooms £5), H169 (£3), M74 (2 broadlooms £5 3*s.* 4*d.*), O1 (53*s.* 4*d.*), W159 (2 looms 43*s.*). For the context, G. D. Ramsay, *The Wiltshire Woollen Industry in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (London, 1965).

[38] WSRO P1/H37.

[39] WSRO P1/P71.

[40] WSRO P1/H169.

Figure 5.1: Geographical distribution of weavers' inventories, Wiltshire

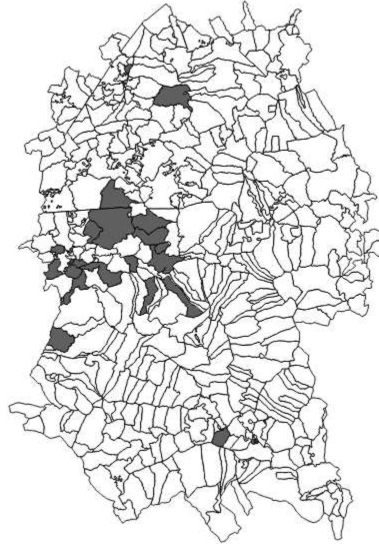

Table 5.3: Tanners' inventory valuations: dioceses of Lichfield and Durham

Cohort	Number	Mean (£s)	Sd	Median (£s)
Lichfield				
1554-1600	16	51.1	50.867	27.0
1601-1639	24	155.2	217.69	106
Durham				
1545-1600	19	133.2	155.98	67
1601-1639	46	104.7	101.85	69.5

leather in his personal estate of £95 10*s.* 0*d.*

When Robert Rygmayden, a tanner of Loughborough in Leicestershire, died in 1551, £28 of his estate of £39 16*s.* 1*d.* was tied up in leather and bark.[41] Comparable was the estate of Richard Breknoke, a Coventry tanner, who possessed in 1543 thirteen dikker of leather in his tanhouse assessed at £28 out of his total personal estate of £37 10*s.* 0*d.* In 1556, a tanner of Nuthurst had accumulated leather and skins valued at £121 6*s.* 8*d.* out of his total estate of £171 5*s.* 4*d.*[42] It appears that that proportion was at the higher end, slightly exceptional in the general prospectus of tanners. The tanner of Radford in Coventry, John Burn, had personal estate valued at £72 12*s.* 1*d.* at his demise in 1539, which included £27 10*s.* 0*d.* in leather and £3 in bark in his tanhouse. Yet another Coventry tanner, John Borlaye, had personal estate totalling £109 11*s.* 8*d.* in 1558, most of which consisted of stock in the barkhouse, including £42 for nine dicker of leather, £32 4*s.* 0*d.* for four dicker of "clout" leather, £12 for twenty-four dozen calf skins, and bark valued at £10. A considerable amount of capital was, nonetheless, tied up in the tanning enterprise in the diocese of Lichfield. Between 26 percent and 71 percent of the personal estate of tanners here consisted of leather, skins and bark – the raw materials of the enterprise. In general, about 40-47 percent of the estate was capital tied up in raw materials. The inventories do not usually specify the value of equipment such as lime pits.

No real disparity existed between urban tanners and those based in rural parishes or developing market towns. One of the most successful tanners, John Archer, had personal estate inventoried at £508 2*s.* 4*d.* in 1624, but inhabited the rural parish of Snelston in Derbyshire. The itemized amounts in the inventory included £178 0*s.* 8*d.* in leather, £66 6*s.* 8*d.* in bark, and £15 10*s.* 0*d.* in wood, reflecting, as discussed below, the high investment in capital goods. In addition, he had taken two leases valued at £60, indicating his diversion of surplus capital into husbandry, as also further examined below.

Salisbury diocese

The capital accumulation and assets of tanners in Wiltshire and Berkshire replicated the pattern further north. The really successful tanners here were located, however, in urban locations, in the City and in the market towns. In Salisbury, 77 percent of the personal estate of the tanner, Richard Merfield, consisted of his dry and green leather and 3, 000 turves, comprising £103 of a total of £132 12*s.* 10*d.*[43] Lionel Orrell, in Trowbridge, had stock (leather and bark) worth almost half of his total personal estate of £265 17*s.* 6*d.*[44] The Marlborough tanner, John Sclatter, possessed twelve dicker of leather and hides and twelve loads of bark with a combined value of £99, 56 percent of his total personal estate.[45] A similar proportion of the personal estate of Richard Slade, of Tilehurst, was composed of leather and twenty loads of bark, accounting for

[41] ROLLR 1D/41 1551/70.
[42] LRO B/C/11 Humphrey Brag(g)e, Hampton in Arden, 1556.
[43] WSRO P1/M145.
[44] WSRO P1/O21.
[45] WSRO P1/S48.

£120 of £204 1*s.* 6*d.*[46]

The North-East

Before 1600, seven of the 19 tanners' inventories in Durham diocese recorded total values exceeding £100; between 1601 and 1639, similarly, almost a third (16 of 46) surpassed £100. One of the differences between the north-east and the north and west Midlands was the degree of urban concentration in the north-east, tanners located mainly in Morpeth (16), Newcastle with Gateshead (15) Durham (10), and a smaller representation in Barnard Castle, Bishop Auckland, Darlington and single presences in Wolsingham and Herrington. Alnwick had a concentration of tanners, but the five inventories in the 1620s and 1630s were appraised at less than £25.

Some glovers attained the level of chattels accumulated by tanners. Roger Alsoppe of the Bigging in Wirksworth was assumed to have possessions worth £160 18*s.* 4*d.* in 1619. As the tanners, a considerable proportion of his personal estate - £66 13*s.* 8*d.* - was invested in capital goods, dressed and undressed leather.

Capital assets in other trades and crafts

Particular crafts and trades, especially tanners and retailers, were characterized by a large proportion of their capital tied up in their commodities and raw materials. The Coventry capper, Hugh Atkyns, had personal estate appraised at £22 2*s.* 10*d.* in 1547, £13 of which was tied up in stock: twelve dozen caps (£6); three dozen Scottish caps and four dozen night caps ((£1); seven stone of wool (£3); and eight dozen hard caps (£3). The capper located in Uttoxeter, Edmund Allin alias Allen (1602), maintained a stock of wool of £6 6*s.* 8*d.* and twenty dozen caps worth £10, about a third of his total personal estate.

In the building trades, there was a distinct division between the *paysans plus* – the village carpenters and joiners – and the larger concerns which were more expansively engaged in building. Exemplifying the latter was Thomas Bramley, a joiner of South Wingfield, whose inventory was compiled in 1634, with a total valuation of £275 15*s.* 1*d.* His prepared timber was appraised at more than £64. Additionally, he had taken the lease of Renoulds farm at Wessington, valued at £20, diversifying into husbandry. Another successful builder was the free mason, William Addams of Wolstanton (1629), with his personal estate of £233 15*s.* 6*d.*, comprising bonds and acknowledged debts of £88 6*s.* 4*d.*, a lease of a house for fourteen years valued at £50, a "particular debt" of £24, and nineteen tons of limestone valued at £21 16*s.* 0*d.* His capital contrasts with Thomas Broughe, of Roston in Norbury whose inventory was composed in the same year. Although there is no *summa totalis*, this carpenter's estate amounted to just more than a tenth of Bramley's: £29 7*s.* 4*d.* Broughe represented the preponderance of carpenters and joiners, with modest personal estate and little in capital investment or stock apart from their tools, usually valued at about a

[46] WSRO P1/S234.

mark.[47] The trade tools of Thomas Barnwell of Stretton in Monks Kirby (1634) were considered to be worth 50*s.*, but he was fairly comfortable and might have been engaged in more elaborate work. At the very bottom of the trade were the impoverished villagers like Roger Barebone of Handsworth (1599), a carpenter with an inventory valued *in toto* at just £2 12*s.* 6*d.*, including “an overworne bedkoveringe”. Even some urban carpenters, however, lived on the economic edge, the very margins, as John Braynsford, of Holy Trinity parish in Coventry, with effects valued at only £3 18*s.* 11*d.* in 1551.

Millers had become decidedly modest in status and position by the sixteenth century, perhaps a contrast with the perceived peculation of the acquisitive miller of the middle ages. A considerable part of the capital of millers subsisted in their leases of their mills. One of the most successful, Thomas Austen of Blore, had a personal estate which just exceeded £77 in 1610, but £20 of the value consisted of his lease of the millhouses and backside for a term of six years to come. Another enterprising miller, Matthew Bramley of Pentrich, held the reversion of the lease of his mill valued at £30 and the goodwill of the lease of land valued at £10, which together almost extended to half his chattels.[48] Similarly, William Brammall, with his mill at Ludworth in Glossop (1627), held a lease of his mill with land appraised at £30 16*s.* 8*d.*, which, with bonds and bills for £20 10*s.* 0*d.*, comprised the major part of the total amount of his inventory. More modestly, the miller of Coleshill, Richard Browne (1626), had personal estate valued at £20 9*s.* 1*d.*, including putative debts owed to him of £7 12*s.* 2*d.* The appraisers commented, however, that recovery of these debts was highly uncertain.

> Item certayne Desperate & uncertayne Debtes supposed to be oweinge by reason the[y] stande uncrost in a note booke he kepte of money which was oweinge him for corne he solde wherein many Debtes are croste and these supposed Debtes standinge uncroste <all> not all but the most parte of them denied vij li. xij s. ij d.[49]

Retail trade, although concentrated in urban centres and developing market towns, exhibited the same disparity in capital accumulation. At the bottom end were traders like Henry Byrch of Birmingham (1573) who, although having a static and stable trade from a shop, ostensibly as a haberdasher, resembled more a chapman in the character of his stock. His inventory totalled just £1 16*s.* 1*d.* His shop stock, consisting of bits and bobs of lace, garters, pins, points, buttons, thread, and the like, was appraised at only 9*s.* 7*d.* At the upper end, the mercer of Uttoxeter, William Beech (1639) had shop stock valued at £136 17*s.* 8*d.*, whilst his total personal estate amounted to £173 19*s.* 9*d.* Comparably, the inventory of a Coventry draper, described “Clothe at the shoppe in the Drapery”, which constituted about a third of his personal estate of £148 10*s.*

[47] E.g. LRO B/C/11 Thomas Bradshawe, Tutbury, 1638.

[48] LRO B/C/11 Matthew Bramley, Pentrich, 1638 (total valuation £92 10*s.* 6*d.* before debts).

[49] LRO B/C/11 Richard Browne, Coleshill, 1626.

8*d.*[50] More representative was a Mancetter mercer whose stock of haberdashery and "grossery" accounted for £44 of his total inventory valuation of £50 4*s.* 2*d.*[51] As other trades, retailers were sometimes encouraged to diversify their capital, so the Coventry draper, Christopher Aullsop, maintained a reserve of £41 in ready money and £70 8*s* 0½*d* "out on bond", which together comprised all but £10 of his total inventory (1632).

The same extensive range of capital characterised shoemakers. The cordwainer, Edmund Bonsall, made up stock and had an outlet in his shop in All Saints in Derby. For a shoemaker, he was inordinately successful with personal estate at death of almost £104. Significantly, however, his trade stock in boots, shoes, leather and hides, amounted to only £16. He spread his capital into other holdings: ten marks in gold, £3 in "Tayle money" and £11 17*s.* 6*d.* in silver plate. Perhaps he was a provincial exemplar of Simon Eyre, but it is more likely that the potential for reinvestment in his primary occupation was limited.[52] Even more successful was Henry Barker in the market town of Ashbourne (1614), where he amassed personal estate valued at £195 5*s.* 6*d.* Much of his wealth was tied up in capital stock, £32 10*s.* 0*d.* in boots and shoes, £61 8*s.* 8*d.* in leather and hides, and £2 for ten stone of tallow. More usually, amongst shoemakers of moderate fortune, the major part of personal estate was held as capital stock. Of the £31 14*s.* 8*d.* of the total value of personal estate of Thomas Bate (1628), cordwainer in Shrewsbury, £14 10*s.* 0*d.* was accounted in shoes and boots, hides and leather. Thomas Browne, with a shoemaker's shop in Burton on Trent (1565), had stock valued at £8 out of his total estate of just over £21. Again, however, the most successful shoemakers were compelled to diversify their capital. Thomas Hawkins, of Marlborough, for example, had, in his personal estate of £60 11*s.* 0*d.*, a bond for £20 as well as £18 3*s.* 0*d.* in money.[53]

Capital accumulation and retention

Three inferences from the assessment of weavers and tanners are: the variance of individual fortunes; the limitation of productive capacity (i.e. capital reinvestment); and the limitations of the localized market.[54] Indeed, the variables are interconnected. The market could sustain only a limited number of enterprises and success in those circumscribed conditions varied enormously. It was, nevertheless, possible for enterprises extraordinarily to extend over generations, perhaps redolent of a thesis suggested by Hoskins many decades ago about suc-

[50]LRO B/C/11 Arthur Bowlatt, Coventry, 1589, with, significantly, plate valued at £14 19*s.* 0*d.*

[51]LRO B/C/11 Henry Blue, Mancetter, 1534.

[52]LRO B/C/11 Edmund Bonsall, Derby, 1574; Thomas Dekker, *The Shoemaker's Holiday* (1599).

[53]WSRO P1/H209.

[54]Jan de Vries, *The Economy of Europe in an Age of Crisis, 1600-1750* (Cambridge, 1976), p. 91 ("constant returns to scale"); for Joan Robinson's "capacity", see below.

cess over three generations in the urban context.[55] In recent discourse, however, we might suggest that such success occurred with only the incipient development of institutional "structures".[56]

A case study which perhaps epitomizes the potentiality is the Brookhouse (Brokehouse and variants) family of tanners in and around Derby. John Brokhouse, of the parish of St Werburgh in Derby, declared his will on 4 August 1554; he died probably late in 1556, as his probate inventory was appraised on 4 January 1556/7. His residuary legatees and executors were his two eldest sons, Robert and Thomas. Thomas Brookehouse the elder expired intestate in 1583, his inventory compiled on 20 November 1583. Robert Broockhouse's will was attested on 1 June 1615. The inventory of John in 1557 is seemingly incomplete. His capital accumulation was remarkably high. His yard contained four dicker (40) of bend leather and seven hides appraised at £23 10*s*; 30 dicker (300) of leather valued at £83 6*s*. 8*d*.; five dozen calf skins and twelve skins in his limepit assessed at £2. His capital tied up in raw materials thus exceeded £100. He divested some of his capital into positional goods: 22 silver spoons (£5), two pieces of silver (plate?) (£3), and a silver salt and silver goblet with silver cover, this plate appraised at £3 6*s* 8*d*. When Robert Brookhouse died, the total valuation of his estate in 1619 amounted to £1, 020 18*s*. 6*d*. including debts owing to him extending in total to £163 10*s*. 0*d*. (£124 of which was secured on bonds).[57] In his tanyard were stockpiled 14 dicker of leather and five hides (£140), 10 kips (£5), 33 dozen calfskins and nine horse hides (£30), seven dicker of clout leather (£115), and bark "more then will tanne the leather" (£50). His raw materials thus accounted for a third of his personal estate (£340). He possessed £37 in status goods, comprising a gilt salt of 15 ounces (£6), a white salt, three silver bowls and two dozen silver spoons (£21), and gold rings and gold and silver (£10).

Another example of some continuity of capital formation is a saddlery shop in Coventry. When Roger Brounrige died, his inventory (1605) enumerated personal estate to the total value of £56 10*s*. 8*d*., including his saddlery shop. In

[55] W. G. Hoskins, *Provincial England: Essays in Social and Economic History* (London, 1965), pp. 76, 110.

[56] For the formations, Douglas W. Allen, *The Institutional Revolution: Measurement and the Economic Development of the Modern World* (Chicago, 2012); Allen, *British Industrial Revolution in Global Perspective*. "Institutions" are a nebulous concept: see, for example, Geoffrey M. Hodgson, "The emergence of the idea of institutions as repositories of knowledge", in *The Institutions of the Market: Organizations, Social Systems, and Governance*, ed. Alexander Ebner and Nickolaus Beck (Oxford, 2008), pp. 23-39, which ranges back over historical commentary by George Lewes, Thorstein Veblen, and even back to Auguste Comte. By such a definition, there was certainly institutional development in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century; the issue remains which promoted economic growth and which hindered it?! Douglass North attempted to explain the historical contexts in *Institutions, Institutional Change and Economic Performance* (Cambridge, 1990).

[57] LRO B/C/11 Robert Brookhouse, Derby, 1619. Robert Brookhouse was elected as one of the two bailiffs of the borough of Derby in 1592: *Derbyshire Parish Registers. Marriages IX*, ed. W. P. W. Phillimore and Ll. Ll. Simpson (London, 1912), p. 2. Marriages of the family between 1609 and 1703 were registered in St Werburgh's parish: *Derbyshire Parish Registers. Marriages X*, ed. Phillimore and Simpson (London, 1912), pp. 6-7, 9, 12-14. They disappear in that parish after 1703.

the next generation, Thomas Brownrigg, whose inventory (1634) amounted to considerably more (£414 18*s.* 11*d.*), had expanded the enterprise. Up to her death, his widow, Jacomea Brownrige, had maintained the business, her inventory including the saddles in the shop, and her wealth only slightly diminished to £354 18*s.* 11*d.*

Another potential for capital accumulation and retention was investment in building to expand the enterprise. Overall, however, there is precious little evidence of this approach. Even amongst innkeepers, new building does not appear to have been frequent, reliance being placed on existing resources. Either there was excessive caution or no confidence in the expansion of the market. Exceptional was Michael Band in the first decade of the seventeenth century. Predictably, perhaps, the *locus* was the city of Coventry. The total effects in his inventory, with a total of £162 8*s.* 8*d.*, were divided between the old buildings (£99 1*s.* 0*d.*) and the new buildings (£63 7*s.* 8*d.*), reflecting a considerable reinvestment. The new buildings consisted of a new chamber, the green chamber, the "Crowne" chamber (presumably in the upper level with a Crown-post), the Rose chamber, the new parlour (still used for bedding) and the new hall.[58]

Supply-side inelasticity and diversification

Capitalization of many of these crafts and industries was circumscribed by relative inelasticity in the market and their labour-intensive character. Since there was a finite limit to the extent of capital investment, capital accumulation was directed outside the craft which generated the return on capital. The outlets for capital comprised investment in husbandry, through leases and livestock, especially by blacksmiths, finance capital though bonds and bills, and position or status goods, mainly silver spoons and other silver plate such as salts and bowls. Illustrative of this tendency was the blacksmith Roger Astburye of Hanchurch (1628) with his personal estate appraised in total at £169 15*s.* 10*d.*, £92 of which was accounted "Item in bills and bondes", whilst a further £50 as:

> Item laid out upon a morgage his brother beinge Joint purchaser it is gone by survivorshipp.

[58]LRO B/C/11 Michael Band, Coventry, 1611. For the transition of the parlour from an additional bedroom to a different living space, Matthew Johnson, *Housing Culture: Traditional Architecture in an English Landscape* (Washington, D.C., 1993), p. 128; this change might have been more precipitate in the west Midlands than in Johnson's west Suffolk. Johnson's examination supersedes the earlier discussions by Hoskins and Machin of "a great rebuilding". Peter Clark, *The English Alehouse: A Social History* (Harlow, 1983), pp. 195-221, suggests that the stage of improvement of the alehouse occurred after 1660. For the potential of inns in the early seventeenth century, we might also consider contemporary dramatic representation, not least Ben Jonson, *The New Inn*, ed. Michael Hattaway (Manchester, 1984), which provides a picture of a more sophisticated constellation. A more truncated depiction of the rural inn and the origins of its landlord is presented in Philip Massinger, *A New Way to Pay Old Debts*, Act I, sc. I (1625).

The inventory of a Newport (Salop) corvaiser in 1550 enumerated two silver goblets valued at £2, a silver salt (26*s.* 8*d.*), a chalice (30*s.*), 18 silver spoons (£3) and two mazers (bowls) parcel gilt (10*s.*) amongst his total possessions appraised at a total of £40 5*s.* 5*d.*[59] He was, by most standards, quite profligate in his acquisition of plate. Predominantly, those who indulged in plate had silver spoons, perhaps a salt, perhaps a bowl. The disinvestment in this luxury was marginal, more symbolic than a virement. In the sphere of finance capital, even those engaged in agrarian activity sometimes resorted to disinvestment from husbandry towards the ends of their lives, viring their capital into finance (rentier economy or "placement"). As an example, John Besford, yeoman of Wem, died in 1626 ostensibly without any husbandry, whether dead or livestock. His total personal estate amounted to £126 11*s.* 0*d.*, comprising £20 for an assignment of a lease, £30 5*s.* 4*d.* owed to him by bills, £27 1*s.* 4*d.* similarly by bonds, £5 on unsecured debts, and "Item in one Frendes hande" £38. Another significant example is Thomas Atkinson of Hardwick (Ault Hucknall) in Derbyshire, whose personal estate was considered to extend to £342 19*s.* 2*d.* in 1612. This yeoman ostensibly had no husbandry – livestock or grain – and his accumulated wealth consisted almost exclusively of £35 in money in his chest and £305 due to him in debts.[60] To take another example, William Ashmore, a yeoman of Newhall in Stapenhill (1616), had a total inventory valuation of £237 4*s.* 10*d.*, but £128 4*s.* 6*d.* comprised debts owed to him on bills and bonds (specialties), a further £28 18*s.* 2*d.* of debts specifically without specialty, and £8 in apparel and ready money. Finally, consider the yeoman John Alsibrooke of Overton in Ashover (1617), whose inventory was appraised in 1617. The total valuation amounted to £701 5*s.* 4*d.*, £10 of which was accounted for by his apparel and the money in his purse. The vast proportion, however, extending to £600, was allocated to:

> Item debts oweinge unto the saide John Alsibrooke by bills bounds wryteings and other specialties.

This departure at the end of life characterised a considerable number of yeomen in Wiltshire. This rentier economy was, nonetheless, entirely localized, not integrated into any organized financial market. Although it is a digression, the point is made to emphasise how the limitations of capital reinvestment compelled diversification into other sectors and how some, even in husbandry, moved into nascent finance capitalism. The movement is merely illustrated here, because it is examined more deeply elsewhere, including the evidence from Wiltshire. The consequence was forced diversification of of the economies of the successful, including through finance capitalism, which developed as a relatively new avenue in the late sixteenth century through the unintended consequences of the various usury acts between 1545 and 1624, which allowed a return on capital of 10 percent from 1571 and 8 percent from 1624. Two aspects have been omitted

[59] LRO B/C/11 John Bowres, Newport, 1550.

[60] It seems likely that these bonds passed to these farmers' widows or daughters: Judith Spicksley, "Usury legislation, cash, and credit: the development of the female investor in the late Tudor and Stuart periods", *Economic History Review* 61 (2007), pp. 277-301.

here. One is the participation of labourers in finance capitalism. For example, William Browne, a labourer in Great Armington within Tamworth, in 1567 had accumulated effects and chattels worth £14 11*s* 8*d*. at his death. The appraisers recorded:

> Debtes owinge to the sayd William Browne as ytt appearyth by sundrye obligacions and Bylles ix li.

Similarly, Thomas Allibone, a labourer of Ladbrooke (1633), had engaged in lending out his surplus accumulated capital:

> Item Moneyes in the house and owing, Due to be payd uppon Speciallties xxij li. xiij s. viij d.

The rationale here is that the origin of this capital is likely to have been agrarian labour and the engagement with finance capitalism will be considered elsewhere.

The second omission concerns the accrual of coin or ready money in chests. A not insignificant number of inventories recorded large amounts of money secreted in houses. One item in the inventory of Henry Atkins, a husbandman of Long Lawford in Newbold upon Avon (1628), accounted: "Item in gould and white Money" £90. Even a labourer, like Stephen Adam of Youlgreave in 1600, could amass a substantial amount of coin, in his case £21. Indeed, labourers probably had no other recourse for their savings than holding coin or lending on specialties. John Browne, a yeoman, possessed £20 in money at his death, a fifth of his personal estate, and in the same year, Wilfred Bumbie, "bedster", £40, a quarter of his personal estate.[61]

> Item one seeled chest with fourty pounds of monie

was accounted for by the appraisers of the personal estate of Richard Buckland of Duffield in 1616 – a quarter of the total amount of his inventory. It is often difficult to address the amount of ready money in inventories since it is so often included in a combined value with apparel. In some cases, however, a net value for the ready money is provided. Before about 1600, the amount of ready money in inventories was ostensibly minimal. After 1600, twenty-one inventories of men engaged in trades or crafts contained ready money of five pounds or more, a third of which exceeded £20, the highest comprising £56. These numbers are undoubtedly an under-estimate. They also exclude the inventories of those engaged only in husbandry, such as Henry Atkins above.[62] The reasons for the exclusion here is that the ready money might have been a temporary situation or, if permanent, a removal of productive capital from the economy.

Finally, we can return to the notion of industries in the countryside (Thirsk), by-employment or dual occupations (Hey et al.), but avoiding the concept of proto-industrialization as, at this stage at least, an anachronism.[63] We can

[61] LRO B/C/11 John Browne, Mucklestone, and Wilfred Bumbie, Whitchurch, 1639.

[62] Liquid capital - money - is treated more fully in the Conclusion, below.

[63] For the literature and context, Keibek and Shaw-Taylor, "Early modern rural by-employments".

examine here briefly the metal-working trades which have been accepted as diagnostic within the diocese of Lichfield, around Birmingham (Aston and West Bromwich) and in north Derbyshire. First, the return on capital of nailers was minimal if it is represented by their personal estate. Seven of the nine inventories of nailers contained total personal estate valued at less than £30. Capital accumulation in that trade was severely restricted and was consistent with remaining smallholders and cottagers. Nailers were not effectively engaged in dual occupations; their sole occupation was the hammering of nails. Any husbandry was secondary and contingent. Scythesmiths and grinders, however, had the opportunity to aggregate capital. Of the nine inventories of those engaged in this trade, only three contained total personal estate below £50 (excluding the widow of a scythesmith).[64] As early as 1543, production of scythes had become a potential resource for considerable return on capital and labour. In that year, the appraisers of the inventory of the widow, Joan Bennet, of Aston near Birmingham, enumerated personal estate of only £17 2*s.* 10*d.*, with two silver spoons and an equal number of silver rings. They remarked, however, on £118 10*s.* 3*d.* in:

> Summes of money Receyved For Sythes and Howikes of dyvers Chapmen deytters to the seyde Jone Bennett at the daye of hyr departure as hit doith more pleynly appere by the partyculer Receptes of the same ...

Scythemakers in Birmingham and adjacent Castle Bromwich (Erdington) amassed personal estate valued at about £250 and about £97 respectively, both belonging to the Bache family.[65] About two-thirds of the estate in Castle Bromwich comprised 700 scythes appraised at £60 and steel at £4 6*s.* 8*d.* The Birmingham stock was a smaller proportion, 42 dozen scythes in the workshop assessed at £40, seven dozen in the warehouse at £6, steel at £8, and accessories at £6 4*s.* 0*d.* Thomas Bache of Birmingham had entered into four leases, renting a mill, lands from Mr Arden and Mr Greve, and Fawcon Fields. From this information, we can posit a progression from primary employment and capital accumulation in the craft and trade in scythes to the generation of surplus capital which cannot be reinvested or "ploughed back" into the enterprise. The consequence was that the capital was diverted into husbandry: scythemaking first; scythemaking and husbandry later.

We can perhaps perceive how weavers fitted into this scenario of industry in the countryside through the example of Denis Atkis of Kinver. This narrow weaver accumulated personal estate appraised at £135 8*s.* 0*d.* by his decease in 1624. His numerous small leases included a cottage house valued for £1, Clombrok meadow for his life considered to be worth £2, arable for the term of "on ould womans lif" valued at 10s., Dudley Croft, comprising one acre, for nine years yet to come, valued at 10*s.*, pasture called Mearscroft for fourteen

[64] LRO B/C/11 Dorothy Byngam, Horsley, 1558 whose estate included 12 dozen rough scythes worth £8, but it is unclear whether she was active in this trade.

[65] LRO B/C/11 Thomas Bache, Castle Bromwich, 1589; Thomas Bache, Birmingham, 1591.

years yet to come appraised at £20, pasture called the "gray filds" for eight years yet to come, valued at £10, as well as £59 6*s.* 6*d.* due on specialties. This divestment from non-agrarian occupation into husbandry perhaps obtained too in the case of Thomas Bull of Cubley (1611), for, although his inventory had the affix shoemaker, it contained no shop or stock, but largely consisted of his livestock.

Just to recapitulate then, non-agrarian activity in the provinces extended from the *paysans plus* – the village craft and trade – to enterprises with high capital formation and accumulation. Success seems to have depended on surmounting inelasticity on the supply side (capacity), whether capital-intensive or labour-intensive.[66] Demographic increase must have stimulated the demand side. The most successful enterprises accumulated capital in their craft or trade, but also successfully vired capital into other activities – the traditional recourse of husbandry and the newer outlet of finance capitalism. When capital was diverted into position or status goods, these materials consisted simply of traditional types, silver and gilt or greater quantities of pewter, rather than new consumer products.[67] Concentration in the industries was probably occurring. Locational factors were not yet determinant, as some industries continued to exist and flourish in a rural context, surviving market towns, emergent towns and large towns

[66] Joan Robinson, *Accumulation of Capital*, pp. 51-2 ("bottle-neck" in capacity).
[67] See Chapter 6 below.

Chapter 6

Disparagement and differentiation

> NURSE Is poverty a vice?
> BEAUFORT Th'age counts it so.[1]

Much English early-modern or Renaissance drama is focused, of course, on the higher echelons of society, the nobility and aristocracy with their concepts of honour and those, especially in the City, later designated the "middling sort", the elite of the crafts, trades and professions, and the burgeoning financial interests in the City. The predominant themes in these cases are the inter-relationship of sexual and financial predation, honour, credit and shame.[2] The potential for disparagement of the poor is, nonetheless, implicit in the verse poem by the clergyman, Phineas Fletcher (1582-1650), "Against a rich man despising poverty" (1633). Although the purpose revealed in the final stanza is to confirm the theological tenet that all are equal in the sight of God, the poem also intimates that the more affluent might indeed disparage the poor. Throughout the antithesis of the lines contrasts the poverty of affluence and the richness of poverty as an overarching didactic exegesis, but still there remains the notion that there is the capacity for the rich to derogate the poor.

> If well thou viewst us with no squinted eye,
> No partial judgement, thou will quickly rate...
> Then this thou bragst, thou are a great receiver:[3]

[1] Ben Jonson, *The New Inn*, edited by Michael Hattaway (Manchester, 1984), Act v, sc. v, line 56.

[2] Swapan Chakravorty, *Society and Politics in the Plays of Thomas Middleton* (Oxford, 1996), although at pp. 38-41, Chakravorty discusses the "plebeianizing of authorship" (quotation from p. 41) in Middleton's sympathetic treatment of the labouring poor in *Father Hubbard's Tales* or *The Ant and the Nightingale*.

[3] *The New Oxford Book of Seventeenth-century Verse*, ed. Alastair Fowler (Oxford, 1991), pp. 190-1.

In the literature of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, poetic and dramatic, there exists an undercurrent of disparagement which, in some cases, rebounded on the lower social orders and may have had a distinct impact on the perception of poorer elements in society, perhaps reducing some elements to an "under-class".[4]

One of the dramatists who, in encompassing the whole of society on the stage, addressed the lowest social orders, was Ben Jonson, as part of his satirical critique of a whole social cosmology. The dramatic realism in Jonson's satires has been demonstrated in particular by Haynes.[5] His acerbic wit was directed against all sorts in society and so his satire of the lowest social levels is no surprise, not unexpected, not erratic.[6] The lower levels of society interrupt the dramatic flow, sometimes transgressively, in the intermeans and paratext of Jonson's plays. Jonson often appears to lack empathy with the lower social orders, although he was obviously familiar with the milieu. We thus have the character of Cob, the water bearer, in *Every Man in his Humour*, who is a comic fool and the recipient of much derision, and the frequenters of Batholomew Fair, carnivalesque in their excess and rapacity, all in the context of the City.[7] When Stuff the tailor is tardy in delivering the gown to The New Inn for Lady Frampul to robe her chambermaid, Prudence, as the sovereign of her court of love, Lady Frampul denounces all engaged in crafts:

> These base mechanics never keep their word
> In anything they promise.[8]

In the approach to matters of stigmatization and exclusion, recourse made to dramatic representations is inherently ambiguous.[9] Real problems are involved here, for the material is all of geographically concentrated (the City), comedic, satirical, and (to some extent) imaginative.[10] On the other hand, although satire exaggerates and heightens, it must remain comprehensible to its audience. Drama is also performative: appropriating some social tropes, exaggerating them, representing those idioms back to the audience, which will respond

[4]Anat Feinberg, "The representation of the poor in Elizabethan and Stuart drama", *Literature and History* 12 (1986), pp. 152-63, basically concerns the poor by impotency, casualty and thriftlessness, and the material responses to them, for which, see now Steve Hindle, *On the Parish? The Micro-politics of Poor Relief in Rural England c.1550-1750* (Oxford, 2004); Marjorie McIntosh, *Poor Relief in England, 1350-1600* (Cambridge, 2012).

[5]Jonathan Haynes, *The Social Relations of Jonson's Theater* (Cambridge, 1992), pp. 1-31, 90 (for the heightened realism of Jonson after his "sabbatical" period), 109.

[6]Haynes, *The Social Relations of Jonson's Theater*, p. 125. Ridicule and contempt are discussed further below.

[7]Haynes, *Social Relations of Jonson's Theater*, pp. 119-38, explains how *BF* does not conform to classic notions of the carnivalesque, in contradistinction, perhaps, to the classic interpretation by Peter Stallybrass and Allon White, "The fair, the pig, authorship", in their *The Politics and Poetics of Transgression* (Ithaca, NY, 1986), pp. 27-79.

[8]Jonson, *The New Inn*, ed. Hattaway, Act II, scene i, lines 8-9.

[9]For stigma, Erving Goffman, *Stigma: Notes on the Management of Spoiled Identity* (London, 1968 edn), pp. 58-68.

[10]Richard Dutton, "Jonson's satiric styles", in *The Cambridge Companion to Ben Jonson*, ed. Richard Harp and Stanley Stewart (Cambridge, 2000), pp. 58-71, esp. 58-60.

in a diversity of ways: confirmation, rejection, reinterpretation, obfuscation, indifference, and perhaps even simple entertainment.[11]

> Plays in themselves have neither hopes nor fears,
> Their fate is only in their hearers' ears;[12]

By retrieving this relationship in its historical circumstance, we recognize once again the role of emotion in history and sociology.[13] We rediscover the formative impact of the emotions on reason propounded by Kant and contained within the earlier *Leviathan* of Hobbes.[14] Whilst disparagement is not quite the same as Bill Miller's "Disgust", it is not far removed – an emotional response to a situation which is an irruption.[15] As Miller asserts,

> Contempt is the emotional complex that articulates and maintains hierarchy, status, rank, and respectability. And differentiated status and rank are the eliciting conditions of contempt. So what we have is a kind of feedback loop in which contempt helps create and sustain the structures which generate the capacity for contempt. And there is good reason to believe that the particular style of contempt will be intimately connected with the precise social and political arrangements in which it takes place.[16]

The rhetorical work of drama did not always coincide with the persuasive purpose of the dramatist, if, indeed, there was one. In the satires of, for example, Jonson and Middleton, few are exempted from criticism, from whatever social spectrum, so caution against over-interpretation is necessary. The aggressive, biting tone is directed against all sorts of people, especially those with pretensions. Jonson in particular may have allowed criticism of the populace through his intermeans, in which popular expectations are derided. It is in this context that we might interpret the episodes involving Cob, below.

Some dramatic works of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century have a *locus* in rural and provincial society, although sometimes not distant from London.[17] In comparison with the continuation of medieval pastoral into the early sixteenth century and the rediscovery of classical pastoral, the eclogue, in the late sixteenth century, there is a genealogy of writing which displays a

[11] For a recent discussion of reception, Laura Caroline Stevenson, *Praise and Paradox: Merchants and Craftsmen in Elizabethan Popular Literature* (Cambridge, 1984).

[12] Ben Jonson, *The New Inn*, Epilogue, lines 1-2.

[13] *Emotions and Sociology*, ed. Jack Barbalet (Oxford, 2002); Barbara H. Rosenwein, "Worrying About Emotions in History", *American Historical Review* 107 (2002), pp. 821-45; *Anger's Past: The Social Uses of an Emotion in the Middle Ages*, ed. Rosenwein (Ithaca, NY, 1998).

[14] Howard Warrender, *The Political Philosophy of Hobbes: His Theory of Obligation* (Oxford, 1957).

[15] William I. Miller, *The Anatomy of Disgust* (Cambridge, MA, 1997), especially chapter 9 which addresses "disgust's close cousin contempt" (p. 206).

[16] Miller, *Anatomy of Disgust*, p. 217.

[17] Jill Levenson, "Comedy", in *The Cambridge Companion to English Renaissance Drama*, ed. A. R. Braunmuller and Michael Hattaway (Cambridge, 2nd edn, 2003), p. 268.

contempt for the lower sort of people.[18] Towards the middle of the seventeenth century, a contrast had appeared between a heroic representation of the gipsy and travelling beggars ("the spiritual nobility of the vagabonds") and the rural poor "who are treated with contempt".[19] It has been suggested that this romanticized reappraisal of the gipsy, and perhaps a redemptive approach to one element of the poor, in Caroline plays, was intended as a critique of the royal court.[20] Brome, in particular, is associated with this eulogy of the itinerant poor, but it must be acknowledged that Jonson too, the "father" of such as Brome, had already initiated this idealization of the gipsy family.

Ostensibly, *Gammer Gurton's Nedle* displays a functionalist restoration of harmony in local social relations. After the division and conflict between neighbours, "normality" is resumed through conviviality in the inn. "Community" is healed. Diccon is revealed as the instigator of discord, the trickster of disruption. It is not surprising, therefore, that the resonance of mutuality and neighbourliness has been perceived in early-modern English society, not only through the exhortations of conduct literature and homilies, but also in the apparent social practice of the "community".[21]

How people survive on the margins of any society – including local society – reflects much about the nature of that (local) society and (local) social relations. Much research has recently been conducted into the formal and informal (voluntarist or charitable) responses to poverty. Those approaches have also, to a considerable extent, examined the marginalization, stigmatization, exclusion, and ostracism of the poor (and delinquent). To a degree, also, the recent investigation of the early-modern poor has comprehended the economies of the poor, extending our understanding of the "economy of makeshifts".[22]

Self-fashioning, agency and the poor?

In our present context, this deprecation is associated with lifestyle and consumption – and so too was its historical circumstance. This recent emphasis on consumption – stimulated by the hermeneutic analysis of the symbolism of the world of goods by Douglas and Isherwood – has followed pretty much also the cultural approach of Veblen: the conceptualization of "social emulation".[23] If we

[18]Katherine C. Little, *Transforming Work: Early Modern Pastoral and Late Medieval Poetry* (Notre Dame, IN, 2013); Andrew McRae, *God Speed the Plough: The Representation of Agrarian England, 1500-1660* (Cambridge, 1996).

[19]Haynes, *The Social Relations in Jonson's Theater*, pp. 102-3, referring here to the "sons of Ben", but Jonson had also lionized gipsy adventure in his later plays, including *The New Inn*.

[20]Martin Butler, *Theatre and Crisis 1632-1642* (Cambridge, 1984).

[21]Keith Wrightson, "Mutualities and obligations: changing social relationships in early modern England", *Proceedings of the British Academy* 139 (2006), pp. 157-94; *Communities in Early Modern England: Networks, Place, Rhetoric*, ed. Alexandra Shepard and Phil Withington (Manchester, 2000); for the concept, which has a voluminous literature, see now Tony Blackshaw, *Key Concepts in Community Studies* (London, 2010).

[22]Hindle, *On the Parish?*; McIntosh, *Poor Relief in England*.

[23]The literature is too expansive to recite here, but the original stimulus was Mary Douglas and Baron C. Isherwood, *The World of Goods: Towards an Anthropology of Consumption*

reverse the perspective, however, as Bourdieu has suggested, what we encounter is differentiation or his "distinction", the manner in which some people separate themselves off symbolically from others and in the process stigmatize those to whom they consider themselves to be superior.[24] Both interpretations have been criticized as ideological presumptions, without sufficient subjective considerations and as wanting a firm evidential basis.[25] Both of the interpretations – emulation and differentiation – have ignored, it is suggested, "the complex issue of motivation" in the "dimension of subjective consciousness".[26] Campbell's critique focuses on the age of "sensibility" and early Romaticism.[27] The notions of "character" in that epoch were, nonetheless, the products of a discursive, literary climate.[28] In a sense, the correlative idea in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries was self-fashioning.[29] Perhaps self-fashioning was more concerned with presenting oneself to the world – exteriority – more than subjective consciousness – interiority – but there seems to be some affinity.[30]

Perhaps the poorest were not totally deprived of the means of self-fashioning through clothing. When a (fictitious, as it turns out) robbery is recounted in Jonson's *A Tale of a Tub*, the alleged cuplrit is identified through a description of his apparel. A certain individuality was thus conceivable. Whilst most of the characters in Jonson's *A Tale of a Tub* are conventional, perhaps even conventionally dull and bucolic, theatrical space is made for the distinctiveness of John Clay. The victim of the robbery, Hilts, when asked by the high constable Turf for any significant features to identify the robbers, after hesitation, responds that one "busy fellow" was distinctive by his "leather doublet, with long points", "a pair of pinned-up breeches, like pudding bags", "yellow stockings" and "his hat turned up with a silver clasp on his leer side".[31] From this characterization by the supposed victim, Hilts, the high constable deduces that the offender is John Clay, the tiler.[32] Clay, like the other parts, sports a moniker consonant with his occupation – tile-maker – mundane and earthy. Unlike the other characters, however, he adopts a certain posture and pose. To some extent, it is a genera-

(New York, 1979).

[24] Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*, trans. by Richard Nice (Cambridge, MA, 1984).

[25] Colin Campbell, "Understanding traditional and modern patterns of consumption in eighteenth-century England: a character-action approach", in *Consumption and the World of Goods*, ed. John Brewer and Roy Porter (London, 1994), pp. 40-57, esp. pp. 41-44. See, however, Emma Tarlo, *Clothing Matters: Dress and Identity in India* (London, 1996), p. 319.

[26] Campbell, "Understanding traditional and modern patterns of consumption", p. 43.

[27] Campbell, "Understanding traditional and modern patterns of consumption", pp. 48-55.

[28] Graham J. Barker-Benfield, *The Culture of Sensibility: Sex and Society in Eighteenth-century Britain* (Chicago, 1992).

[29] Stephen Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self-fashioning: From More to Shakespeare* (Chicago, 1980).

[30] Erving Goffman, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (New York, 1959), also criticized by Campbell, "Understanding traditional and modern patterns of consumption", p. 46.

[31] *A Tale of a Tub*, Act II, scene ii.

[32] *A Tale of a Tub*, Act II, scene ii, lines 120-9. For clothing and self-presentation, Ann Jones and Peter Stalybrass, *Renaissance Clothing and the Materials of Memory* (Cambridge, 2000). For the "sartorial economy of the countryside", Daniel Roche, *A History of Everyday Things: The Birth of Consumption in France, 1600-1800* (Cambridge, 2000), pp. 198-201.

tional distinction; he is younger than all the others, the prospective bride-groom who is being framed. He may accord more closely with the ritual of resistance through apparel of a younger generation.[33] The character of Clay is, of course, a theatrical device, crucial for the plot, but his attributes are conceivable. The episode alerts again that style was not confiined to the elite or self-fashioning to Renaissance intellectuals. Although accused of the felony, Clay, as is obvious from the outset, is not deviant, although, because of his gait, demeanour and youth, he is a candidate for stereotyping as deviant. Suspicion of youth might have been at its most incisive in urban contexts, but lack of years could diminish gravitas in mature rural eyes.[34] The difference between the self-presentation of Clay and the self-fashioning of the elite lies in Clay's adaptation of everyday clothes whilst the elite, as ever, purchased specially-commissoned clothes from professional couturiers. Clay's attire exhibited the "conceptual framework within which the problem of what to wear is situated": constraint, but always choice at the margin.[35] Clay's "style" is equally different from "what we call the 'style' of a period", associated as that is with high culture, "the equivalent of the transcendent idea of nobility".[36]

Individuality is expressed in the attire of another *dramatis persona*, in Arden of Faversham, the rogue and thief, Jack Fitten. When Bradshaw solicits from Black Will the identity of the thief who sold Bradshaw the plate of Lord Cheyne, he first describes the man by his facial features. Will requires some description of the apparel. The ensemble is all that Will needs to identify Fitten.

> A watchet satin doublet all to-torn
> (The inner side did bear the greater show),
> A pair of threadbare velvet hose, seam rent,
> A worsted stocking rent above the shoe,
> A livery coat, but all the lace was off — [37]

"Havyng no patch to hyde my backe, save a few rotten ragges"[38]

> MALHEUREUX ... Advance thy snout; do not suffer thy sorrowful nose to drop on thy Spanish leather jerkin, most hardly-honest Mulligrub.[39]

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[33] *Resistance Through Rituals: Youth Subcultures in Post-War Britain*, ed. Stuart Hall and Tony Jefferson (London, 1998 edn), pp. 55-7; John Clarke, "Style", in *Resistance Through Rituals*, pp. 175-91.

[34] Paul Griffiths, *Youth and Authority: Formative Experiences in England 1560-1640* (Oxford, 1996), esp. ch. 2 ("The politics of age").

[35] Tarlo, *Clothing Matters*, p. 318.

[36] Jean Baudrillard, *The System of Objects*, trans. by James Benedict (London, 1996 edn), p. 138.

[37] *Arden of Faversham*, scene ii, lines 52-55.

[38] *Gammer Gurton's Nedle*, Act I, sc. iii, line 96.

[39] John Marston, *The Dutch Courtesan,* ed. M. L. Wine (London, 1965), Act I, sc. i, lines 2-3.

> COCLEDEMOY ... Yet he got my cloak: a plain stuff cloak, poor, yet 'twill serve to hang him! 'Tis my loss, poor man that I am![40]

Whether composed by William Stevenson or not, *Gammer Gurton's Nedle* ridicules popular mores, indicating the descent into fractious social relationships between neighbours (although social harmony is restored finally through communal drinking). The author from the elite denigrates local society, certainly representing here a distinction between elite culture and "popular" culture, even if that distinction was obfuscated in other sectors or attitudes.[41] The margins are stereotyped as unrelentingly crude, undignified, crass, superstitious and rude. When Hodge tears his breeches, he must have them mended again by Dame Gurton, although it is only two days since she mended them. The crisis of the play depends on the loss of her sole needle.

> My fayre longe strayght neele, that was myne only treasure –
> The first day of my sorow is, and last end of my pleasure.[42]

Hodge cannot countenance wearing his breeches the following day unpatched, because he expects to encounter the maid, Christian Clack, whom he wishes to impress. That situation is, of course, crucial to the plot, so is dramatically determined. Dame Gurton's maid, Tyb, however, also complains about having only a few rotten rags for apparel (as the quotation above). The poverty of the household is indicated by the domestic gloom which can only be illuminated by a candle of an inch of white tallow which is stored in an old shoe behind the old brass pot. The candle is consumed, so the household has to adjourn the search for the needle until daylight. Again, that predicament is integral to the plot, but obviously not unimaginable to the prospective audience. During the distraction of the search for the needle, Diccon, their neighbour, stole the last "morsell" of bacon from behind Hodge's door. Diccon is the trickster in this local society, sowing discord between neighbours. He informs Dame Chat that Dame Gurton will assail her on the belief that Dame Chat stole and cooked Dame Gurton's "goodly faire red cocke". Diccon pretends to summon up the devil for information about the lost needle. Subsequently, Diccon intimates to Dame Gurton that Dame Chat discovered the lost needle and purloined it, despite the gallant intervention of Diccon. Harmony is restored by resort to

[40] Marston, *Dutch Courtesan* ed. Wine, Act IV, sc. v, lines 26-28.

[41] For the ambiguous relationships between elite and popular culture, see now *Popular Culture in England, c.1500-1850*, ed. Tim Harris (Basingstoke, 1995); Levenson, "Comedy", p. 258 and n. 9.

[42] *Gammer Gurton's Nedle*, Act I, sc. iv, lines 135-136. See, however, Curtis Perry, "Commodity and commonwealth in Gammer Gurton's Needle", *SEL* 42 (2002), pp. 217-34, which connects the farce to contemporary social concerns, but as a parody of the urgency of the Commonwealth reformers, and for the contention that the farce undermines the potential for a return to a nostalgic social harmony. For a recent discussion of the play's relationship to popular and elite culture, Andrew Hiscock, "'Hear my tale or kiss my tail!' The Old Wife's Tale, Gammer Gurton's Needle, and the popular cultures of Tudor comedy", in *The Oxford Handbook of Tudor Literature 1485-1603*, ed. Mike Pincombe and Cathy Shrank (Oxford, 2009), pp. 733-48.

the ale-house, but not before the playwright has exposed the crudity of this social milieu. The play, it is supposed, was produced for an academic audience, and certainly performed at Christ's College, Cambridge, perhaps confirming prejudices about social inferiors. Printed in 1575 in London, the stereotyping of poor rural society was extended to the urban elite. Hodge's defective apparel was exaggerated, but the clothing of the poor marked them out.

The difference existed not in the type of clothing, but in its quality and quantity. The eponymous Malheureux advises Mulligrub "do not suffer thy sorrowful nose to drop on thy Spanish leather jerkin ..."[43]

> WHIT Phat? Because o' ty wrought neet cap, and ty phelvet sherkin, man? Phy? I have sheen tee [Leatherhead] in ty ledder sherkin ere now, mashter o' de hobby-horses, as bushy and as stately as tou sheem'st to be.
>
> TRASH Why, what an' you have, Captain Whit? He has his choice of jerkins, you may see by that, and his caps too, I assure you, when he pleases to be either sick or employed.[44]

The caveat pertains, however, that some of the more affluent amongst the "middling sort" might have resisted fashion and exhibited parsimony or modesty. The profligate son of the notable builder, Rooksbill, Nicholas, could thus decry his father's sober, even mean, attire:

> Yes, marry it is he, forsooth; he has built I know not how many houses hereabout, though he goes, Dammy, as if he were not worth a groat; And all his clothes I vow are not worth this hilt.[45]
>
> ... for time in passing weares (As garments doen, which wexen old above)[46]

Tubs and Turfs

It has been suggested that one of Jonson's later comedies, *A Tale of a Tub*, connotes the more solid, traditional values of an earlier bucolic time, for which Jonson was nostalgic, the 1590s, conveying a "sense of people complexly enmeshed within a continuum of time", displaying the common local values of "mutual dependency and solidarity".[47] Jonson's sympathy might be misconstrued.[48] The characters often seem dull, dimwitted, naïve, and slow. Most conform to a trope of the country gull, deceived by rudimentary plotting. In

[43] Marston, *The Dutch Courtesan*, ed. Wine, p. 5 (Act I, scene i, line 3)

[44] Ben Jonson, *Bartholomew Fair*, Act III, sc. i, lines 34-39.

[45] Donald McClure, *A Critical Edition of Richard Brome's The Weeding of Covent Garden and The Sparagus Garden* (New York & London 1980), p. 72 (Act I, scene i, lines 389-91).

[46] Edmund Spenser, *The Sheapheardes Calendar, Æcloga sexta* (June), lines 38-39.

[47] Anne Barton, *Ben Jonson, Dramatist* (Cambridge, 1984), pp. 321-37 (quotations at pp. 328, 336). For the plot, Richard Harp, "Jonson's late plays", in *The Cambridge Companion to Ben Jonson*, pp. 99-101.

[48] Generally, Rebecca Yearling, "Ben Jonson's late plays and the difficulty of judgment", *Ben Jonson Journal* 14 (2007), pp. 192-205.

A Tale of a Tub, Jonson exposes rural society as basely bucolic, without any of the romance of *To Penshurst*.[49] Diagnostic of his intention is the Prologue, which is unconstrained in its demeaning of rural society.

> No State-affairs, not any politic Club,
> Pretend we in our tale, of a tub:
> But acts of clowns and constables, to day
> Stuff out our scenes of our ridiculous play.
> A cooper's wit, or some such busy spark,
> Illuminating the high constable, and his clerk.
> And all the neighbourhood, from old records,
> Of antic proverbs, drawn from Whitsun-lords,
> And their authorities, at wakes and ales,
> With country precedents, and old wives' tales;
> We bring you now, to show what different things
> The cotes of clowns, are from the courts of kings.

There is nothing of the pastoral or the eclogue here. The simplicity of life is naivety, crudity and lack of sophistication. Jonson is explicity referring back to the tradition of the "rustic clown": "the 'stock' characteristics of stupidity, gluttony, provinciality and gullibility ..." as a provincial who "cannot be expected to act rationally, nobly or morally unless he is ruled".[50] Bottom was certainly not the last of the "rude mechanicals".[51]

In Act I, scene iii, indeed, the rural characters garble the association of *colonus*, farmer and clown. Justice Preamble in Act I, scene v, differentiates himself from "the ignorant clowns here". When she expresses her contempt for her servant, Pol-Martin, Lady Tub denounces his ingratitude "Beyond the coarseness yet of any clownage".[52] Hilts dismisses Puppy as "young clown" and derogates Clay to Audrey as "a clown-pipe".[53]

All the characters are assigned metonyms which symbolize their trade or occupation. Such a device was a contemporary literary trope. It does, nonetheless, impute that these rural folk were associated with inanimate objects and lumpen. Whilst it is the case that all characters, regardless of status, were recognized by metonyms, not least by the metaphor Metaphor (Miles, the justice's clerk), the lower social actors have the names which resonate of dullness and stupidity, not least the principals Turf and Clay, but also Clench and To-Pan. Their naivety and gullibility is demonstrable in their fantastic confusion over the tradition of St Valentine.[54] Whilst rural customs remained vital in local society, these incredible explanations of the origins and meaning of Valentine's

[49] Garrett A. Sullivan, Jr, "The Land", in *Ben Jonson in Context*, ed. Julie Sanders (Cambridge, 2010), pp. 289-95.
[50] Laura C. Stevenson, *Praise and Paradox: Merchants and Craftsmen in Elizabethan Popular Literature*, (Cambridge 1984), pp. 166, 167.
[51] Stevenson, *Praise and Paradox*, p. 178.
[52] *Tale of A Tub*, Act I, scene vi.
[53] *Tale of A Tub*, Act II, scene ii; scene iii.
[54] *Tale of a Tub*, Act I, sc. ii.

Day are outlandish. So gullible are these rural characters that they accept Hilts's description of the robber even though Clay is present in their midst and Hilts quite obviously simply describes the attire which Clay is wearing in front of them all. It is difficult to accept the late Anne Barton's conception of this play as a representation of Jonson's affection for traditional community in the 1590s.[55]

Those monikers again

In *The New Inn*, Jonson alludes to the underworld of the base characters through the attribution of animal names: Ferret, alias Stoat or Vermin, the servant of Lovel, and Fly, buzzing below stairs. The ferret recurs in *A Tale of a Tub*, for Pol-Martin is the servant of Lady Tub. In her frustration, Lady Tub divulges the origin of Pol-Martin: formerly he was known by the "stinking name" of Martin Polecat, a base moniker not to be uttered in the presence of a lady, but she altered his name to Pol-Martin, "to have it sound like a gentleman in an office".[56] In *A Tale of a Tub* is encountered also Hannibal (Ball) Puppy, the high constable's (Turf's) servant.

A "poor neighbour", the waterbearer

The depiction of Oliver Cob in Jonson's *Everyman in His Humour* illustrates the sort of demeanour towards the margins which was imaginable. Ostensibly, Cob supplies the stage clown in the manner of Onion in *The Case is Altered* and Hannibal (Ball) Puppy in *A Tale of a Tub*.[57] Those of a higher status or pretensions to higher status condescend to Cob. Cob, in response, exhibits both deference and modesty, as well as the intermittent malapropism.[58] In delineating his lineage through the pun of his moniker, Cob, the great herring, Oliver associates himself with low food. Thus commences the demeaning of Cob through the distinction of food and consumption. Cob, by occupation and status, deals "with water, and not with wine".

The "crisis" of this sub-plot, involving Cob and his wife Isobel, her status reflected in her hypocorism, Tib, is the condemnation of Cob himself when he suffers abuse from Bobbadil when Cob complains about the Captain's "roguish tobacco". When Cob approaches Justice Clement for a recognizance to keep the peace against Bobbadil, Clement's initial indifference is transformed to hostility when Cob deprecates tobacco: to the extent that the Justice menaces imprisonment for the heinous crime of denouncing the weed.[59] Throughout the

[55] Barton, *Ben Jonson*, pp. 321-37.
[56] *Tale of A Tub*, Act I, scene vi.
[57] Barton, *Ben Jonson*, p. 321.
[58] Ben Jonson, *Everyman in His Humour*, Act I, sc. iv, Act II, sc. iv, v-vii.
[59] For recognizances to keep the peace, S. Hindle, "The keeping of the public peace", in *The Experience of Authority in Early Modern England*, ed. Paul Griffiths, Adam Fox and Hindle (Basingstoke, 1996), pp. 213-48, and Hindle, *The State and Social Change in Early Modern*

sub-plot Cob is subverted by his exclusion from higher-status consumption. His consumption is simple, but unsophisticated.

Equally, of course, the others are ridiculed as pretentious and hollow (perhaps with the exception of Knowell and Cash), Matthew, Bobbadil, and Clement. It is possible here that Jonson is equating the insufficiency of the poor with the gendered and zealous opposition to tobacco. Elsewhere, the condemnation of the weed is levelled by women, especially gentlewomen, and, or on behalf of, religious zealots. Mistress Mulligrub, in Marston's *The Dutch Courtesan*, objects to tobacco – "the smell of profane tobacco" and "ungodly tobacco" – as one of the elders assures her that the drug was not used in the Family of Love.[60]

Correspondingly, Cob is deferential, not falsely, but modestly. He solicits Justice Clement as your "poor neighbour". The self-description may resonate with the rhetorical device of orators in petitions and other supplications, but Cob's self-demeaning throughout is suggestive that he "knows his place". He would, for example, "fain have them bound to a treaty of peace, an' my credit would compass it".[61] To Matthew's astonishment and incredulity, his idol, Captain Bobbadil, has not only lodged in Cob's house, "such a base, obscure place", "a waterbearer's house", but lodges, inebriated, on Cob's bench. Tib asserts, in response, that Matthew enters a "cleanly house", insisting on the respectability of the household, their position amongst the respectable poor.[62] The *locus* represents, however, "the brute facts of poverty and social stigma", which cannot be disguised from Matthew.[63]

By a device sometimes employed by Jonson, Cob is imputed to be less than entirely human. When questioned by the gentleman, Master Matthew, himself naïve, Cob refers to his ancient lineage, herring, the "king of fish", one of the "monarchs o' the world", descended from the "first red herring that was broiled in Adam and Eve's kitchen".[64] "His cob was my great-great-mighty-great grandfather". The exchange is intended to enhance the comedic content of the play, but also demeans Cob. Cob, by definition, is a young herring. There are two implications: herring, despite the description as king of fish, is low food[65]; second, Cob is less than human. The consequence of Cob's ancestry is confirmed by his occupation as a water-bearer and his aversion to tobacco (smoking).[66] The derogation of marginal people as "sub-human", if in the cause of satiric humour, was a device deployed by Jonson in *The New Inn*. Anne Barton remarked on this employment of "sub-human" names (especially Fly and Ferret) in the play as "totally defining charactonyms", allowing for no development of the characters, so that in *The New Inn* "in the effort to establish the shallowness

England, c.1550-1640, (Basingstoke, 2000), pp. 94-115 (effectively binding one party to keep the peace or a restraining order).

[60] Marston, *The Dutch Courtesan*, ed. Wine, Act III, sc. iii, lines 46-50.

[61] *Everyman in His Humour*, Act III, sc. vii, lines 5, 7, 14, 20-21.

[62] *Everyman in His Humour*, Act I, scene v, lines 11-12.

[63] Haynes, *Social Relations in Jonson's Theater*, p. 94.

[64] *Everyman in His Humour*, Act I, sc. iv, lines 1-25.

[65] Massimo Montanari, *The Culture of Food*, trans. by Carl Ipsen (Oxford, 1996), pp. 78-82.

[66] *Everyman in His Humour*, Act I, sc. iv, lines 45-50; Act III, sc. v, lines 87-96; "beaten like a stock-fish" (Act II, sc. iv, line 56).

and triviality of these characters, Jonson's writing became tedious".[67] As with Cob, Jonson alluded to the habits of the characters to refine and extend their monikers: Fly's buzzing around and sipping the drinks available and Ferret's manner of the polecat.[68] In *Every Man in His Humour*, the device is used more sparingly in the occasional appearances of Cob and Jonson's satire is liberally directed at all sorts of characters, but some of the audience no doubt subscribed to and were confirmed in their distaste for the descendant of the great cob of yore.

"A slave that never drunk out of better than pisspot metal in his life"[69]

So Justice Clement berates the hapless Oliver Cob. Clement is obviously alluding here to pewter drinking cups, deriding their common use. Chamber pots were composed of pewter, as the five chamber pots valued at 1*s.* 8*d.* in the inventory of the personal estate of the widow, Helen Bickerton, of Newport in Shropshire, appraised in 1621, as previously enumerated in the inventory of William Bickerton, innholder of Newport, in 1620.[70] The composer of *The Owles Almanacke*, probably Thomas Middleton, includes prognostications for the fortunes of the various crafts and trades in London, including the pewterers, whom he introduced as follows:

> From great and gorgeous swilling, you pewter Johns, issueth a world of leaking, and I know every many will purchase a piss-pot to prevent the colic, or else he must spout out at the window, and that may prove perilous to the urine if the descent be violent.[71]

Incidentally, the exegesis of the pewterers concludes in defiance of Clement, maintaining that "a pewter pot of ale with a toast in his belly will quench a man's thirst better than a silver tankard with nothing in it", which reminds us to be cautious in accepting material possessions as an indicator of wealth and status, recollecting the aphorism "all fur coat and no knickers".[72] Clement was contrasting in a derogatory way common pewter with silver and gilt. Cocledemoy, with his accustomed wit, exclaims that if his wit has no edge, he must be reduced to "cack in my pewter".[73] In indignation, Mistress Tenterhook declared:

[67] Barton, *Ben Jonson*, pp. 272-5 (quotation at p. 273).

[68] Barton, *Ben Jonson*, p. 274.

[69] *Everyman in His Humour*, Act III, sc. vii, lines 54-55.

[70] Reminder: references to the probate material in Lichfield Record Office (LRO) is by surname, forename, parish, and date, so no footnote references are added to the details in the text.

[71] *The Owles Almanacke*, lines 1987-1992, in *Thomas Middleton: The Collected Works*, ed. Gary Taylor and John Lavagnino (Oxford, 2007), p. 1296.

[72] *The Owles Almanacke*, lines 2008-2010, in *Thomas Middleton. The Collected Works*, pp. 1296-1297; see also lines 1642-1645 (on goldsmiths), at p. 1292.

[73] Marston, *The Dutch Courtesan*, ed. Wine, p. 32 (Act II, scene i, line 200).

"Of [*sc.* Off] me you peuter-buttoned rascall".[74] In *The New Inn*, the maintainer of the beds and chamber pots is Jordan, "A comely vessell, and a necessary", undoubtedly of base metal, pewter.[75]

Conclusion to dramatic representation

We might wonder whether there is a genealogy of disparagement which extends from the sleights by Skelton's *Tunning of Elynour Rumming* through Stephenson's (?) *Gammer Gurton's Nedle* to Jonson. Jonson was perfectly aware of Skeltonic form and probably with the *Tunning of Elynour Rummyng*, for he consciously reproduced the Skeltonic metre in the masque, *The Fortunate Isles*. In these short rhyming couplets, Jonson specifically recites a stanza from the *Tunning*.[76] The general structure and disposition of *A Tale of a Tub* suggests an affinity with *Gammer Gurton's Nedle*. Marston was indeed familiar with *Gammer Gurton's Nedle*, to which he referred (perhaps ironically) in *Histrio-Mastix*.[77] Satire conforms to two standards: a mild critique and the invective of Juvenal. Skelton can only be received in the latter stringency. *Gammer Gurton's Nedle* invites nothing but ridicule of rural society, low, scatological comedy directed at perceived idiots. Whilst *Tale of a Tub* contains the same farce and burlesque as *GGN*, it is less excrutiating. Farce, burlesque and *comédie de situation* demand absurd and convoluted plots and episodes, but in intensity can leave a posionous legacy, especially when derision is involved. Even so, the impression is still conveyed of bumpkins and some were receptive to that sway.

Material circumstances of the poor

> Poverty and social exclusion are intimately related to economic inequality but are distinct concepts. The definition of poverty most commonly applied in economically advanced societies is exclusion from the life of the society due to lack of resources ...[78]

When Richard Barrett of Dorrington in the parish of Muckleston, died in 1615, his personal estate was appraised to a total value of £8 19*s.* 6*d.* Contributing to that assessment were several desperate debts which reflected the nature of his social networks. Hugh Hampton, it was assumed, was indebted to Barrett in £5, but the debt almost certainly written off because the debtor was very

[74] Thomas Dekker and John Webster, *Westward Hoe*, Act V, sc. iv, line 209 (*The Dramatic Works of Thomas Dekker*, ed. Fredson Bowers, (Cambridge, 1955), ii, p. 419).

[75] Barton, *Ben Jonson*, p. 274.

[76] Barton, *Ben Jonson*, p. 321; Jonson, "The Fortunate Isles and their Union", in John Nichols, *The Progresses, Processions, and Magnificent Festivities, of King James the First* (London, 1828), pp. 1020-21.

[77] H. Harvey Wood, ed., *The Plays of John Marston* (London, 1828), iii, p. 263.

[78] Brian Nolan and Ive Max, "Economic inequality, poverty, and social exclusion", in *The Oxford Handbook of Economic Inequality*, ed. Wiemer Salverda, Brian Nolan, and Timothy M. Smeeding (Oxford, 2009), p. 316.

poor and the debt long outstanding. The appraisers had little confidence in its redemption.

> Inprimis Hugh Hampton of Dorrington aboue sayd oweth to him v li beynge a Desperate Debt as wee Do Judge by reason that the Debt is olde, and the Debtor verye poore.

Another debtor, the testator's own son, was so encumbered that he was in receipt of parish assistance, so another £2 was irredeemable.

> Item John Barrett his owne sonne, whoe hath A blynde woman to his wyfe, and manye poore children releyved by the parishe, oweth to him xl s.

Such was the deceased's penury, that the appraisers were very specific in their evaluation of his apparel: "Item A fewe symple clothes v s." (for which, see further below). Only occasionally did appraisers resort to any sort of emotive language in the compilation of probate inventories. Although impecunious, Barrett was held, it seems, in some affection and esteem by the other residents, for the six appraisers appended their authentication of the inventory: "For better testymonye wherof we his lovinge neighboures have hereunder subscribed our names ..." It is thus not difficult to discover anecdotal evidence of the predicament of the poor in the diocese of Lichfield. For the material abjection of the poor, there is the example of John Balle, of Walsall, whose inventory total in 1587 amounted to merely 11*s.* 2*d.* His descent into a material abyss was recounted by his appraisers.

> John Balle was feane to put a way is wife because he was not able to keepe her and that while as shee was a way hee spent all that hee had in so much that he gaged the bolester under his head and then <he> sent for her againe and this stuffe shee hath goten this wile and he was served with a execution at the last and died in prison and all this good which they haue prased shee hath boroed of her money of her frendes to fetch it againe.

Down and out in Penkhull and Longsdon: estimating the economic margin

Perhaps one obvious method of assessing the economic margin of local societies is to analyze the proportion of the parish population in receipt of assistance from the collectors for the poor or the overseers of the poor. That solution only obtains after the institutional responses to the problem of the poor, however, and probably inconsistently before 1597. Nor can we resolve the conundrum of the migrant, itinerant poor, beggars. What we can perhaps assess, if somewhat circumspectly, is the proportions of local inhabitants who, although settled, were vulnerable to exogenous circumstances. To that end, analysis has been conducted of several thousand probate inventories in the diocese of Coventry

Table 6.1: The economically vulnerable in Lichfield diocese

Summa totalis	1533-1553	1554-1600	1601-39
Amount (£s)	% of inventories	% of inventories	% of inventories
<5	16	6	5
>5-10	25	12	9
>10-15	16	13	8
>15-20	13	11	9

and Lichfield, which comprised the whole of the counties of Staffordshire and Derbyshire, and large parts of those of Warwickshire and Shropshire.

We encounter, for example, the labourer in Atherstone, William Becke, whose personal estate amounted to a meagre £5 14*s.* 0*d.* in 1624, consisting of a little brass pot (1*s.* 6*d.*), two platters (1*s.*), his apparel (1*s.*) and debts of £4 owed to him. In Rolleston, the labourer, William Burten alias Burttone, possessed in 1625 personal estate valued at only £3 14*s.* 0*d.*, including his "maredge apparell" (4*s.*), brass comprising only one old pot and two old kettles (3*s.*), and pewter consisting of a single dish, a saucer, a spoon and a salt (10*d.*). The nailer of West Bromwich, John Birch, although owning more personal estate than these two, appraised at £13 17*s.* 0*d.*, yet had no brass or pewter, only iron and treen ware in 1625.

The susceptibility is here predicated on the definition of *bona notabilia* as £5 in the Probate and Mortuaries Act of 1529, below which level of personal estate inventories were not required to be appraised nor payment for probate exacted. This line of exemption may be accepted as a poverty line. With the relentless inflation from the 1540s, this poverty line must be regarded as too low and personal estate assessed between £5 and £9 adopted in its place. A complication to the periodicity, however, is not only the inflation from the 1540s, but also the enhancement and debasement of the coinage in the 1540s and the collapse of the currency in 1551. The first chronological section has thus been extended to 1553. Some attempt can be made to quantify the extent of the vulnerability of the poor in the diocese, as in Table 6.1, bearing in mind that the numbers will be an under-representation of the poorest in society, especially since an inventory was not required for deceased with personal estate below £5. What the percentages (to the nearest integer) represent is those with personal estate valued at less than £5 as a proportion of those for whom inventories were compiled. The absolute number of the poor with goods worth less than £5 as a percentage of the whole population will thus be even higher. The proportion with less than £5 will also decline in each cohort as inflation pushed up the value of assets in the late sixteenth century. We have, nonetheless, an indication of the plight of the poor in an economic abyss.

Although even by *c.*1600 inventories were compiled for only a proportion of deceased adults, the sample from the diocese of Coventry and Lichfield seems fairly representative of the distribution of individual wealth in local societies. The proportion of inventories which pertained to personal estate below £10 in-

timates a significant local population on the economic margin.[79] Adopting the robust satirical expression in the contemporary comedic drama, the material position of the poor can be examined through the inventories or personal estate in the following: apparel; household utensils; and "credit constraint". The first category is fairly straightforward: the valuation of clothing and change of clothing (as Hodge in *Gammar Gurton's Nedle*). The second element addresses the amount of pewter and brass, but also the extent to which the more successful marked themselves off through position or status goods (silver and gilt). The caveat here is that these position or status goods did not constitute a consumer revolution; the constituent goods were not novel, but traditional durables. "Credit constraint" concerns the resort to gages and pledges as, presumably, the ability to borrow became foreclosed.

Somatic stuff

> Item all his apparell whiche was but simple ...[80]

Hodge's defective apparel was exaggerated, but the clothing of the poor marked them out.

> Item three suites of apparell and one cloake and one payr of bootes iiij.li.

Such were the changes of clothing of the husbandman of Calcott, Richard Ballarde, in 1630. Roger Baker, of the parish of Worfield, left the world in 1624, his personal estate assessed at just £3 15*s.* 4*d.* He had, however, invested his savings in loans, since he was owed a "bond or bill obligatory" of £40 and two other debts amounting to £8. His vestments included a cloak valued at 13*s.* 4*d.*, three doublets (6*s.*), an equal number of jerkins (10*s.*), the same number of pairs of hose (6*s.*), two old felt hats (1*s.*), linens (6*s.*), and shoes and hose (1*s.*). The affluent yeoman, John Alcoke, had wearing apparel valued at £10, the yeoman Thomas Bloxich £6, the tanner William Billingsley £5, the yeoman John Bower £10, and the cooper William Brett ten marks (£6 13*s.* 4*d.*).[81] The clothing of the affluent yeoman, Crispin Cotterill, was deemed to be worth £10 at his death; another yeoman with personal estate of more than £500, had apparel worth £8.[82] An affluent Wiltshire tanner had expended £11 on his wearing apparel.[83] A successful Coventry carpenter (that is, builder), John Blunt, had apparel appraised at £7 in 1620. A narrow elite of yeomen and traders thus expended considerable amounts on clothing appropriate to their

[79] For comparison, Muldrew, *Economy of Obligation*, pp. 27-31.
[80] LRO B/C/11 George Browne, Swadlincote, 1611 (valued at 3*s.* 4*d.*).
[81] LRO B/C/11 John Alcoke, Hanbury (Fald), 1621, the elder, yeoman (total valuation £297 6*s.* 8*d.*); Thomas Bloxich, Aston (Erdington), 1638; William Billingsley, Birmingham, 1634; William Brett, Newcastle under Lyme, 1634; John Bower, Ashover, 1603.
[82] WSRO P1/B180, C115; also W135 another Wiltshire yeoman with apparel valued at £10 in 1630.
[83] WSRO P1/M38.

perceived status. The numbers of such men, however, was very limited, a small cadre, less than 1 percent of all the inventoried personnel. The difference was less in the items of clothing than in the quantity and quality. The highly successful saddler in Coventry, Thomas Brownrigg, accumulated by 1634 clothing valued at £21, comprising six suits of clothing, five gowns, and five cloaks. A husbandman of Perry Bar in Handsworth, William Bache, had in 1620 a best suit of apparel worth two marks (£1 6*s.* 8*d.*) and a second suit worth £1, both consisting of a doublet, jerkin, hose and hat. William Bourne of Derby was a moderately successful shoemaker; when he died in 1622 all his woollen garments were appraised at £3 13*s.* 4*d.* and his linens, bands, caps and shirts at 10*s.* A shop-owner in Devizes, described as gentleman, had a wardobe consisting of a gown, a cloak, a stuff doublet, a cassock, three pair of stockings, two pair of stuff hose, a satin doublet, a stuff jerkin and a muff.[84] Even a less affluent blacksmith might have a best suit of apparel and an older one with another coat, appraised at £2, with three shirts and six bands (6*s.*), and boots, shoes and stockings amounting to 5*s.*[85] The lowliest inhabitants, in contrast, did not acquire two complete changes of clothing. Exceptions occurred, so that Richard Champe of Amesbury in 1610/11 had accumulated "his best Apparrell being a pare of hose a Jerkin and a dublett wee esteeme worth xs.", a grey coat (3s. 4d.), "old Apparrell besides at iijs. vjd.", three canvas shirts, two caps, a kerchief, and eight bands (5*s.*), although his personal estate only amounted in total to just under £17.[86]

It remains difficult, however, to assess the general differences in clothing. The general problem is that inventories only occasionally describe apparel and not before the early seventeenth century for the non-elite. More frequently it is not identified and is often combined with money in the purse. Even when the inventories itemize the clothing, we cannot be certain that all items have been included. Some of the deceased had divested themselves of their clothing as *inter vivos* gifts, presumably towards the end of their lives: "Item his other waringe apparill he gaue away in his life time to those that did attend him".[87] Clothing, of whatever quality, featured as sentimental and symbolic legacies in wills, of course, such as the old doublet bequeathed by the husbandman, Robert Rudman to a friend and "a payre of my Worst breeches, and a Jerkin" to his kinsman and namesake, Robert Rudman.[88] The modal appraisal of apparel seems to be £1. A few labourers had clothing valued at £1, but there was a subset of men with very poor clothing.[89] In the early seventeenth century, 73 inventories contained clothing worth 10*s.*, eighteen 6*s.* 8*d.*, nineteen 5*s.*, six 3*s.* 4*d.*, all rounded amounts, and twenty-one other amounts below 10*s.*, a total of 137 at or below 10*s.* One poor husbandman, for example, possessed a

[84]WSRO P1/B265.

[85]LRO B/C/11 Henry Bickley, Tamworth, 1638 (inventory total £17 5*s.* 4*d.*).

[86]WSRO P1/C42.

[87]WSRO P1/H43.

[88]WSRO P1/R61.

[89]LRO B/C/11 Nicholas Barton, Sutton Coldfield, 1631, and George Barnickell, Thurlaston, 1632, both labourers whose clothing was valued at £1.

best jerkin, doublet, hose, two shirts, abd shoes, but worth together only 10s.[90] Undoubtedly, the numbers are an under-estimate because of the complications of compounded values for money in the purse and apparel. These valuations of clothing can be compared with prices of new vestments through the inventory of Ambrose Pontin, a tailor of Marlborough in 1623: his stock comprised twenty doublets valued at £5, twelve pair of brreches (£3), and six jerkins (17*s.*).[91]

Some glimpse of the apparel of the poorest is divulged by a few probate inventories. Francis Berry of Coventry, described as "Delaberer" (day labourer) in 1625, had estate extending to no more than £4 6*s.* 8*d.*, his apparel valued at 8*s.* 4*d.*, consisting of an old cloak, a jerkin, a doublet, but three pair of breeches. Quite startlingly, George Bromley of Whitmore, according to the appraisers of his personal estate in 1606 had no vestments of any value: "In primis his apparell being but one ould lether gerkin", which they valued at 2*d.* With his two little kettles and two pieces of pewter, his total estate amounted to just 15*s.* He was ascribed, however, the status of yeoman. Either he had fallen on very bad times, which seems likely, or he had transferred his estate *inter vivos*. The more detailed inventories are tabulated below (Table 6.2).

The expectation of the "middling sort" was for two suits of clothing: holiday and workplace. Besides working clothes and a coat, valued at the lower amount of 6*s.* 8*d.* in total, an inventory contained also a suit of clothes and a cloak worth £2, but additionally two hats, boots and shoes, three pair of stockings, five shirts, five caps and six (shirt) bands, together valued at 22*s.*[92] A black dyer had a best set of clothes, with his "stained clothes about the chamber" (his working clothing) appraised at only 6*s.* 8*d.*[93] More specifically, a husbandman's inventory itemised "Inprimus [sic] his wearing Aparell for Holly Dayes & workinge Dayes ij li. xs.", Sunday best and weekwear.[94] This additional set of fresh clothes was denied to the poorest.

There are more than such inventories without status but itemizing apparel; all exhibit even more paucity of clothing.

Credit constraint

When our old friend, Oliver Cob, becomes less respectful of Bobbadil, after their contretemps about tobacco, his desire for vengeance leads him to reveal how Bobbadil has abused the hospitality of Cob and Tib: "but being my guest, one, that I'll be sworn, my wife has lent him her smock off her back, while his shirt has been at washing; pawned her neckerchers for clean bands for him; sold almost all my platters to buy him tobacco; and he to turn monster of ingratitude, and strike his lawful host".[95] The recourse to pawns and gages was probably a quotidian event for the poor and marginalized in local society. Before the third decade of

[90] WSRO P1/T12.
[91] WSRO P1/P100.
[92] WSRO P1/C175.
[93] WSRO P1/W9.
[94] WSRO P1/W132.
[95] *Everyman in His Humour*, Act III, sc. vi, ll. 49-53.

Table 6.2: Vestments in inventories, 1613-39

Status	Coats	Cloaks	Shoes	Suits	Shirts	Breeches/Hose	Jerkins	Doublets
Servant		3		3				
Servant						3	1	1
Gentleman	2			2				
Labourer				1		1	1	1
Labourer		1				3	1	
Labourer	2	2	2		4	3		2
Glover		1	1			1		1
Cook					2	1	1	1
Glazier	1					3	2	1 (satin)
Hosier	1	2				2		2
Joiner		1	1			2 (1 leather)		2
Sawyer		1	2			2	1	1
Butcher		1				1	2	2
Corvaiser		2	1		3	3	2	2
Miller		1				2	2	1
Parchmentmaker		1	1		2	2	1	1
Salter	1	2				3		2
Blacksmith		2	2			3	2	2
Black dyer		2			1	1	2	2
Husbandman	1		1			2	2	1
Husbandman					3	3	2	2
Husbandman					2	1	2	1
Husbandman		1	2		3	3	2	3
Husbandman	2	2			3	1		1
Husbandman		1			2	1	1	1
Husbandman			1		2	2 (1 canvas)	1	
Yeoman		1	1		2	1	2	3
Yeoman	1		2		3	2	2	2
Weaver	1	2				4	1	2
Weaver		1			1	2	1	2
Tailor		1 (old)	1		1 (canvas)	2	3	2
Tailor		2	2	2				
Tailor		1			1	2	3	2
Turner	2						1	1
Shopkeeper	3 (russet)		2		3	3		3

the seventeenth century, the pervasive relationship of credit remained a social one, dependent on trust. Economic credit and social credit were combined.[96] Access to credit has been and still is, however, asymmetric: more difficult for those with marginal economic status. In our contemporary economic world, the barrier to credit for the poor is denominated credit constraint.[97] Where credit is obtainable, it is acquired on more stringent terms, sometimes unsustainable. In the case of the poorest early-modern debtors, collateral was demanded for the extension of even the smallest funds.

> Item John Burgis gave his word to pay for his sister Jane for a peare of Shites wich shee had paund to he[r] father vj s.[98]

The siblings' father, William, of Norton Wood, was himself on the margins of the local economy, his personal estate on his death in 1614 appraised at £21 5*s.* 0*d.* To extend a loan to his daughter, he had required a pawn of a pair of sheets, which her brother had promised to redeem. The debt had not been liquidated by William's death and was consequently, although slight, included in the inventory of his personal estate.

Pawns and gages in Lichfield and Salisbury inventories (deceased; date; inventory total; pawns/gages)

Thomas Benet, Wroxeter 1534 £6 2*s.* 8*d.* "Item A Syluyr spon' with Edward Shererres wyfe in gage for xvjd"

Adam Broghton, Shrewsbury St Chad, broadloom weaver 1534 £11 7*s.* 8*d.* 1534 in the shop: gages 39*s.* 6*d.*

William Blakeman, Bradley 1545 £18 19*s.* 9*d.* "Item my brother Rycherde blakeman othe to me vj s viij d & in plegg of that I have j panne a twyllshete a bagg & ij lyttyll peuther dysshes & yf he brynge hys money to have then thys his stofe"

1545 Hugh Boden, Stafford 1551 £41 8*s.* 3*d.* "Item pleges that were lede unto him" 12*s.* 8*d.*

John Balle, the elder, Shrewsbury, glover 1576 £25 5*s.* 6*d.* 4 silver spoons "lyeing in pawne for xxs"

Margery Allen 1577 £1 7*s.* 4*d.* "Pawnes which I have" amounted to £1 1*s.* 4*d.* including a silver salt, flax sheets, a coverlet, two sheets and a voider, including from three other women, one of whom was the brushmaker's wife

Humphrey Brundlye, Leek, labourer 1578 £9 11*s.* 0*d.* "Item I haue one great panne in the Custody of John Cowall And another in the custodie of William Fyney of Whitelye"

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[96] Craig Muldrew, *The Economy of Obligation: The Culture of Credit and Social Relations in Early Modern England* (Basingstoke, 1998); "Similarly, to have credit in a community meant that you could be trusted to pay back your debts" (p. 3); "social ethic of credit as trust". (p. 4).

[97] Samuel Bowles, *The New Economics of Inequality and Redistribution* (Cambridge, 2012), pp. 39-42.

[98] LRO B/C/11 William Burgis, Norton in the Moors, 1614.

Richard Bright, vicar of Norton (Derbys) 1580 £47 5*s.* 6*d.* John Gyll "oweth me xxjs upon the pawne of iij ould englisse Crownes and one frenche crowne"; Charles Bennett's wife "xvs [debt in] for whiche I haue a brasse panne in pawne"

Hugh apLewis, baker 1584 £14 0*s.* 10*d.* "Pawnes of diuers persons ..." a table with a frame, a form, two boards, a trough, certain clothes valued at 2*s.* 8*d.* but pawned for 45*s.*, other pawns 6*s.* 2*d.*

Thomas Burghall, Whitchurch, innholder 1585 £11 15*s.* 8*d.* "Item one sylver salt now at pawne for xxs being in valew worthe xxxs"; "Item Stable clothe at pawne for viijs worth in valew xs"

Ellis Allene, Derby 1586 £50 3*s.* 4*d.* "Item Mr Bolland received of me xlvs for on salte and allso xvjs for 4 spoones which he laide to gage to me, he had allso ten shillinges after the same fower spoones ..."

William Burne, Derby St Peter, cordwainer 1589 £225 2*s.* 4*d.* "certayne pawnes" in his personal estate

Helen Bostocke, Childs Ercall, widow 1590 William Turner owed her 5*s.* "for which vs I have a pott in pawne"

John Bearsley *alias* Beesley, Keele 1592 £8 7*s.* 2*d.* "Item to John Peake xvijs viijd for the which he hath a panne of myne to gage to be quitte out when it shall please my executore"

Richard Allen, Coventry, corvaiser 1598 £26 16*s.* 2*d.* Gages in his house valued at 12*s.*

John Barnes, Trentham, yeoman 1609 £51 16*s.* 4*d.* "'Item Harry Blower hath borowed on a cloake 40s but if he pay within any reasonable tyme, he shall have his cloake againe."

Robert Allen, Wirksworth, husbandman 1617 £33 18*s.* 4*d.* pawns laid out: brass pot 8*d.*, coverlet 3*s.* 4*d.*, iron 'maule' 2*s.*

Ralph Bowne, Matlock, "Filler" 1617 £58 10*s.* 10*d.* "Item one other pott beinge a pledge" 8*s.*; "Item one great spyt a pledge" 3*s.*

William Whiting, Abingdon, cordwainer 1620 "Item in pawnes xxijs. viijd."[99]

John Burgis, Norton in the Moors 1624 £21 5*s.* 0*d.* "Item John Burgis gave his word to pay for his sister Jane for a peare of Shites wich shee had paund to he[r] father [Wm] vjs."

Agnes Spire, Steeple Ashton, widow 1631/2 £4 6*s.* 11*d.* "Item iij littell seluer sponnes at paune for iijs. iiijd."[100]

Those with few assets – locally quite visible in their poverty – are credit-constrained, because of risk and uncertainty.[101] Either they are discouraged or need to provide collateral, even unto their possessions for material subsistence: "Item one featherbedd one bolster a paire of sheetes & a gowne pawned to the deceased for iij li. Item one Cloake pawned to the deceased for xxs."[102] Since their personal estate is limited, they are reduced to extending gages and pledges

[99] WSRO P1/W87.
[100] WSRO P1/S207.
[101] H. Harvey Wood, *The Plays of John Marston III* (London, 1939), p. 299 ("What will you have this cloke to pawne, what thinke you it's worth?")
[102] WSRO P1/F77.

of their necessities, those items vital to their existence: their brass and pewter utensils, which are necessary for their very subsistence. Skelton itemized these articles and they are enumerated as gages and pledges in probate inventories.

Symbolic silver

As denty and nice as an halpeny worthe of sylver spoons[103]

In response to the attempt by two gallants to vex him for their wager, the patient draper, Candido, invites the two to drink to the sale of the pennyworth of lawn cut from the middle of his roll. The servant, George, produces Candido's silver and gilt beaker.[104] The beaker is a symbol of Candido's success in his trade. The successful "middling sort" intended to demarcate their status through their material goods, especially silver and gilt.

When his inventory was compiled in 1620, the Coventry carpenter (presumably a builder), John Blunt, had personal estate valued at £302 15*s.* 2*d.*, amongst which were itemised pewter valued at £5 16*s.* 0*d.*, consisting of 33 large platters, 12 dishes, seven fruit dishes, 30 plate trenchers, six Cardinal hat porringers, nine other porringers, three pie plates, eight small saucers, 12 quart pots, six pint pots, a beaker, and unquantified salts and spoons. As importantly, the pewter was located in the street parlour, devoted to dining (for which see below). Even more significantly, in his chamber over the parlour, privy to himself, were itemized a gilt salt with a cover, a small white (silver) bowl, six silver and two gilt spoons, collectively valued at £7 13*s.* 4*d.*

The differentiation through silver was already evident by the early sixteenth century. John Blakenall, of Sheldon, had four silver spoons valued at 5*s.* 4*d.* at his death in 1533. In the following year, the inventory of Ralph Bostock of Hodnet recorded ten silver spoons appraised at 26*s.* 8*d.*, as well as a silver salt of the same value. In the same year, Richard Bylyngesley of Worfield had six silver spoons assessed at 15*s*, and a year later Thomas Buswyll of Rugby five such spoons for 10*s.*[105] Thomas Benet of Wroxeter had raised cash by pawning a silver spoon: "Item A syluyr spon' with Edward Shererres wyfe in gage for xvjd".[106]

In the generation between 1533 and 1553 inclusive, fifteen percent of the Lichfield inventories included silver spoons. The mean number of spoons in these inventories numbered half a dozen, but ranged from a single silver spoon to two dozen. The mean valuation of inventories containing spoons amounted to £36. Whilst some of the owners belonged to the urban elite, most inhabited rural parishes. Although the inventories and wills only occasionally specify occupations, the possessors seem to have been mainly engaged in agrarian activity.

[103] *Jacke Jugeler*, line 218, in *Four Tudor Comedies*, ed. with an introduction by William Tydeman (London, 1984), p. 61 – Careawaye referring to his mistress, Dame Boungrace.
[104] Thomas Dekker, *The Honest Whore Parts One and Two*, scene v.
[105] LRO B/C/11 John Blakenall, Sheldon, 1533; Ralph Bostock, Hodnet, 1534; Richard Bylyngesley, Worfield, 1534; Thomas Buswyll, Rugby, 1535.
[106] LRO B/C/11 Thomas Benet, Wroxeter, 1534.

On his death in 1539, John Bramley, husbandman of Anstey, had accumulated personal estate exceeding £87, amongst which he had acquired two dozen silver spoons and a little silver salt.

A difference existed between urban and rural silver possessions, however, for successful urban inhabitants invested more heavily in silver plate, extending beyond silver spoons. The successful cordwainer of Newport in Shropshire, John Bowres, had at his death in 1550 two silver goblets, a silver salt, a silver chalice and two silver mazers, and eighteen silver spoons. A Coventry draper, Thomas Bordon *alias* Burdon, deceased in 1544 owned plate appraised at £21 16*s.* 8*d.* The burgess and alderman of Shrewsbury, Richard Bryckedale, possessed in 1543 two flat silver cups of 14 ounces, a little silver salt parcel gilt, and a dozen silver spoons.

Between 1554 and 1600 inclusive, 10.5 percent of the inventories contained silver spoons, the owners' occupation consisting mainly of yeomen and husbandmen. In this select number of inventories, the mean number of silver spoons was half a dozen, but a fifth of the owners possessed only one or two silver spoons. The mean value of the personal estate of possessors of silver spoons was £68, although about a half had estate worth less than £50. Just over 1 percent of the inventories included other silver status goods, most usually a silver salt or drinking vessel (bowl, cup, goblet or mazer). Such items were reserved to the upper "middling" sort.

The pattern is confirmed in the inventories between 1601 and 1639 inclusive, with just over 9 percent of the inventories containing silver spoons. The mean number of spoons was five and a half and the median four, although a quarter enumerated only one or two spoons. The mean value of the inventories with silver spoons comprised £148 and the median £101. By and large, the numbers suggest that the ownership of silver spoons correlated with "middling" parish status, in both rural and urban contexts.

In the diocese of Salisbury, just over 120 inventories contained plate and/or silver spoons, about 5 percent. Of those with silver items, 30 percent had total valuations less than £50; 19 percent more than £50 to £100; 24 percent more than £100 to £200; 16 percent more than £200 to £500; and 8 percent more than £500. The predominant owners, however, were constituted of the clergy (28), from curates to very affluent higher clergy. The nearest category consisted of widows (25), whose social status is concealed. Yeomen (19) and husbandmen (6) combined equalled the number of widows, who might have derived from the same social background. The remainder, excluding the eight of gentle status, belonged to craft and trade occupations: barbers, bricklayer, butcher, glover, innholders, leatherdresser, tailors, tanners, and woollen draper - all economically successful. The anomalies were perhaps two singlewomen and two labourers, the latter accumulating personal estate valued at £43 and £69, each with four silver spoons. Amongst the yeomen and husbandmen, almost a half had personal estate extending beyond £100. If, however, we concentrate on silver vessles, salts and drinking artifacts, the number of owners declines to 62, dominated again by clergy (22), widows (ten), and gentle status (eight), although eight yeomen possessed salts and/or silver drinking vessels, six of whom had personal

estate exceeding £100..

Some caveats obtained. The possession of plate did not, of course, signify exemption from troubled times. A bond for £11 7*s.* 0*d.* was entered into by Mulligrub and Burnish on a cup parcel-gilt of 32 ounces.[107] Occasionally, silver spoons were gaged or pawned. Roger Boulton, of Longton in Stoke on Trent, thus in his will in 1605 returned silver spoons which had been pawned to him: "Item I giue to my brother Rychard Heathe ij Syluer Spoones I had of his wyffe". Silver spoons were evidently inherited and were no doubt acquired for that purpose: as symbolic legacies to children, quasi-heirlooms. Even this circumstance, however, marked off the owners and their children. Some spoons were similarly received by widows with limited means as part of their dower. Between 1533 and 1553, several poorer widows had odd silver spoons amongst personal estate valued between £3 and £17. A more specific example is Ann Brownbyll, widow of Netley in Stapleton, who in 1597, had an interest in a third part of a silver spoon appraised at 9d., and so probably an old-fashioned item.

The possession of the silver spoons nonetheless reflected their position. Some silver items, often not plate, were acquired for personal satisfaction and enjoyment, often associated with female recreation: silver pins and needles. The motives for acquisition of silver spoons were thus intimately personal as well as an element of social emulation. These two stimuli are inextricable, however, because personal satisfaction presented the owner to him- or herself as different. What is more certain is that expenditure on silver spoons did not involve investment. The amount invested in spoons was minimal, even though the asset price increased with inflation – from about 2*s.* to about 6*s.* over a hundred years. That asset price pertained only to new items, however, for spoons depreciated in value with changes in fashion, an example being "one olde litle silver spone" appraised at only 2*s.* in the inventory of John Bromall, a yeoman of Kingsbury, in 1625, a value no higher than the asset almost a century earlier. In 1614, Margery Becke, widow of Austrey, with limited estate of £12 14*s.* 4*d.*, possessed two "older" silver spoons, with a combined value of 5*s.* The single silver spoon of Elizabeth Bromwich of Handsworth, another widow, in 1602, was worth merely 1*s.* 4*d.*

Larger items of plate, such as mazers or bowls and salts involved a larger expenditure, but still not sufficient to represent a serious investment. They remained a hedge against inflation, but the amount invested was minimal in terms of the overall personal estate. The acquisition of plate represented a small diversion of capital into status goods. Silver spoons were a refraction of civility to the outside world and as importantly to the owner, a self-reflection and self-definition.

Household utensils

When Cob was deprecated for never having drunk out of better than piss-pot metal, the imputations were not only that he had not the benefit of silver cups,

[107] Marston, *The Dutch Courtesan*, ed. Wine, p. 61 (Act III, scene ii, line 3).

but that the pewter was of the worst kind. In the inventory of Thomas Brownrigg, a wealthy sadler, the principal pewter was distinguished from "More in coarse pewter as Chamber pottes".[108] Where Baudrillard goes astray is when he places the emphasis on function in pre-industrial goods.[109] Although the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries were not distinguished by the consumer goods crowding onto the market from the late seventeenth century, function was not the sole or perhaps even the principal determinant. Even in the century before 1640, use value was not a sole criterion. Quantity and quality differentiated ability to consume. Treen and tin were being replaced by pewter, brass and silver. Indeed, if not in the full panoply of the decades after 1660, there already existed "a system of differences which is, properly speaking, the cultural system itself".[110] Whilst pewter implements became the standard in most households, their complement diverged widely between households. Some households still depended on old-fashioned materials, indeed, so that treen persisted rather than pewter vessels. Occasionally tin spoons rather than pewter appeared in inventories in both dioceses.

Some, perhaps elderly, yeoman adhered to frugality rather than exhibiting their status. When the yeoman of Monks Kirby, James Blake, died in 1574, his inventory valuation surpassed £54, but he relied still on a dozen tin spoons. Perhaps reflecting even greater parsimony, another yeoman, Richard Bentley of Shirley, despite his personal estate of over £252 in 1574, retained 'xviij Tinn spoones' appraised at 1*d.* each. Neither possessed any silver spoons or plate. Both seem redolent of the "honest Hertfordshire yeoman", Old Carter, relentlessly parsimonious and refusing to emulate his social superior, the gentleman, Old Thorney.[111]

Differentiation existed, nonetheless, in the complement of pewter and brass in more affluent and poorer households. Such distinction is evident during the early sixteenth century. John Bowres, mentioned above with his silver plate, was also the possessor of a garnish of pewter vessel considered to be worth two marks.[112] John Bramley of Anstey, an extremely wealthy husbandman in 1539 with personal estate in excess of £87, similarly owned "a garneych of pewter vessel", appraised at one mark. A garnish of pewter distinguished the richer rural inhabitants by comparison with their poorer neighbours, like John Blakewey of Upton Magna in 1538 with his "viij pewter dyshys iiij of them smalle". A similar comparison can be made between John Barfoth, husbandman of Fillongley in 1551, with his pewter consisting of sixteen platters, thirteen dishes, eight saucers, six potingers and five salt cellars, and poor John Buckenall of Checkley in 1534 with just six pieces of old pewter. Two pewter dishes

[108] LRO B/C/11 Thomas Brownrigg, Coventry, 1634. The best chamber pots were probably valued at about 10*d.* each, as the dozen provided for his customers by a Coventry innholder in 1611 (LRO B/C/11 Michael Band, Coventry, 1611) and the ordinary at 6*d.* (John Blakemore, Astall, 1625).

[109] Baudrillard, *System of Objects*, p. 138, n. 1.

[110] Baudrillard, *System of Objects*, p. 140.

[111] William Rowley, Thomas Dekker, John Ford, *The Witch of Edmonton*, ed. Peter Corbin and Douglas Sedge (Manchester, 1999), Act 1, sc. ii, lines 3-19 (pp. 38-9).

[112] LRO B/C/11 John Bowres, Newport, 1550.

worth 1*s.* 4*d.* apparently constituted the only pewter possessed by John Boles of Hodnet in 1584. The pewter owned by Ann Bendowe of Harley in 1591 was apparently worth only 4*d.* Another singlewoman, Emma Butler of North Wingfield, had in 1591 a similar paucity of pewter: "Item ij litle thine pewter dishes vjd". Such impoverishment was not limited to poor women, for John Brunte (Alstonefield, 1600) had only three old pewter dishes worth 9*d.* Although the husbandman, Hugh Buxton (Carsington, 1599), had a little more personal estate, his pewter was in poor condition: four little old pewter dishes and a salt worth 2*s.* 6*d.*; and his brass (kitchenware) was decrepit, comprising a little old brass pot (4*s.*), another broken pot (1*s.* 6*d.*), a little old kettle (1*s.* 4*d.*), and a broken skillet (2*d.*). We can replicate these possessors of paltry pewter to excess. Perhaps a few more examples will suffice. Christopher Bunting of Heanor (Codnor, 1571) owned only six pieces of pewter valued at 1*s.* 8*d.* The labourer, William Bourges (Nuneaton, 1607), had but a single pewter dish and Ralph Birch of Winster (1613) three worth 1*s.* 2*d.*

The potential extent of pewter utensils in the household is exemplified by the rural blacksmith, John Byssell of Sheldon, who in 1630 possessed buttery pewter with a total value of 50*s.*, comprising fifteen pieces of great pewter, a voider, seven pieces of the next sort, two basins, two fruit dishes, eight saucers, a pit plate, a basin, a spout pot, twelve porringers, a cup, two double salts with covers, two single salts, twenty spoons, three chamber pots, a pint pot, and an aquavite bottle. In the same year, the labourer David Blakemor (Newport, 1630) owned only three pieces of pewter worth 1*s.* 6*d.* The full panoply of pewter expanded in the early sixteenth century. Pewter vessels comprised dishes and doublers of varying size and quality, platters and plates, voiders, counterfeit dishes, saucers, potingers and porringers, and the accompanying salts and spoons. Those dining accoutrements were complemented by other vessels, ornate and functional implements, fruit dishes, cups, bowls, flower pots, basins and chamber pots. In smaller houses, the pewter was accommodated in the hall, but in larger houses dispersed in the hall and buttery and occasionally the parlour. The scythegrinder of Birmingham, Richard Band (1589), organized his pewter in the hall and buttery, seven dishes, four saucers and three tin salts in the hall, and twenty dishes, four saucers, six counterfeit dishes and four tin salts in the buttery.

The number of pewter items is not consistently described in the inventories. Most often there is only a simple valuation, other times the weight is calculated, and often the pewter and brass are lumped together in a single valuation. The pewter of John Brelforth (North Wingfield, 1600), for example, was estimated at 50 lbs at 6*d.* per pound. The sadler, Roger Brounrige, had acquired 63 lbs of pewter valued at 5*d.* per lb and his successor, Thomas, sadler, 216 lbs valued at £10.[113] The problem of converting weight into items is illustrated by the 44 lbs of pewter of Christopher Blydworth which attracted a value of 1*s.* per lb., so presumably greater vessels only, and the 62 lbs of John Billingsley at 9*d.*

[113] LRO B/C/11 Roger Brounrige, Coventry, 1605; Thomas Brounrige, Coventry, 1634; Mistress Jacomea Brounrige, Coventry, 1639.

per lb.[114] The 96 lbs in the household of a Birmingham yeoman in 1625 were valued at only 48*s*.[115] There is no way to convert weights of pewter into the number of items. It might be possible to extrapolate from values for pewter a number of items, but with difficulty, because of the variability of quality and depreciation. Pewter vessels consisted of both greater and lesser items, so any conversion would be fraught. The asset price of greater items rose with inflation from under 1*s*. per item to more than 1*s*. Occasionally, moreover, it is revealed that some of the pewter is higher-value London pewter, as the 24 lbs of London pewter of the gentle Benyons of Ash in Whitchurch.[116]

The amount of pewter was influenced also, of course, by household size. Smaller households – singletons, say – required less household equipment. It is possible too that when the household size contracted, some utensils might have been transferred to offspring in their period of household formation. On the other hand, pewter vessels offered an opportunity for display at relatively low cost, through the number of items, the type of item (including, for example, flower pots and drinking vessels), and the purchase of more fashionable items. The widow, Catherine Bilby, thus owned eleven doublers "of a newer sorte", seven "of an oulder sorte", six old saucers, four poringers, six old salts, and "one fashionable sault", but "all the old puter" of John Blidworth amounted to only 6*s*. 8*d*.[117] The number of pewter items is thus only an ambiguous surrogate indicator of relative poverty.

The following figures concern the number of pewter items in inventories in the three cohorts: 1533-1553; 1554-1600; and 1601-1640. Spoons, chamber pots and candlesticks are excluded. For each cohort, the numbers of inventories containing descriptions of pewter are in the hundreds and in the final cohort (1601-1639) almost eight hundred. Between 1533 and 1553 inclusive, the mean number of pewter items per household was twenty-five, excluding spoons, but including salts. About a third of these households, however, possessed fewer than ten pieces. At the very bottom, a few inventories contained only two pieces of pewter. From 1554 to 1600 inclusive, 18 percent of inventories either described the pewter or gave a number for the pieces of pewter. The mean number of pewter items was 20, excluding spoons, but 28 percent of these inventories enumerated ten or fewer pewter items. About a third of all inventories between 1601 and 1639 inclusive itemize the pewter, with a mean of nineteen pieces, but a median of fourteen. Over a third (35 percent), however, enumerated ten or fewer pewter vessels and, indeed, thirteen percent five or fewer.

The potential for disparagement or condescension existed, if sometimes even misplaced. Some appraisers in Kirk Ireton in the late sixteenth century seem to have been patronising. In the inventory of Henry Blackwall in 1590, they described "a litle brasse & a litle pewter", but the valuation amounted to 30*s*. Henry was, indeed, a husbandman, with personal estate adjudged by them to

[114] LRO B/C/11 Christopher Blydworth, Derby, 1638; John Billingsley, Coventry, 1634.
[115] LRO B/C/11 Thomas Braddock, Birmingham, 1625.
[116] LRO B/C/11 George Benyon, Whitchurch, 1611; Margaret Benyon, Whitchurch, 1614.
[117] LRO B/C/11 Catherine Bilby, Staveley, 1621; John Blidworth, Duffield, 1616, the elder, yeoman.

be worth almost £50. In the same year, they attributed to Margaret Brockett "a litle old brasse & pewter", but its value they estimated at 12*s.* Margaret was the widow of Edward, a cottager who had died in 1588. His appraisers had inscribed: "Inprimis his apparell which is verie course vs." The estimated value reflects its low quantity and quality, but his status may have influenced their description. The local appraisers also misjudged the clothing of the husbandman, Blackwall, insisting: "Inprimis his apparell which is verie simple", imputing basic, but which was valued at a mark, so not decrepit. The appraisers in Horton in 1639 recited the possessions of Thomas Baylie as: "Item a little ould pewter vs." and "Item a little ould brase xxs." The amounts were not insubstantial, but the appraisers may have been influenced by the mediocrity of his total estate. When the appraisers enumerated the pewter and brass of Roger Bodington (Foleshill, 1624), comprising just two small pieces of pewter, a small pot, and a kettle, they added "& other implements belonginge to a poore house". The contents of the house of the poor widow of Sunning, Berkshire, Alice Curtis, were consistently described in demeaning terms: "iij payer of ouerworne canvas sheetes", "a coursse canvas bedcase", "two ould couerleds & blanketes", "two ould bedstedes", "one ould presse for clothes".[118] Another deceased widow, Elizabeth Posten, in the same parish received similar derogatory comments about her possessions, although her personal estate surpassed £34. The appraisers employed the adjective 'ould' 45 times in her short inventory. Of her two coverlets they considered "one is a very sory oulde one".[119] Every item in the inventory of a Devizes haberdasher was described as old, his possessions amounting to no more than £4 10*s.* 6*d.*[120] The appraisers of the inventory of Thomas Sherwood also deployed "ould" 23 times and "very(e) ould" five.[121] It might be suspected that "old" was tantamount to very poor condition, not just longevious: "Item one good bowlster and one old bowlster".[122]

Conclusion

Whilst economic inequality was considerable by the early sixteenth century, economic differentiation became exaggerated during the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, both between and within social groups. Social and cultural tensions were attendant. Material circumstances differed widely. Some of the "middling" sort attempted to distance themselves from the most indigent. A climate was created in which disdain for the poorest became acceptable. Drama assisted this disparagement in the works of some authors. Although these writers directed their satire at the whole world, their depiction of the lowest social levels as the rudest and most ignorant, the continuation of the comedic clown, debased the climate. Paradoxically, the development of "civility" or "civil cul-

[118] WSRO P1/C62.
[119] WSRO P1/P24.
[120] WSRO P1/B9.
[121] WSRO P1/S116.
[122] WSRO P1/R71.

ture" might have exacerbated the derogation of the poorest. This sort of Renaissance civility, even in its English context, might have involved no more than civil relationships within the "middling sort" and between those of similar status. It need not have obviated less civil reponses to those considered lowlier.[123] Categorizing "inferiors" tends to stereotyping, through the focus on a particular perceived attribute, derogating that feature, and referring thence demeaningly to a homogeneous lump.[124] Imputing inferiority grasped at the assumed worst characteristics in a comparative way, especially material circumstances. The dissemination of this stereotyping was perpetrated through the usual private social processes of personal contact, but now also through the public medium of drama, as well as print. Conversely, it remained difficult to counteract this disrespect by one social group towards another. "Processes of cultural exclusion consist of strategies that limit opportunities for articulating class-specific experiences of injustice by systematically withholding the appropriate linguistic and symbolic means for their expression".[125]

[123] For early-modern civility, *Civil Histories: Essays Presented to Sir Keith Thomas*, ed. Peter Burke, Brian Harrison, and Paul Slack (Oxford, 2000); for an analogy for my argument, John Gillingham, "1066 and the introduction of chivalry into England", in *Law and Government in Medieval England and Normandy: Essays in Honour of Sir James Holt*, ed. George Garnett and John Hudson (Cambridge, 1994), pp. 31-55).

[124] Michael Pickering, *Stereotyping: The Politics of Representation* (Basingstoke, 2001); the process, and interpretations of the differentiation, are more nuanced, of course, as is discussed expansively by Pickering at pp. 22-46.

[125] Axel Honneth, *Disrespect: The Normative Foundations of Critical Theory* (Cambridge, 2007), p. 88.

Chapter 7

Commensality and exclusion

> Better is a dry morsel, and quietness therewith, than an house full of sacrifices with strife.[1]
>
> Food-sharing is so prevalent that it has been taken for granted in many studies of food-ways. The exception is anthropology, where food-sharing has been studied as the social cement holding groups together.[2]

Introduction

Several historians have thus extrapolated from some of these anthropological interpretations to the context of commensality – shared meals – as historical events.[3] Mostly, such exegesis has emphasized the functionalist cohesion of solidarity and incorporation.[4] The contemporary rhetoric associated with

[1] Proverbs 17:1. I am inordinately grateful to the staff of Nottinghamshire Archives for their advice, courtesy and friendliness.

[2] Carole Counihan and Penny Van Esterik, introduction to the section "Commensality and Fasting. Giving, Receiving and Refusing Food", in *Food and Culture: A Reader*, ed. Counihan and Van Esterik (London, 1997), 92.

[3] First, it should be specified that the concern here is with "exceptional commensality", which occurs intermittently, often at prescribed intervals, not with "everyday commensality": Claude Grignon, "Commensality and social morphology: an essay of typology", in *Food, Drink and Identity: Cooking, Eating and Drinking in Europe Since the Middle Ages*, ed. Peter Scholliers (Oxford, 2001), p. 27. Gervase Rosser, "Going to the fraternity feast: commensality and social relations in later medieval England", *Journal of British Studies* 33 (1994), pp. 430-46; Charles Phythian-Adams, "Ceremony and the citizen: the communal year at Coventry 1450-1550", repr. in *The Early Modern Town: A Reader*, ed. Peter Clark (Longman, 1976), pp. 109-12 (originally published in *Crisis and Order in English Towns 1500-1700*, ed. Peter Clark and Paul Slack (London, 1972), pp. 57-85). Note here that Phythian-Adams does recognize the separation of gender. Phythian-Adams, *Desolation of a City: Coventry and the Urban Crisis of the Late Middle Ages* (Cambridge, 1979), pp. 263-5.

[4] For a markedly different analysis, Gillian Feely-Harnik, *The Lord's Table: The Meaning of Food in Early Judaism and Christianity* (Washington, D.C., 1981), pp. 85-106, on divergent intentions of "commensalism".

these formal meals portrayed them as promoting communal sentiments, as preempting division and strife, bringing people together as a harmonious process.[5] Analysis of the formal occasions has attempted to get behind the rhetoric to the practice and experience, and has, in most cases, confirmed that the rhetoric reflected the reality. Some historians have perspicaciously – implicitly or explicitly – indicated that the solidarity and cohesion pertains only to the in-group. The emphasis has, nonetheless, been placed on internal solidarity and reintegration of the body politic. In concentrating on reintegration and harmony, the degree of hierarchy has been elided or accepted as merely an integral part of formal associations. It is perhaps important to consider, however, that: "Consuming food and drinks together may no doubt activate and tighten internal solidarity; but it happens because commensality first allows the limits of the group to be redrawn, its internal hierarchies to be restored and if necessary to be redefined".[6] Since this exceptional commensality occurs at times of stress, rather than in quotidian "unstressed" time, order is at a premium and rhetoric deployed to ensure, propagate, or simulate harmony, or conceal disharmony.[7] Whilst the process of reintegration is enacted by the group representing itself to itself, this refraction and reflection takes place in private, separated from the interference of the external world, excluding dissent (which is why the extract from *The Mayor of Casterbridge* below has such resonance). It seems equally clear, however, that foodstuffs and foodways may contribute to the formation of cultural distinctions.[8] So the intention here is to revisit formal communal meals to attempt to elucidate their different meanings in different situations and to different constituents. The gender-specific composition of these formal events has been highlighted, so it is not reconsidered here. Suffice to say that it was a major exclusionary division. By and large, however, whilst emphasizing the status hierarchy in commensality and feasting, historians have returned to the social obligations and bonds which were reinforced on those occasions.[9] The major obstacle is uncovering incidences of discord, dissent or conflict with the attendant issue of how we treat such singular evidence when it is discovered. We can either assume that its irregularity confirms the norm of solidarity and harmony or we can interpolate that, because our sources are produced and probably controlled by the dominant, then such recording of discordant voices has a heightened significance.[10] An undoubted problem here is that most civic commensality "is a result and manifestation of a pre-existing social group".[11]

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[5]See, however, Edward Muir, *Ritual in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge, 1997), pp. 127-32, for the opposing tendency of meals to be consumed in private and with mannerism.

[6]Grignon, "Commensality and social morphology", p. 24.

[7]Grignon, "Commensality and social morphology", p. 28.

[8]Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*, trans. by Richard Nice (London, 1984), p. 79.

[9]For a recent summary, Ilana Ben-Amos, *The Culture of Giving: Informal Support and Gift-exchange in Early Modern England* (Cambridge, 2008), pp. 169-80, which recites much of the previous literature by historians.

[10]Ethan Shagan, *The Rule of Moderation: Violence, Religion and the Politics of Restraint in Early Modern England* (Cambridge, 2011), p. 20.

[11]Grignon, "Commensality and social morphology", p. 24.

Formal civic institutions did not, however, have the same cohesion as voluntary associations – guilds, clubs and societies. Although dignitaries and officers were elected (by limited constituencies), selected or co-opted, there was no guarantee of homology and consensus. What we do not encounter in these quasi-political institutions, nonetheless, is the equivalent of the potlatch, competitive and gargantuan attempts to overwhelm in which "hospitality was a primary tool of politics", a recourse usually associated with "great men".[12] There have been suggestions of a substantial transformation of the import of these occasions in the civic context. Whilst the panoply of ritual events in the late-medieval borough enhanced cohesion throughout the whole of the borough community, after the Reformation that symbolic unification of the corporate body was hollowed out, leaving only civic ceremony as a remnant.[13] By the late seventeenth century, such integrative praxis had disappeared completely.[14] Whilst we have the notionally structural-functional interpretation of the ritual occasion as performing the reintegration of community, the argument is not ahistorical, but recognizes broad change: a transition from the corporate body of the late middle ages to civic ceremony in the late sixteenth century and to particular and special associations by the late seventeenth century.[15]

Fictive feasting

It may seem odd then to commence with a long extract from *The Mayor of Casterbridge*, a fictional account of a communal meal for the corporation of the borough of Casterbridge (Dorchester).[16] The justification will follow the

[12]Jack Goody, *Cooking, Cuisine and Class: A Study in Comparative Sociology* (Cambridge, 1982), p. 141. For the classic account of the potlatch, Marcel Mauss, *The Gift: Forms and Functions of Exchange in Archaic Societies*, trans. I. Cunnison (New York, 1967); see also Lewis Hyde, *The Gift: How the Creative Spirit Transforms the World* (Edinburgh, 2006 edn), p. 9; Paul Hegarty, *Georges Bataille: Core Cultural Theorist* (London, 2000), p. 38.

[13]Mervyn James, "Ritual, drama and the social body in the late medieval English town", repr. in his *Society, Politics and Culture: Studies in Early Modern England* (Cambridge, 1986), pp. 16-47; Phythian-Adams, "Ceremony and the citizen". For "urban routine" and "the obsession with order", Christopher R. Friedrichs, *The Early Modern City 1450-1750* (Harlow, 1995), pp. 245-56.

[14]Vanessa Harding, "Reformation and culture", in *The Cambridge Urban History of Britain Volume II 1540-1840*, ed. Peter Clark (Cambridge, 2000), p. 286 ("Inauguration rituals"). For a wider consideration of early-modern associations, Jonathan Barry, "Bourgeois collectivism? Urban association and the middling sort", in *The Middling Sort of People: Culture, Society and Politics in England, 1550-1800*, ed. Barry and Christopher Brooks (Basingstoke, 1994), pp. 84-112.

[15]Peter Clark, *British Clubs and Societies 1580-1800: The Origins of an Associational World* (Oxford, 2001); Newton Key, "The political culture and political rhetoric of county feasts and feast sermons, 1654-1714", *Journal of British Studies* 33 (1994), pp. 223-56; Angela McShane, "The extraordinary case of the blood-drinking and flesh-eating cavaliers", in *The Extraordinary and the Everyday in Early Modern England: Essays in Celebration of the Work of Bernard Capp*, ed. McShane and Garthine Walker (Basingstoke, 2010), pp. 192-210. For interpretation of the body – material, symbolic and metaphorical – Anthony Synott, *The Body Social: Symbolism, Self and Society* (London, 1993), pp. 1-37, 228-64.

[16]For carnivalesque gastronomic episodes in early-modern drama, for example, Peter Stallybrass and Allon White, "The fair, the pig, authorship", in their *The Politics and Poetics of*

passage, which must be cited *in extenso.*

> "Well, ye must be a stranger sure", said the old man, without taking his eyes from the window. "Why, 'tis a great public dinner of the gentle-people and such like leading volk - wi' the Mayor in the chair. As we plainer fellows bain't invited, they leave the winder-shutters open that we may get jist a sense o't out here. If you mount the steps you can see em. That's Mr. Henchard, the Mayor, at the end of the table, a facing ye; and that's the Council men right and left ... Ah, lots of them when they begun life were no more than I be now!" ... The band now struck up another melody, and by the time it was ended the dinner was over, and speeches began to be made. The evening being calm, and the windows still open, these orations could be distinctly heard. Henchard's voice arose above the rest; he was telling a story of his hay-dealing experiences, in which he had outwitted a sharper who had been bent upon outwitting him. "Ha-ha-ha!" responded his audience at the upshot of the story; and hilarity was general till a new voice arose with, "This is all very well; but how about the bad bread?"
>
> It came from the lower end of the table, where there sat a group of minor tradesmen who, although part of the company, appeared to be a little below the social level of the others; and who seemed to nourish a certain independence of opinion and carry on discussions not quite in harmony with those at the head; just as the west end of a church is sometimes persistently found to sing out of time and tune with the leading spirits in the chancel.
>
> This interruption about the bad bread afforded infinite satisfaction to the loungers outside, several of whom were in the mood which finds its pleasure in others' discomfiture; and hence they echoed pretty freely, "Hey! How about the bad bread, Mr. Mayor?" Moreover, feeling none of the restraints of those who shared the feast, they could afford to add, "You rather ought to tell the story o' that, sir!"[17]

Analysis of this passage might include a number of observations about the communal meal of a corporate organization. We might perceive here, in the rhetoric of the speeches and the initial convivial reaction to Henchard's reminiscences those aspects of community and solidarity so often associated with the communal feast. We are led into the explanation of the feast, however, by an outsider, one who is excluded, so we immediately understand that the feast is for important people, insiders, not the whole community. The outsider reflects on their success with some diffidence about men who were, if they are not now, not

Transgression (London, 1986), pp. 27-79. My concern here is not voluntary associations, but formal corporate institutions, so I omit such as the dining club of Dickens's *Pickwick Papers.*

[17] Thomas Hardy, *The Mayor of Casterbridge: The Life and Death of a Man of Character*, edited with an Introduction and Notes by Keith Wilson (London, 2003), pp. 31-6 (Chapter 5).

superior to him. Then, suddenly, the jovial mood is interrupted by dissident voices. Those recalcitrant utterances come from the lower end of the table, so it becomes evident that the table is hierarchically arranged. The convivial atmosphere is broken asunder by the complaints from the lower end of the table about the poor quality of the grain which Henchard has delivered to the millers and bakers. The derogation might be aimed, by the novelist, at Henchard, to introduce the portents of his tenuous position, his meteoric rise to elevated status, and thus be entirely of internal consistence with the narrative force of the novel. The communal occasion, however, does not, in the novelist's mind, ineluctably lead to solidarity. By contrast, discord cannot be dismissed from the occasion; an opportunity is provided for the expression of disagreement and acrimony. Far from fostering solidarity, the feast is fractious. Henchard, the head of the corporate organization is reduced to the anger of rebuke. The upshot is that some of the excluded, viewing the feast from outside, join in the refrain to "discomfit" the superior. The consequence of opening the windows for all to be spectators on the feast is the animosity of some to its divisiveness and their trenchant dissatisfaction. Envy may not be an enviable trait, but it is a constituent of the human psyche, which is a motive in spectators of the spectacle.

We might compare this fictive occasion with another, the feast patronized by Simon Eyre in the dénouement of Dekker's *The Shoemaker's Holiday*. The most recent interpretation of this event has contrasted the commensality with the exclusion and hierarchy. Having promised that he would furnish a feast for all the apprentices if he attained the office of Lord Mayor, he remains true to his obligation. It appears, however, that the apprentices were fed first and then dispersed, before the commensality of Eyre and his peers with the presence of the King.[18] To clarify here, the meals are transformational. In the first, for the apprentices, Eyre recollects his origins. In the second, he marks his separation from that background to a new social situation. The mayor's feast combines also the presentation of the new mayor to the King.[19] These narratives are, of course, fictional, but nonetheless illustrate the potential in human imagination for interpretation of the event and its diverse meanings to different constituencies – the hermeneutics of commensality.

The literary constructions forfend a homogeneous, unitary, essential or universal understanding of the shared meal. We might therefore seek to uncover the dissonance in communal commensality in the past. Such a quest is difficult because the narrative of those events is usually produced by those concerned with a rhetoric emphasizing community of purpose. The dissident voices are suppressed. When they are discovered, we might consider giving them additional

[18]Stephen Deng, *Coinage and State Formation in Early Modern English Literature* (London, 2011), p. 179. For the structural composition of the livery companies, Steve Rappaport, *Worlds Within Worlds: Structures of Life in Sixteenth-century London* (Cambridge, 1989), pp. 215-84, esp. 228-9 and 254-5 for (a) some reluctance to attend great or annual dinners; (b) the prodigious cost of the dinners; and (c) the onerous office of the stewardship which arranged the dinners.

[19]For the City's relationship with the Crown, Ian Archer, *The Pursuit of Stability: Social Relations in Elizabethan London* (Cambridge, 1991), pp. 33-9.

weight rather than discarding them as aberration.

The Rhetoric of Reunion

In Hardy's narrative above, the mayor proposed the toast and gave the speech, although his rhetoric did not elicit universal approval. Preparing the ground before the dinner might have been a wise precaution, for criticism of aldermen and councillors by each other was not non-existent.[20] At the apogee of this rhetorical approach was the engagement of a literary figure to provide the speech or dramatic representation of harmony and self-congratulation. In this category belong the *Entertainments* and *An Invention* commissioned from Thomas Middleton for the Lord Mayors of London in 1620-1. The inspiration here was, of course, the proximity of the royal court and its masques and anti-masques, less as rivalry, more as imitation to convey the importance of the capital City.[21] The *Entertainments* consisted of small pageants – small by the standard of the expense and the number of players – for the festive cycle of the mayoral term.[22] The ten *Entertainments* marked the Lord Mayor's dinner on the Monday and Tuesday of Holy Week, the congregation of the aldermen at the revival of archery practice at the butts at Bunhill, their visitation of the springs at Tyburn which supplied some of the City's water, their presence at the training of the musters, the final dinner of the incumbent Lord Mayor (Sir William Cokayne) on SS Simon and Jude, the dinner for the Haberdashers' Company by the Lord Mayor-elect (Sir Francis Jones) who was of that company (for which, see Simon Eyre's dinner), the Lord Mayor's dinner at Christmas, the Lord Mayor's dinner at Easter, and the dinners sponsored by the two sheriffs, on the Thursday and Saturday of Holy Week.[23] *An Invention* extended the dramatist's mayoral antimasques into the following year for the ensuing occupant, Edward Barkham: Performed for the service of the Right Honourable Edward Barkham, Lord Mayor of the City of London, at his lordship's entertainment of the Aldermen his brethren, and the honourable and worthy guests at his house assembled and feasted in the Easter holidays, 1622.[24] The purpose of these dramatic preludes to the feasting was to emphasize the dignity of the mayor, the honour of the aldermen, their collective wisdom and sagacity, and their corporate integrity. Through the performance, Middleton represented them to themselves ideologically and ideally, directing their sentiments and minds. The action of

[20] *Oxford Council Acts (1626-66)*, ed. M. G. Hobson and H. E. Salter (Oxford Historical Society xcv, 1933), p. 4: Alderman Harris expelled from the house and as an alderman for his opprobrious words against the mayor and Alderman Potter in 1626; see also, p. 51; *Selections from the Records of the City of Oxford ... [1509-1583]*, ed. W. H. Turner (Oxford, 1880), p. 293 (expulsion from the council of several men, 1562).

[21] For royal antimasques, Lesley Mickel, *Ben Jonson's Antimasques: A History of Growth and Decline* (Aldershot, 1999), pp. 171-85.

[22] For the grander civic pageants, David Bergeron, *English Civic Pageantry 1558-1642* (Tempe, AZ, 2003).

[23] *Thomas Middleton: The Collected Work*s, ed. Gary Taylor and John Lavagnino, (Oxford, 2007), pp. 1431-45.

[24] Taylor and Lavignano, *Thomas Middleton: The Collected Works*, p. 1446.

the mini-drama was coercive to the extent that it prepared them for their dinner together and rendered dissent difficult.[25]

> MEAN Joy be ever at your feasts.
> BASE Bounty welcome all your guests.
> CHORUS That this city's honour may Spread as fast as morn shoots day.[26]

At the Christmas feast of the Lord Mayor, Temperance intervened in the dialogue of Levity and Severity to applaud the reverent attitude of the "grave Senators".[27] At the Lord Mayor's feast at Easter, Flora commends the "fair assembly" who not only bow their heads in honour of the feast, but also have distinguished themselves by their charity and virtue.[28] The common purpose, insinuated to such an extent, precluded any dissension. In the great City, it was, of course, vital to propagate internal cohesion and order amongst the governing elite to maintain wider order.[29] Although on not such a magnified scale, the same compulsion existed in other urban places. The cycle of dinners was an opportunity to reconfirm that solidarity.[30]

Civic commensality: mayors and meals

Within boroughs, mayors assumed a responsibility to provide an annual dinner for the corporation. This obligation has been perfectly explained by Charles Phythian-Adams: "The tradition of hospitality by a newly-elected superior lay at the heart of the late-medieval social system ..."[31] The dinner furnished by the mayor of Coventry extended, indeed, to a wider constituency, congregated in St Mary's Hall. After the election of the new mayor at Bristol, two dinners ensued, one of the new mayor with the majority of the council, and the other of the previous mayor with a smaller number of officers. "This ceremony repeated in a symbolic way the transfer of authority from the outgoing to the incoming mayor". Thereupon, the two mayors combined to lead a procession up the hill to St Michael's church. After the benediction, all the dignitaries and officers returned downhill to the new mayor's house for "cheerful hospitality", reuniting the official community through commensality.[32] The mayor's position at the

[25] The constant refrain in the *Honourable Entertainments* that the corporate body is the delegate of the sovereign reinforces the message. For the general context of new (bureaucratic) elites and state formation, Michael Braddick, *State Formation in Early Modern England c.1550-1700* (Cambridge, 2000); Steve Hindle, *The State and Social Change in Early Modern England, c.1550-1640* (Basingstoke, 2000); Robert Tittler, *The Reformation and the Towns in England: Politics and Political Culture, c.1540-1640* (Oxford, 1998).

[26] *Thomas Middleton: The Collected Works*, ed. Taylor and Lavignano, p. 1447.

[27] *Thomas Middleton: The Collected Works*, ed. Taylor and Lavignano, p. 1440.

[28] *Thomas Middleton: The Collected Works*, ed. Taylor and Lavignano, p. 1442.

[29] Archer, *Pursuit of Stability*, p. 32.

[30] Rappaport, *Worlds Within Worlds*, pp. 377-87.

[31] Phythian-Adams, *Desolation of a City*, p. 263.

[32] David Harris Sacks, *The Widening Gate: Bristol and the Atlantic Economy, 1450-1700* (Berkeley, CA, 1991), p. 177. Harding, "Reformation and culture", p. 286 ("Inauguration rituals").

apex of the hierarchy of urban officialdom thus demanded a celebration on the appointment of the incoming mayor. In most boroughs, the selection of the new mayor occurred towards the end of August, in advance of the new accounting and official year from Michaelmas.[33] The precise arrangements for the mayoral feast or dinner varied, however, between urban place and over time. In the earliest references to the mayoral dinner at Reading, for example, the costs were at least partly defrayed by the admission fines to the gild merchant, so that each new freeman contributed 1*s.* 8*d.* or 3*s.* 4*d.* (depending on their qualifications for admission) towards the *gentaculum* (*jantaculum*), *pro jantaculo pro Majore et fratribus suis*, *pro gentaculo dicti Majoris et fraternitatis eiusdem*; *pro gentaculo Majoris*.[34] In other boroughs, the attendant personnel was more limited.

In Leicester, the mayor's dinner extended back at least to the early fourteenth century and happened around the Feast of the Invention of the Holy Cross (early summer), for the jurats and many of the community of the borough.[35] Since the mayor also functioned as the financial officer at this time, he gave himself an allowance of £2 for his special dinner.[36] When the chamberlains were appointed as the new financial officers, they continued the tradition of allowances for the mayor's dinner.[37] When a new fiscal ordinance was introduced in 1379 to regulate the financial responsibility of the chamberlains vis-à-vis the mayor, the mayor's fee was established at £10, including £2 for the mayor's dinner.[38] In Leicester, as a mediatized borough, with over-lordship of the earls of Leicester, the mayor was also required to contribute towards a dinner at which, shortly after Michaelmas, the newly-elected mayor, along with the bailiffs and jurats of the borough, were presented to the earl or his steward as a symbol of homage and allegiance.[39]

Shortly after the incorporation of Boston, it was decided in 1555 that the company in the hall should dine where the mayor stipulates. Given its slender and declining resources, however, it was decreed that only 10*s.* would be allowed towards the cost, with the remainder borne by the company.[40] Under its consti-

[33]For example, *The Southampton Mayor's Book of 1606-1608*, ed. William Connor (Southampton Record Society 21, 1978), p. 97 (197). Exceptionally, the mayor of York was selected in January and his office began from Candlemas: David Palliser, *Tudor York* (Oxford, 1979), p. 64; for the authority of the mayor of York, p. 63; for the composition of York's civic government, pp. 60-91, including the *cursus honorum* (pp. 71-2).

[34]*Reading Records: Diary of the Corporation Volume I Henry VI to Elizabeth, (1431-1602)*, ed. J. M. Guilding (London, 1892), pp. 1-76, esp. 66-7.

[35]*Records of the Borough of Leicester* (hereafter *RBL*) (London, 1899-1905), II, p. 47, ed. Mary Bateson (3 May 1341).

[36]*RBL*, II, p. 154 (1375-6).

[37]*RBL*, II, pp. 158 (1376-7), 170 (1377-9).

[38]*RBL*, II, p. 192. The fee remained at £10 until enhanced to £13 6*s.* 8*d.* in 1578-9: *RBL*, II, pp. 41 (1537-8), 51 (1544-5); *RBL*, III, p. 180 (1578-9). Compare the fee allowed to the mayor of Exeter: Wallace MacCaffrey, *Exeter, 1540-1640: The Growth of an English County Town* (Cambridge, MA, 1958), p. 45, and at Southampton (the mayor's "Anuytie"): *The Book of Fines: The Annual Accounts of the Mayors of Southampton, Volume III, 1572-1594*, ed. Cheryl Butler (Southampton Record Society 44, 2010), pp. 7, 17, 22, 51, 176.

[39]*RBL*, II, pp. 13 (1333-4), 15, 25 (*gentaculum*, 1335-6), 45, 60.

[40]*The Boston Assembly Minutes, 1545-1575*, ed. Peter Clarke and Jenny Clarke (Lincoln Record Society 77, 1988), p. 19; for the decline of the borough, ibid., pp. xiv-xv.

tution of 1621, the corporate authority for Dorchester consisted of the Governor and his Assistants of the Common Council (until the receipt of a new charter in 1649 introduced a mayor). Their dinner was held in an inn, but in 1633 it was ordained that Mr Governor should entertain the Assistants and Common Council for dinner in place of the dinner in the inn.[41] One of the occasions for commensality in Chester was the "Sheriff's Breakfast", which was scheduled for Black Monday, the Monday of Holy Week (see also the reunion of dignitaries of Nottingham at St Ann's Well, below). At this festive event, the elite of Chester divided into two teams, each led by one of the two sheriffs, for an archery contest by the River Dee. After the completion, the two teams returned to the common hall for a breakfast of calves' heads and bacon, the winning team's members each contributing 2*d.* and the losing team's adherents 4*d.* each. In the early seventeenth century, annalists recollected the purpose: "the ende being the amitie and societie of the Cittizens there". These commentators also regarded its existence as custom from time immemorial, although it had been introduced in 1511. It almost certainly therefore pertained to the invention of new traditions as a response to the vicissitudes of the late middle ages, the social and economic transformations resulting from the plague and the potential for decline in large urban centres.[42] For more than a century, whilst the teams of the worshipful company had their special tables, other benches were furnished for a wider section of the urban society. By 1640, however, the elite had become more sceptical and the occasion was reconstituted to exclude the wider commonalty. The contest was converted into a formal challenge for a silver plate and the commensality was confined to the mayor, aldermen, sheriffs and gentlemen, a "more particular priuat dynar", through the removal of the long tables for the "other loose people" or "straggling people".[43] The occasion was thus transformed from a communal meal at which a wider body of urban inhabitants could attend to an ordered feast for the civic elite and magistracy. It happened, nonetheless, that the custom of the mayor's dinner had disappeared completely in some large urban places. Hooker remarked on the 'bankett' which the incoming mayor of Exeter had arranged for the twenty-four and the recorder on his election, which had, as early as 1590, lapsed into desuetude, "as a superfluose thinge is lost".[44]

Contingency, custom and commensality: Oxford

The development and vicissitudes of communal meals in Oxford illustrates another interesting point: the notion of utility applied to the cost of the entertain-

[41] *The Municipal Records of the Borough of Dorchester*, ed. Charles Mayo (Exeter, 1908), p. 405.

[42] Phythian-Adams, *Desolation of a City*, and "Urban decay in late medieval England", in *Towns in Societies: Essays in Economic History and Historical Sociology*, ed. Philip Abrams and Tony Wrigley (Cambridge, 1978), pp. 159-185, are the *loca classica*; *The Invention of Tradition*, ed. Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger (Cambridge, 1992).

[43] *Records of Early English Drama: Chester*, ed. Lawrence Clopper (Toronto, 1979), pp. 23, 253, 322-3, 352, 434, 451.

[44] *REED: Devon*, ed. John Wasson (Toronto, 1986), pp. 168-9.

ments in the sixteenth century. Here, the benefits of the dinners were weighed in times of need, and the provision of the dinner commuted intermittently; instead of furnishing the meal, the officer paid an equivalent sum of money into the borough coffers, sometimes for very specific purposes. In the later middle ages, selection to all the higher offices involved a communal meal organized by the incoming officer and many other important occasions involved refreshments. In 1520, however, it was ordained that there should be no dinner at the presenting of the chamberlains' accounts, but the cost commuted.[45] At the same time, new regulations were proclaimed for the dinner at the Lent sessions. The mayor would now receive an allowance of 26*s.* 8*d.* for the cost, but the personnel entertained was to be restricted to the mayor, recorder, aldermen, bailiffs and chamberlains. On the law days, the bailiffs should refrain from their dinner. In that year too, it was decided that the mayor should not organize a dinner on his election, but should pay £10 instead into the borough's coffers.[46] No doubt the corporation was experiencing some financial stringency. Eleven years later, some of these ordinances were repeated: the mayor's 26*s.* 8*d.* for the sessions dinner and the bailiffs to contribute £6 for the repair of the mills in lieu of their dinners at the law days.[47] After another interval of eleven years, it was decreed that the chamberlains should allow £1 for the sessions dinner, but adding to the complement at the dinner the jurors sworn on the day of the dinner.[48] In the same year (1542), a new promulgation enabled the incoming mayor, selected on the Thursday before the Feast of St Matthew, to expend 33*s.* 4*d.* on his dinner, to include the commons of the town.[49] Within four years, nonetheless, the bailiffs were required to exercise restraint, to forego the dinners at their houses on their election on Michaelmas Day, and instead to pay £6 13*s.* 4*d.* to the common coffers.[50] In the same year, further discretion was observed, by temporarily suspending the custom that the newly-elected alderman furnish a breakfast for the mayor, aldermen, bailiffs, chamberlains, burgesses and commonalty; the alderman consented to contribute £3 6*s.* 8*d.* to the common funds.[51] When he was selected as the new alderman in 1553, Mr Glynton, instead of a meal, offered £2 and a bullock.[52] By 1554, the mayor's dinner had been reinstated, and with a bang: bread, drink, pigeons, capons, coneys, beef, wine, venison, pigs, cock, eggs, chicken, butter, spices and dates.[53] Fourteen years later, the affair was as elaborate, for the mayor received an allowance of £10 to hold a dinner within sixteen days of Michaelmas, for the "worshipful" and the "commons".[54] In 1571, the dinner was cancelled, but in this year because of

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[45] *Selections from the Records*, ed. Turner, p. 25.
[46] *Selections from the Records*, ed. Turner, p. 26.
[47] *Selections from the Records*, ed. Turner, pp. 102-3, 106 (1531).
[48] *Selections from the Records*, ed. Turner, p. 164.
[49] *Selections from the Records*, ed. Turner, pp. 164-5.
[50] *Selections from the Records*, ed. Turner, p. 181 (1546).
[51] *Selections from the Records*, ed. Turner, p. 181.
[52] *Selections from the Records*, ed. Turner, p. 215.
[53] *Selections from the Records*, ed. Turner, p. 226.
[54] *Selections from the Records*, ed. Turner, p. 323.

the visitation of infectious disease.[55] The following year, however, occasioned a blow-out of considerable proportions, as the mayor's dinner was attended by six Privy Councillors and other gentlemen "of great worship" with their retinues.[56] In most years, even so, the occasion of the mayor's dinner was a splendid affair, for it required three stewards in the hall.[57]

The mayor of Oxford also provided another dinner, when he rode the liberties of the city each year. All those councillors accompanying him contributed 1*s.*, whilst the members of the Thirteen and the bailiffs 1*s.* 8*d.* for their "Ordinaries" at his dinner.[58] An attempt was made in the early 1570s to reduce the expenditure, for the current mayor was expected to perform the riding of the franchise on the day before the election of the new mayor. The riding dinner would thus be combined with the dinner of the newly elected mayor, for which higher amounts were demanded: 2*s.* 6*d.* from the mayor, 2*s.* each from The Thirteen (aldermen), 1*s.* 4*d.* from the bailiffs, 1*s.* the chamberlains, 8*d.* common councillors, and 6*d.* commons.[59]

In Oxford, then, all the principal officers were expected by custom to furnish a meal on their appointment. In 1582, nonetheless, there was a temporary stop on the election dinners in the cause of the repair of the city walls. Instead of entertainment on his selection, the incoming mayor contributed £10 towards the mural reparation, whilst the bailiffs furnished £5 instead of their banquet. Additionally, the old and the new mayor would combine to make a dinner at their own cost.[60] From 1629, moreover, it was decided that the "banquets" arranged by the officers should be commuted to a money payment because of the city's indebtedness and its inability to finance the improvements to the river navigation. The mayor would accordingly make a payment of £10, the two bailiffs £15, the chamberlains and common councillors £2. The commutation persisted for at least six years, the funding in 1634 transferred to the Commissioners of the Barges.[61]

At Oxford, the custom of the dinners was not immutable. From the third decade of the sixteenth century, if not before, the custom was not only defined and reiterated, but also appraised for its utility. From time to time, the provision of meals was interrupted in the cause of raising finance for the common funds and frugality. By the seventeenth century, the suspension of the meals in favour of the accrual of income, was motivated by specific purposes. There appears then to be a transition from a collective identity of the elite to the prosecution of the common good in a wider sense, from commensality to improvement.[62]

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[55] *Selections from the Records*, ed. p. 337.

[56] *Selections from the Records*, ed. p. 344.

[57] *Selections from the Records*, ed. Turner, p. 375 (1575).

[58] *Oxford Council Acts (1626-66)*, ed. Hobson and Salter, pp. 7, 12, 26, 54, 59. The riding was discontinued in 1643 because of the troublesome times: p. 114.

[59] *Selections from the Records*, ed. Turner, pp. 341-2.

[60] *Selections from the Records*, ed. Turner, p. 421. The mayor's allowance for his office had been increased to £21 by this time: p. 381.

[61] *Oxford Council Acts (1626-66)*, ed. Hobson and Salter, pp. 20, 26, 35, 40, 55.

[62] Paul Slack, *From Reformation to Improvement: Public Welfare in Early Modern England* (Oxford, 1998).

The Cycle of Commensality in Nottingham

Nottingham belonged, of course, to the category of incorporated county borough with a conciliar structure of government, the mayor, aldermen and councils, and the officers and officials of the borough.[63] With the status of the county of a borough, Nottingham appointed additional officers for the business. The county borough and borough of the county thus exemplified those "little commonwealths" of early-modern England.[64] The mayor of Nottingham, perhaps like mayors of other larger boroughs, employed his own cook.[65] References to the mayor's dinner occur throughout the chamberlains' accounts. The chamberlains themselves were entertained to a dinner when they rendered their annual accounts.[66] Perhaps the principal occasion for commensality for the corporation was the annual excursus to St Ann's Well, outside the borough, on Black Monday (the day after Easter Day). This ceremonial event became conflated with the annual hen-eating at the house of the woodward, one of the minor officials of the borough. The borough owned the Coppice ("Copy") located outside the borough within the jurisdiction of Sherwood Forest and its juridical authority, the Swanimote of the Forest.[67] The woodward acted as custodian of the Coppice and attended the Swanimote on behalf of the corporation. An annual felling was performed in the Coppice, usually of the underwood, but intermittently of the standards too.[68] The felling was a traditional spring event in the corporation's calendar.[69] In the late sixteenth century, the spring fall was accompanied by commensality at the house of the successive woodwards, Michael Bonner and Richard Hall.[70] Every year, the chamberlains accounted

[63]For the constitution of Nottingham under its charter of 1449, Judith Mills, "Continuity and change: the town, people and administration of Nottingham between *c.*1400 and *c.*1600", (unpublished PhD thesis, University of Nottingham, 2010), pp. 171-86.

[64]Phil Withington, *The Politics of Commonwealth: Citizens and Freemen in Early Modern England* (Cambridge, 2005).

[65]*Records of the Borough of Nottingham* (hereafter *RBN*), ed. William H. Stevenson *et al.* (London, 1882-1956), IV, p. 285 (1607): wage of the mayor's cook increased.

[66]NA CA1625 (1585-6), f. 27: Item the xijth of december paid for bread ale & Chese at the givinge up of the chamberlyns accompt ijs. xd.; NA CA1644 (1635-6), f. 6: Item for the dinner at the old Chamberlaines accounmpt xxijs. viijd.

[67]RBN, IV, p. 299, n. 1; NA CA1640 (1630-1) wine and sugar to Laughton arbour at the swanimoot.

[68]*RBN*, III (Nottingham, 1885), p. 230: the Copy actually coppiced, including oak (1485)

[69]NA CA1632, f. 7: 2s. 8d. allowed at the "breakinge of the Copies" in 1614-15; NA CA1633B, f. 6: 3*s.* 4*d.* expended at the "breaking of the Coppies" in 1617-18; NA CA1634, f. 9: in September 1618 3*s.* 4*d.* allocated at the "breakinge of the Coppies"; NA CA1635, f. 13: 2*s.* disbursed when the mayor set out trees in the Coppice.

[70]NA CA1617, f. 2v (1577-8): Item gevyn to tow mvsyssyons at myhell bonar house When Mr mere and hys brethren dyd dyne ther When the fall Wase leyde fourth xij d.; NA CA1618, ff. 5v, 6v (1578-9): Item payd for A gallon of Wyne that Mr mere and hys brethren had at myhyll bonars When the fall Wase lead forth ij s. Item payd to Myhell Bonar for Ale brede and chese that Wase had in the Coppy When the fall Wase fetchet to the towne iij s. iiij d. NA CA1619, ff. 4v, 5v (1579-80): Item payd for A gallon of [Ale t] Wyne that Wase had at Myhyll bonar house for Mr mere and hys company at the fall ij s. Item gevyn to the blynde harpar the same tyme xij d. Item payd to Myhyll bonar for bred Ale and chese that Wase had in the Coppy When the fall Wase fellyd iij s. iiij d.; NA CA1620, f. 6 (1580-1): Item payd for A gallon of Wyne that Mr mere and his brethern had at myhyll Bonar howse When

for wine and sugar despatched to the Well.[71] The tradition extended back into the late middle ages, but the corporation decided to retain it after the Reformation. Recognizing its previous connotations, the corporation reflected that the custom merited perpetuation for its own sake.

> This Companie havinge had some conferrence this Day aboute the meetinge att Saint Anne well on Black monday nexte. and consideringe the antient vse thereof, and lykewise Conceivinge thatt the first begynninge therof was in yttselfe to a good end and the Contynance lawdable bothe in former and the future tymes, yf the abuses bee taken away. ytt is therefore ordered and agreed thatt from henceforthe the same assembly shall contynewe, and be held by mr Maior mr Aldermen, the Coroners, Sheriffs, Councell, and Clothinge, as hertofore and thatt mr Maior, mr Aldermen, the Coroners, Sheriffs, the Towneclarke and the Steward shall pay there for themselves, and wyefes [ys] (whether they haue anie or nott [ijs] or whether they bee present or absent) ij s. and all the rest of the Clothinge and Councell, lykewise whether they bee present or absent xviij d. and thatt everie one soe to goe shall geve his attendance on mr Maior att his howse [to goe with] and wayte/ on him bothe goinge and Cominge, and thatt everie [made] one thatt haue wyues shall lykewise wishe them to attend on mistres Maioris as hathe beene antiently vsed. And thatt yf anie [man shall] of the aforenamed of the Aldermen Coroners, Sheriffs Councell Cloathinge and other shall make Defalte in nott Accompaninge, or attendinge of mr Maior [shall fo] (vnlesse he or they shalbe lycenced by mr Maior for the tyme beinge) shall pay for everie Defaulte xij d. to the vse of the pore of Saint Joanes over and besydes [there] the Rates formerly by them to be paied, for theire Dynners.[72]

The ordinance was reiterated in 1626:

> This Companie are agreed thatt Mr Maior Aldermen Councell and Cloathinge [sh] Will observe the antient custome of goinge to St Anne well on Blackmonday nexte and to pay accordinge to the auntient Custome videlicet ij s. mr Maior Aldermen and Coroners.

the fall Wase lead fourth ij s. Item gevyn the blynde harpar ther the same day xij d.; NA CA1621, (1585-6): Item given to the blynd harper at Richard hals, there beinge ouer maior & his brethren in reward xij d. Michael Bonner alias Bonar: woodward, 1577 (*RBN*, IV, pp. 420, 422; NA CA3362, f. 2v: *custos nemorum*); annual wage (fee) of 25*s.* with 5*s.* for his livery (NA CA1621, f. 1); supervised the fall in the Coppice (NA CA1621, f. 5); assessed for 2*d.* in Long Row in the Easter Book for St Mary's parish, 1583 (*RBN*, IV, p. 205), but probably dead since the hall book of 1581-2 recorded Michael Bonner *custos nemorum mortuus hoc Anno*: (*RBN*, IV, p. 422; NA CA3365, f. 3).

[71] NA CA1628, f. 9 (1615-16); 1633A, f. 8 (12*s.* 6*d.* for wine and sugar at St Ann's Well on Black Monday); NA CA1633B, f. 8 (16*s.* 7*d.* for wine and sugar at St Ann's Well on Black Monday); NA CA1634, f. 7 (wine and sugar at St Ann's Well on Black Monday 1618-19); merely as examples.

[72] *RBN*, IV, p. 256 (ordinance of 1601).

> And the Councell and Cloathinge xviij d. a peice provided thatt ffrancis Nixe doe appoynt some honest woeman of Creditt to have the oversighte and orderinge of the meate and drincke to be spent there: and then aswell those absent as present to pay as aforesaied:[73]

In this promulgation, we encounter the role of the woodward, at this time Francis Nixe, who had succeeded in the post of Brightman and Hall, but also exhibiting some disquiet about the fare produced by Nixe.[74] References in the chamberlains' accounts confirm that the event had previously involved a hen-eating at the house of the woodward.[75] The traditional custom had thus become elided with the provision of a dinner by the woodwards, a hen-eating, to which the chamberlains sent wine and sugar. In this manner, the "reformation of the landscape" consisted of a conscious decision by the corporation, recognizing the previous elements associated with the celebration, but prepared to maintain the custom for its other perceived benefits.[76] At the request of the mickletourn jury, which had also become confused with the constables' inquests, a new "house" was erected at the Well and the chapel there was decorated.[77] The celebration had thus once served a spiritual purpose, the company (the corporation) commemorating the death of Christ and observing the solemnity of Holy Week. Commensality was associated with a deeply religious purpose, external to a civic year which extended from Michaelmas to Michaelmas. Whether the date represented the end of a ritual, spiritual half of the year consisting of the *temporale*, Christ's life-course, is contested.[78] The feast certainly marked the conclusion of Lent. After the Reformation, however, the commensality signified the relationship between the corporation and its woodwards, its minor officers who were custodians, nonetheless, of an important corporate resource. Considering the tradition of "goinge to St Ane Well", the council agreed that the aldermen, council and clothing should on Black Monday process to St Ann's Well:

> there to spend theyr money with the keeper & woodward ... And

[73] See also *RBN*, IV, pp. 139, 383.

[74] NA CA1633B, f. 7: for wine and sugar at Francis Nix's hen eating 5*s.* 5*d.* (1617-18); NA CA1634, f. 7: 3*s.* 5*d.* for wine and sugar at Francis Nix's hen eating; NA CA1635, p. 9: 4*s.* to Francis Nixe for maintaining the long hedge October 1620; NA CA1625 (1585-6), f. 29; NA CA1634, f. 3: Francis Nixe received the wage associated with Hall (1618-19); Francis Nixe: woodward, an office associated with the annual meeting of the council at his house to drink wine and eat hens (NA CA1633B, ff. 7, 8; NA CA1634, ff. 3, 7; NA CA1635, p. 9);

[75] *RBN*, IV, p. 353 (chamberlains' account, 1616-17): 3*s.* 5*d.* for wine and sugar at Richard Hall's hen eating; *RBN*, IV, p. 355 (chamberlains' account, 1617-18): 5*s.* 5*d.* for wine and sugar at Francis Nix's hen eating; *RBN*, IV, p. 356 (1617-18): 3*s.* 1*d.* for wine and sugar at Michael Brightman's hen eating.

[76] Alexandra Walsham, *The Reformation of the Landscape: Religion, Identity & Memory in Early Modern Britain & Ireland* (Oxford, 2011), p. 534.

[77] NA CA1643 (1633-4), f. 15: 6*s.* 8*d.* for painting the chapel at the well; NA CA1643, f. 15: 10*s.* 10*d.* paid to William Newbold and his men for tiling at St Ann's Well "against the Kings Cominge"; NA CA1633B, ff. 17-23: extensive work at St Ann's Well erecting a new "house".

[78] Eamon Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars: Traditional Religion in England, 1400-1580* (New Haven, CT, 1992), p. 124; Phythian-Adams, "Ceremony and the citizen"; Ronald Hutton, *The Rise and Fall of Merry England: The Ritual Year 1400-1700* (Oxford, 1994), p. 46.

> that every of the Aldermen shall spend there with the Townes woodward .ijs. and with the Thorney woodes keeper att discretion everye Councellor with the Townes woodward .xviijd. & with the keeper in discretion everye of the cloathinge to spend with the Townes woodward .xijd. & with the keeper at discretion. And that none of them shall Carry or send any provision thither.[79]

Previously, the fiscal distinction had not existed, since each rank contributed 16*d.* "all alyke" at the congregation at St Ann's Well, although the status hierarchy was maintained as they sat according to their seniority.[80] As was made transparent in the Hall Book in 1622, the purpose had now become to patronize the corporation's woodward; the company should assemble there or else send their fines there "in regard the poore man makes provisions for them".[81] The other important resource of the burgesses was the common meadow in the Eastcroft. The "breaking open" of the meadow for common usage was a significant occasion. The chamberlains dined with the keeper of the meadows:

> Item Chardges at the breakinge of Eastcrofte at John Vereyes howse there beinge our maior & others at dynner vjs. Item the xijth of September we nicholas Sherwin & John noden Chamberlyns did dyne at John vereyes accordinge to the ould Custome at the breakinge of Eastcrofte and it Cost us of our selves & others iiijs.[82]

In the *cursus honorum* of advancement to the major offices in the county of the borough, burgesses were required to hold first the most onerous offices, the financial and judicial responsibilities, sheriffs and chamberlains (two of each in each civic year). Tradition demanded that the sheriffs provide an annual dinner. By the early seventeenth century, some controversy arose over the furnishing of the dinner. In 1614, Masters Jowett and Allvey, the two incumbents, refused to make the dinner and, when summonsed before the principal officers, remained obstinate. The mayor and company imposed a fine of £10 on each with the threat of disfranchisement for default of payment. The two were dismissed from office and two other burgesses (Masters Perry and Ludlam) selected to replace them, of whom it was demanded that they would promise to obey the custom: "they honestly say they will perform ytt lovingly", in the account in the Hall Book, the rhetoric of order and harmony.[83] The controversy did not finish

[79] NA CA3378, f. 24 = *RBN*, IV, p. 256; see also *RBN*, IV, p. 383 (1623).

[80] *RBN*, IV, p. 91

[81] *RBN*, IV, p. 381

[82] NA CA1624 (chamberlains' accounts, 1584-5), f. 19; NA CA1625 (1585-6), f. 29 .

[83] NA CA3389, p. 36 (paginated, not foliated): Shiriffs theyr dynner Mr Jowett and Mr Allvey shiriffs being called here before this company to show cause why they Doo not make theyr shiriffs dynner this yeare accordinge to custom they both answere ytt peremptorily that they will neyther make dynner nor gyve a penny fyne or composicion. Whereupon this company with <all> one assent Doo all agree (except Jo. Stanley) that the sayd shiriffs shall pay the fyne of 10li according to the order in that behalfe made befor the <last> fyrst day of October next or otherwise in default thereof they shall both then be disfranchised and <all> theyr partes & landes which they have of the Townes shalbe then taken from them & lett to others & so to remayne as foreyners/

there, however, for Allvey remained obdurate. When the two were summonsed again on the 21st November in 1614, Jowett submitted, but Allvey at first resisted, but later submitted too. Their fines remained.[84] In 1616, the mayor and company were at pains to ensure that the sheriffs would conform to provide their dinner; it was recorded in the Hall Book that not only were Masters Burrowes and James selected to the office, but that they had promised to abide by the custom.[85] Within two years, however, Masters Rockett and Huntt also refused to host a sheriff's dinner, both again fined £10. Whilst the former submitted, Huntt was disfranchised for his contumacy.[86] Ultimately, Huntt too was reconciled, tendering a fine of £5 to the company, but receiving a remission of all but 10*s.* because "the towne hathe in regard of his willingnes allwaies {for his partt} to make his Dynner therfore the companie have onely taken of him xs. which hee payeth <very> verie willingly and ys verie thanckfull to the companie ..." The rhetoric once again refracts the intention of the mayor and company, indicating not only that Huntt conceded, but that he performed his submission with humility and gratitude.[87] In 1636, however, conflict resumed when Masters Richards and Drewrie, required to pay a fine of £10 for not making the sheriff's dinner during their term, refused to pay.[88]

We can perhaps attribute this disobedience and resistance to the onus of the office at a time of financial difficulties.[89] It was not unusual for burgesses to decline to serve as chamberlain, the difficult financial office, in the second decade of the seventeenth century. John James was fined £2 in 1616, but, on his reconciliation, the fine was reduced to 22*s.* and he was restored as a burgess. A general promulgation confirmed a fine of £5 for refusal to accept the office of (i.e. exemption from) chamberlain.[90] Perhaps, however, the diffidence also reflected a decline of interest in that sort of social capital imparted by formal

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Mr Perry Mr Ludlam Mr Perry & Mr Ludlam called hither <&> about the same cause to know whether they will make the dynner or no. they honestly say they will perform ytt lovingly

[84] NA CA3390, pp. 57-8 (= *RBN*, IV, pp. 328-9); NA CA3390, pp. 57-8.

[85] NA CA3391, p. 46: d new sheriffs Before this company was the matter of the new shiriffs spoken of <att> against Michaelis next and they all with one assent Doo intend to chuse Mr Samuel Burrowes & William James to be sheriffs who will take ytt upon them and will Doo all things as formerly hath bene & will make theyr sheriffs dynner (god willinge) according to custome. The letter d indicates the item of business.

[86] NA CA3392, f. 32v (= *RBN*, IV, p. 351).

[87] NA CA3392, f. 33.

[88] *RBN*, V (Nottingham, 1950), p. 178.

[89] Compare Jennifer Kermode, "Urban decline? The flight from office in late medieval York", *Economic History Review* 2nd ser. 35 (1982), pp. 179-98; William G. Hoskins, "An Elizabethan provincial town: Leicester", in *Studies in Social History*, ed. Jack H. Plumb (London, 1955), pp. 33-67.

[90] *RBN*, IV, pp. 272, 286, 287, 296, 320, 339, 342; NA CA3391: [John James] beinge formerly fyned att 2li for refusinge to be chamberlayne beinge chosen att Michaelis last. he now here hath submytted himselfe and layd downe his fyne of 2li . . . ; *RBN*, IV, p. 296: Edward Grene refused to serve as chamberlain in 1609 "to the evill example of others in tymes to come"; he was to be disfranchised and suspended from the company or to pay a fine of £5 by the next general sessions; *RBN*, V, p. 114 (1626) for the standard fine of £5. For the similar resolution at Leicester: *RBL*, IV, p. 272: refusal to serve as chamberlain would incur a fine of £5 (*c*.1630).

civic office as opposed to more inter-personal relationships more immediately central to the individual.[91] By the seventeenth century, the provision of dinners had become too onerous. Some were abandoned by specific authorization.

> Easter day walke Also yt ys agreed that the drynkinge & feastinge with the Aldermen att theyr howses on Easter day by theyr wholl wardes shall from hence furthe cease & be no more used in tymes to Come[92]
>
> Sessions Dynner Ytt ys agreed upon Mr Maiours mocion that <in despect of> for dyvers respects him movinge that the Sessions Dynner now to be made shall for this tyme bee forborn and in liew thereof Mr Maiour ys contented to gyve to the chamber of the towne tenn powndes which this company hath accepted of[93]

The sessions dinner had appeared in the chamberlains' accounts only sporadically and the its composition only hazily recorded.

> Item given to Mr Maior at his sessions dynnar, there beinge Mr Perkins, Mr Bowne Mr Cooke and others in wyne one gallonde ijs.[94]
>
> Item the xxth of Januarie paid for wyne & Sugar at our sessions dynnar there being with Mr maior Mr perkin our recorder and all Mr maiors brethren in wyne ij gallons iiijs.[95]

In the institutional framework of the governance of Nottingham, the mickletourn jury has an interesting role, originally developing out of the view of frankpledge, sheriff's tourn or leet jurisdiction in the borough. The jury made presentments twice each year before the leet courts at Easter and Michaelmas. As reciprocity and reward for their diligence, the borough contributed to the jurors' dinner on the two occasions in the year, the chamberlains disbursing 2*s.* for each dinner.[96] By the late sixteenth century, the chamberlains' remitted for the refreshment for the jurors.[97] By the seventeenth century, however, the separate allowance for the jurors' dinner had become subsumed in a global total in the chamberlains' account.[98] Such refreshment at views of frankpledge or leet courts

[91] *Patterns of Social Capital: Stability and Change in Historical Perspective*, ed. Robert Rotberg (Cambridge, 2001), esp. p. 169 (Jack Greene).

[92] NA CA3378, f. 24 .

[93] NA CA3383, f. 23v (6 July 1608).

[94] NA CA1624 (1584-5), f. 6: Perkins was the Recorder.

[95] NA CA1625 (1585-6), f. 27v.

[96] *RBN*, II, p. 377 (1464; the chamberlains paid 4*s.* for the two dinners of the mickletourn); *RBN*, III, p. 232 (chamberlains' account, 1484-5: 2*s.* towards the cost of the Mickletourn dinner, 26 October); *RBN*, III, p. 237 (same account, 2*s.* towards same cost, 24 May); *RBN*, III, pp. 262, 264, 271; *RBN*, III, p. 360 (4*s.* for the mickletourn dinners from the chamberlains, 1529-30, for the whole year).

[97] NA CA1624 (1584-5), f. 6v: Item the xxv of Aprill' paid for wyne and Sugar given at the mydleturnes Dynner xviijd.; f. 17: Item paid for ale & bread at the mydleturnes vardict xviijd.

[98] NA CA1634 (1618-19), f. 5: Item for the Michellturne Charges att Michellmas sessiones xxxjs. xd. f. 7: Item for the Charges of the Mickleturne att Easter Sessiones xxxjs. vd.; NA CA1644 (1635-6), f. 5: Item for the Micleturnes Chardges at Michaelis sessiones xlvs. iiijd.; CA NA1644 (1635-6), f. 7: Item for mickleturnes Chardges at easter sessiones xliiijs. ijd.

might have obtained in many incorporated urban places. At Shrewsbury, for example, the bailiffs and the *legales homines* (jurors) at the second great court were entertained to dinner at a cost of 17*s.* 3*d.*[99] The notion of recompense was extended there to a dinner for the bailiffs and the collectors of the subsidy with the aldermen in 1590, consisting of mutton pies, veal, rabbits, chicken, pigeons, venison, apple tarts, butter, spices, fruit, bread, beer, and wine.[100] The mayor of Reading was limited to a dinner at only one meeting of quarter sessions in 1597, perhaps for a dinner for the affeerors, as is recorded in 1601.[101]

Conclusions

If the communal meal for the civic elite had served as a metaphor for the body social and political, during the sixteenth century at least some of that meaning had diminished. The annual civic dinners provided an occasion for the body politic to represent itself to itself as a corporate entity. The incoming mayor's dinner established not only the status of the mayor as the titular head of the corporate body, but also presented the aldermen as the fathers and elders of civic society, and bound the councillors and commons in loyalty. In return, the mayor offered reciprocity at his own cost, in most cases, although in some boroughs the cost was subsidized. About Michaelmas every year, the corporate body reiterated its communal purpose and corporate identity, ostensibly in an amicable environment. The problem remains that it is difficult to get behind the rhetoric which suffused the accounts and narratives which were almost invariably reported by the hierarchy, which again represented itself to itself. Dining was hierarchically arranged and we do not have access to dissenting opinion.

In some urban authorities, the mode of reciprocity extended outside the elite of officialdom. These corporations, such as Nottingham, recognized the contribution made by some of their lower officials. Multiple motivations probably obtained. These lower officials were responsible for valuable resources, such as the coppice and the meadows for Nottingham. The reciprocity offered by the urban government reflected the value of the resources. This recognition could, nonetheless, have been achieved through wages. In the case of the Nottingham, the governing elite decided on a more personal approach, to patronize a dinner with the lower officials at their houses. The common and corporate identity was re-established by this inclusiveness.[102]

During the sixteenth century, a transformation occurred in the ethos of the common meals partaken by the governing elite. Corporate identity remained significant, but in a somewhat secularized context.[103] In this new environment,

[99] *REED: Shropshire*, ed. J. Alan Somerset(Toronto, 1994), p. 138.

[100] *REED: Shropshire*, p. 245.

[101] *Reading Records*, I, p. 441; *volume II James I to Charles I* (1603/4-1629) (London, 1895), pp. 15, 21, 31.

[102] Phil Withington, *Society in Early Modern England: The Vernacular Origins of Some Powerful Ideas* (Cambridge, 2010), pp. 177-86.

[103] For the generalized impact, Georges Bataille, *The Absence of Myth: Writings on Surrealism*, ed., trans. and introduced by Michael Richardson (London, 2006), pp. 13-14 ("Introduc-

it was tenable to suspend the dinners and to redistribute the cost to urban improvements. The common purpose continued to be the focus, but depended less on the maintenance of communal identity. Civic function was denuded of its mystical cloak.[104] However much such occasions had, moreover, been employed to foster harmony in former times, some of them could very well have worked to the opposite effect under the circumstances of the 1590s.[105]

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tion" by Richardson); for the transition from the permeation of the sacred to the "buffered" self by removing the cloak of mystique and transcendence, most recently Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge, MA, 2007), pp. 43-54, 84.

[104] C. John Somerville, *The Secularization of Early Modern England: From Religious Culture to Religious Faith* (Oxford, 1992); Jonathan Barry, "Civility and civic culture in early modern England: the meanings of urban freedom", in *Civil Histories: Essays Presented to Sir Keith Thomas*, ed. Peter Burke, Brian Harrison, and Paul Slack (Oxford, 2000), pp. 193-6; Phil Withington, "Agency, custom and the English corporate system", in *Identity and Agency in England, 1500-1800*, ed. Henry French and Jonathan Barry (Basingstoke, 2004), pp. 200-22.

[105] Robert Tittler, "Henry Hardware and the face of Puritan reform in Chester", in his *Townspeople and Nation: English Urban Experiences 1540-1640* (Stanford, CA, 2001), p. 155; Muir, *Ritual in Early Modern Europe*.

Chapter 8

The New Inn: fashion and stigmatization

Was *The New Inn* Jonson's late "estates play"?[1]Dessen coined the sub-genre to indicate that Jonson's plays such as *The Alchemist* address all sorts of people and all levels of society, whilst referring or harking back to a notion of social organization divided into estates. Principally, like much of Jonson's *oeuvre*, the contention of the play is self-discovery, in this case for the playwright himself as well as the characters.[2] Whilst observing the Aristotelian unities of time and place, and more loosely action, Jonson nonetheless included, but not incorporated, the whole of society in the drama.[3] The various companies at the *New Inn*, near Barnet perform the role of a metonymic cosmos. The customers who frequent the inn represent the lower sorts of people, whilst the temporary visiting company of Lady Frampul and the contingent arrival of Lovel the highest echelon of the aristocracy. The intrusion of the tailor, Nick Stuff and his wife, Pinnacia, reinforces the representation of the lower orders. The strategy of ordering of society in the play involves temporary inversions and pollution, which, although seemingly and to some contemporaries far-fetched, have a degree of coherence.[4] Perhaps the most sordid of the inversions demands attention first: Pinnacia and the gown.

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[1]Alan Dessen, "The Alchemist: Jonson's 'Estates' Play", *Renaissance Drama*, 7 (1964), pp. 35-54. The importance of this comedy was denoted by Anne Barton, *Ben Jonson: Dramatist* (Cambridge, 1984), ch. 12. For political resonance, Ian Donaldson, *Ben Jonson: A Life* (Oxford, 2011), p. 415.

[2]Barton, *Ben Jonson*, pp. 259, 270, 284.

[3]The text predominantly used here is *Ben Jonson. The New Inn*, edited with an introduction by Michael Hattaway (The Revels Plays, Manchester, 1984); for the unity of action, p. 16.

[4]Hattaway, *New Inn*, p. 37. For the abrupt, but complicated dénouement, Anne Barton, *Ben Jonson*, pp. 279-81. For the relationship of the plot to "fashion" and social hierarchy, Jonathan Haynes, *The Social Relations of Jonson's Theater* (Cambridge, 1992), pp. 51-55.

Pollution and disordering of society

Lady Frances Frampul commissioned a gown from the tailor, Nick Stuff, his moniker punning on the materials, to lend authority to her chambermaid, Prudence, who would preside over the court of love for Lady Frampul's entourage at the *New Inn* or *Light Heart*.[5] It is Stuff's practice to adorn his wife, Pinnacia, in the sumptuous apparel of his clients, transport her to various inns, and there to have his way with her. Unfortunately for them, their destination on this occasion, the *New Inn*, brings them into contact with Lady Frances, who recognizes Stuff, who has to confess to the committing of his fantasies, although it is Pinnacia, who is reluctant to be involved in his subterfuges, who completes the narrative of Stuff's incontinence and disreputable designs in all its "immodest" detail.

> It is a foolish trick, madam, he has; For though he be your tailor, he is my beast. I may be bold with him and tell his story. When he makes any fine garment will fit me, Or any rich thing that he thinks of price, Then must I put it on and be his countess Before he carry it home unto the owners. A coach is hired and four horse; he runs In his velvet jacket thus to Rumford, Croydon, Hounslow, or Barnet [the location of the *New Inn*], the next bawdy road; And takes me out, carries me up, and throws me Upon a bed[6]

Upon this revelation, Lady Frampul refers to the judgement of the court of love, still in session. The transgression is defined as treason against the sovereign of the court as well as a profanation, demanding the "censure of the court". The decision of the court is to strip Pinnacia to her undergarments and to subject Stuff and Pinnacia to rough music.[7] More significantly, however, the commissioned gown, it is assumed at this point, cannot be cleaned, cleansed or purified, but must be destroyed.[8]

> LADY FRAMPUL Pluck the polluted robes over her ears;
> Or cut them all to pieces, make a fire o' them.
> PRUDENCE To rags and cinders, burn th'idolatrous vestures.[9]

This episode requires extensive interpretation: the significance of Pinnacia's name; the transgression against the sovereign; the tailor's ability not only to

[5] Julie Sanders, "'Wardrobe stuffe': clothes, costume and the politics of dress in Ben Jonson's *The New Inn*", *Renaissance Forum* 6 (2002), pp. 1-27.

[6] *The New Inn*, Act IV, sc. iii, lines 63-74.

[7] Edward P. Thompson, "'Rough music': Le Charivari anglais", *Annales; Économies, Sociétés, Civilisations* 27 (1972), pp. 285-312; Martin Ingram, "Ridings, Rough Music, and the 'Reform of Popular Culture' in Early Modern England", *Past & Present* 105 (1984), pp. 79-113.

[8] Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of the Concepts of Pollution and Taboo* (London, 1966), but, more importantly, William I. Miller, *The Anatomy of Disgust* (Cambridge, MA, 1997), pp. 89-108.

[9] *The New Inn*, Act IV, sc. iii, lines 92-94.

fashion, but to counterfeit; the infraction of the Sumptuary Laws which represented the ordering of society; the destruction of the garments since the pollution is not merely of the attire but of the social order, which cannot be reversed by purification, but only by the severest of punishments of the gown by the court: the capital code.

Pinnacia was admirably defined by Anne Barton as "a light bark given to sexual deviations from a straight course".[10] A pinnace was a small boat which acted as a go-between for larger ships in estuaries. It contains also sexual innuendo, "[u]sed chiefly of whores".[11] This implication is intensified by Pinnacia's insistence on referring to her husband, Nick Stuff, the tailor, as her "Protection".[12] The ultimate confession of this status is conveyed by Pinnacia herself, who informs Lady Frampul that Stuff, when commissioned to fashion a high-class garment for a distinguished customer, first dresses Pinnacia in it and has sexual intercourse with her, as his "countess". Stuff hires a coach and four and wears his velvet jacket for the adventure.[13] The Host proclaims, to extend the bawdy metaphor: "Pillage the pinnace".[14] The Host, Footman and Fly condemn the offenders to tossing (Stuff) and conveyance in a cart with rough music ("beat the basin") in front, the popular punishment of sexual transgressors.[15]

Prudence, still principal of the court, demands that the costume be shredded and burned. She is sensitive to the inversion of the social order, which has, through the metaphor of the soiled dress, been profaned. The dress is now impure and must be destroyed to reverse the inversion of the social order by this profanation. Ultimately, when it is realized that the sexual act has not yet happened in the dress, Pru accedes to wearing the dress, so the emphasis is on the potential pollution. The transgression entails also the infraction of the sumptuary laws enacted through the sixteenth century, which again has implications for right social ordering.

Contingently, there may also be a gendered imputation about Pinnacia, for women's clothing was fastened with pins in contrast to men's fastening with buttons: "The button is a mark of masculine power, for women and children fasten their garments with pins and laces".[16] This sartorial difference potentially suggests male domination of a wife and her subordination in a patriarchal manner, which is, however, ambiguous in the case of Stuff and Pinnacia, for, although he concocts the scheme, she apparently towers over him physically. Again, there is complication in the inversion, for she physically dominates him, he exerts his male desire over her in his salacious plot, but that sexual gratification involves her assuming a higher social status than him, and ultimately she places all the responsibility on him.

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[10] Barton, *Ben Jonson*, p. 273.
[11] Gordon Williams, *A Glossary of Shakespeare's Sexual Language* (London, 1997), p. 236
[12] *The New Inn*, Act IV, scene ii, line 59, scene iii, line 38
[13] *The New Inn*, Act IV, scene iii, lines 63-74.
[14] *The New Inn*, Act IV, scene iii, line 90.
[15] *The New Inn*, Act IV, scene iii, lines 96-100.
[16] Daniel Roche, *A History of Everyday Things: The Birth of Consumption in France, 1600-1800* (Cambridge, 2000), p. 195.

These motifs were deployed in other comedies, by Jonson and his contemporaries. The association of tailors, elaborate dresses (a gown bedecked with jewels and precious stones) and lechery provides the exposition in *Westward Hoe*, where Birdlime, the bawd, takes delivery of the article which she has commissioned to entice a protégée.[17] Jonson employs the term "pinnace" in *The Devil is An Ass*, when Fiztdotrell enters into a bargain with Wittipol to borrow Wittipol's fine cloak to attend the theatre in return for allowing Wittipol to converse for fifteen minutes with Fitzdottrel's young and beautiful wife. Mistress Fitzdottrel, not being party to the contract nor consulted, is reluctant to engage in the meeting with the anonymous visitor, Wittipol. Fitzdottrel thus directs her to the meeting:

> ... Here my sail bears for you. Tack toward him, sweet pinnace ...[18]

In this context, the term seems superficially to be deployed only in the sense of the small boat which navigates where its parent ship cannot, into and out of port: a metaphor for the go-between. Unwittingly, however, in his eagerness for the cloak, Fiztdottrel is running the risk in others' eyes of prostituting his wife, as she herself declaims: "... [t]he scorn will fall/ As bitterly on me ..."[19]

The aristocracy and social order

A central character, a quasi-narrator, is the Host, Goodstock, an intermediary between the usual company of the inn and the temporarily visiting aristocratic companies.[20] Goodstock is at ease in both societies. In the unravelling of the plot, in the complications of the various courtship arrangements, the Host reveals himself as Lord Frampul. The Host divests himself of his disguise as an innkeeper, a cap and beard, and requests Fly, his serving man, companion and "fellow gipsy", to collect his noble dress: "and fetch my lord".[21] The Host recounts the collapse of the Frampul household to Lovel, on the arrival at the inn of Lady Frances Frampul and her company. Lady Frampul had issue by "[t]he mad Lord Frampul" two daughters, Frances and Laetitia.[22] The assumption was that Laetitia died in infancy, their mother descended into melancholy because she did not produce a son for Lord Frampul, and disappeared. Frampul initially searched for her, but then became enamoured of the life of pipers, fiddlers, rushers, puppet-masters, jugglers and gipsies, and "colonies" of beggars, tumblers and ape-carriers, travelling throughout the country, especially in "those wilder nations" of the Peak and Lancashire.[23]

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[17] Thomas Dekker and John Webster, *Westward Hoe* [1607], Act I, scene I, lines 1-20.

[18] *The Devil is An Ass*, Act I, scene vi, lines 57-58.

[19] *The Devil is An Ass*, Act I, scene vi, lines 15-16; *Ben Jonson. The Devil is An Ass and Other Plays*, ed. Margaret Jane Kidnie (Oxford English Drama, 2000), p. 480.

[20] Hattaway, *New Inn*, p. 17.

[21] *The New Inn*, Act V, scene v, lines 87, 127.

[22] *The New Inn*, Act I, scene v, lines 55-80.

[23] *The New Inn*, Act V, scene v, lines 93-100. For potential influences and antecedents, Robert C. Evans, *Jonson and the Contexts of His Time* (London and Toronto, 1994), pp.

The plot here is more or less reproduced ("intertextually") in Brome's *The/A Jovial Crew*, this dramatist an acolyte of Jonson, one of the "circle/sons of Ben". Springlove, the steward of Oldrents, succumbs to an urge every Spring (in fact, May) to travel with the beggars who congregate near Oldrents' estate. Springlove is, indeed, acclaimed by the beggars as their Master, Captain or King. Two daughters of Oldrents, Rachel and Meriel, understanding from the prognostication of Patrico, a fortune teller amongst the beggars, that they are destined to be beggars, also join the company of beggars. In the dénouement, the plot unravels somewhat in the manner of *The New Inn*, for it is revealed that Springlove's origins are gentle and that he has contracted marriage with the gentle Amie, Justice Clack's niece. It transpires too that Patrico's father's estate was acquired aggressively by Oldrents. As in *The New Inn*, the company of beggars or, in one instance gipsies, are depicted as merry, free, and happy in their environment. Brome's iteration of the plot was apparently successful.[24]

> HILLIARD Beggars! They are the only people can boast the benefit of a free state in the full enjoyment of liberty, mirth, and ease, having all things in common and nothing wanting of nature's whole provision within the reach of their desires. Who would have lost this sight of their revels?
>
> VINCENT How think you, ladies? Are they not the only happy in a nation?
>
> MERIEL Happier than we, I'm sure, that are pent-up and tied by the nose to the continual steam of hot hospitality* here in our father's house, when they have the air at pleasure in all variety.[25]

The beggars are thus portrayed as the "merry pastoral figures", the obverse of ordinary society, an original condition, not shackled by the artifices of civil society. In the plays, however, this inversion is only a temporary escape for the people from civil society; their return is inevitable. As in this romantic and the more dangerous image of the beggars, the depiction of their alternative society is hierarchical and organized, although the monarch is acclaimed rather than hereditary.[26]

Since the Host (Goodstock/Frampul – Goodstock a metonym of his lineage as Frampul) declares: "A strange division of a family", we are invited to consider the context and predicaments, perhaps "crisis", of the contemporary aristocratic household.[27] The reunification of this aristocratic household conformed to Jonson's perceptions of the role of the aristocratic family as the backbone of rural England, redolent of his pastoral eulogies to the noble place and household in

116-31: "Jonson, Campion, and The Gypsies Metamorphos'd" (Campion's "Ayres sung and played at Brougham Castle in 1617" (printed 1618)).

[24] <http://www.hrionline.ac.uk/brome/viewTranscripts.jsp?play=JC&act=1&type=BOTH> May 2014.

[25] Richard Brome, *The Jovial Crew*, Act II, scene I, lines 120-122.

[26] William Carroll, "Vagrancy", in *A Companion to Renaissance Drama*, ed. Arthur Kinney (Oxford, 2002), p. 87.

[27] *The New Inn*, Act I, scene v, line 75; Hattaway, *New Inn*, p. 5.

his poems such as *To Penshurst*.[28] The further inference might be that the host (Frampul) resumes the obligations of the nobility of ancient lineage, after abandoning those responsibilities in his journeyings with the gipsies and beggars. Jonson's play implies and Brome's directly proclaims the freedom and merriment of the gipsies and beggars, their liberation from anxiety and care, and their abrogation of any responsibility to other than their close companions.

A similar situation obtained at the *New Inn*, for the Host (Goodstock) frequented the same sort of company in Fly, Tipto, Burst and Huffle. His existence as an innkeeper involved an abdication of the responsibilities and obligations of the old aristocracy, although a different kind of hospitality. In effect, Frampul's dereliction of duty subsists in his denial of the traditional responsibility of hospitality of the nobility, but his extension of it as Host to the less salubrious margins of society.[29] "Yet the play is not an earnest elevation of working class morality above that of the upper classes".[30] Indeed, it is not, because, although Jonson colours that environment as convivial and informal, the finale contains the resumption of aristocratic obligation by Lord Frampul and recognition of his social responsibility. In "scrutinizing a narrow milieu, the ambivalent morality of the working class and the niceties of social distinctions there", Jonson is making a direct comparison with the formal obligations of the aristocracy in the ordering of society.[31] Restored to social position and correct order, the Host/Frampul stands as a synecdoche for an aristocracy which had lost its way and which ought to reoccupy that role.

We might perceive the rather sober character of Lovel and the motive of his unrequited dedication to Lady Frances. In the exposition of the play, he prescribes forthrightly that nobility engenders not carefree licentiousness and profligacy, but obligations. He describes Lord Frampul to the Host (the disguised Lord Frampul) as "mad" and "cock-brained" because of his erratic voyaging abroad with the gipsies, character traits followed by his daughter, Lady Frances, who:

> ... takes all lordly ways how to consume it [the estate]
> As nobly as she can: if clothes and feasting
> And the authorised means of riot will do it.[32]

The Host (Frampul) accepts, however, her excess as corresponding to her status and condition, unconvinced by Lovel, reflecting that he has still not considered the social obligations of his own status.[33] Lovel is not an impartial critic, flawed by his "melancholic" response to Lady Frances Frampul's disregard for his devotion, but he denotes the principle that the nobleness of nobility involves obligations to the social order. There is a certain amount of irony in

[28] Ian Donaldson, "Jonson's poetry", in *The Cambridge Companion to Ben Jonson*, ed. Richard Harp and Stanley Stewart (Cambridge, 2000), pp. 119-139, esp. 128-36; Donaldson, *Ben Jonson*, pp. 284-288.

[29] Felicity Heal, *Hospitality in Early Modern England* (Oxford, 1990).

[30] Hattaway, *New Inn*, p. 26.

[31] Hattaway, *New Inn*, p. 26.

[32] *The New Inn*, Act I, scene v, lines 78-80.

[33] *The New Inn*, Act I, scene v, line 81.

the Host according the epithet "melancholic" to Lovel, indicating Lovel's own flawed character.[34] Neither the Host nor Lady Frances Frampul can be accepted as unbiased critics of Lovel, but their repeated allusion to his disposition as "melancholy and musty", his "daily dumps", "sad and lumpish", "lethargy", and "sullen", not only prepare the audience for the transformation of opinion of Lovel through his eloquence and valour later, but also indicate real character defects.[35] Although Lovel is cognisant of the qualities (integrity and valour) of the old aristocracy, yet he is excessively sober, serious to a fault.

Transgender and correct order

In the convoluted plot, the audience is introduced early to the Host's son, Frank (Francis). The Host had adopted Frank from an old Irish nurse, taking her into service too. Considered by Lady Frances Frampul and Prudence as a "pretty" boy, he is induced to participate in another trick of theirs. They dress him in female clothes and have their coach driver bring him back to the New Inn in disguise as a gentle lady, Laetitia.[36] Beaufort is mesmerised by her and marries her through the intermediary of Fly, who makes the arrangements for the marriage. The two ladies, Lady Frampul and Prudence, then attempt to humiliate Beaufort by revealing Laetitia as the boy Frank. At this point, the old Irish nurse divulges her real self, the old Lady Frampul, wife of the Host/Goodstock/Frampul, and Frank as Laetitia, the lost daughter of the Host/Goodstock/Frampul. This complicated "transgendered" sub-plot, intended by two tricksters as a ruse to discomfort and amuse their company, thus serves two purposes: to reunite the Frampul household, but also to reconfirm the correct gender order after its subversion and inversion.

Inversions and restorations

One of the major criticisms of *The New Inn* has been the rather artificial combination of the (sub-)genres of satire and the chivalric court of love. Massinger adopted the sub-genre of the court of love in his *The Parliament of Love*, but without the distraction of sub-plots.[37] Jonson approached the combination of satire and romance in a bawdier manner in *The Devil is an Ass*, in which Fitzdottrel is prepared to allow Wittipol to woo Fitzdottrel's young wife in language redolent of Lovel's, in return for the loan of Wittipol's cloak for an evening at the

[34] *The New Inn*, Act I, scene vi, lines 116-117.

[35] *The New Inn*, Act I, scene ii, lines 5, 15; scene iii, lines 138, 145; Act II, scene vi, line 97.

[36] For the context, David Cressy, "Cross-dressing in the birth room: gender trouble and cultural boundaries", in his *Agnes Bowker's Cat: Travesties and Transgression in Tudor and Stuart England* (Oxford, 2000), pp. 92-115, especially the notes at pp. 301-4; Alison Findlay, "Gendering the stage", in *A Companion to Renaissance Drama*, ed. Arthur F. Kinney (Oxford, 2002), pp. 399-415, esp. p. 406.

[37] *The Plays and Poems of Philip Massinger*, ed. Philip Edwards and Colin Gibson (Oxford, 1976), II, pp. 97-179.

theatre.[38] Another dissatisfaction concerns the "subsequent unveiling of hidden identities [which] comes gratuitously".[39]

The recurrent device in *The New Inn* is the inversion of the social order and social norms. These inversions are in some senses Bakhtinian, but in others not. There is no sense in which these inversions are intended as "safety valves" in the wider politico-social context, temporary interruptions which ultimately confirm the right order. The risk perceived by Jonson is a permanent undermining of the social order and its norms and his authorial intention is to correct those defects. As has been indicated, his context is an animadversion to and an aversion to the corrupting of honour and titles, on which even the Host/Goodstock/Frampul can comment:

> Ay, that was when the nursery's self was noble,
> And only virtue made it, not the market, ...

Every noble household was "[a]n academy of honour".[40] The environment of *The New Inn* is, however, superficially carnivalesque in its revelry and in the interchanges between the host, some of his customers, and the comedic character of Fly, a wise fool. The revelry is not, however, somatic or bodily, but oral, aural and literate.[41] The *Light Heart* or *New Inn* is a *locus* of disorder in an ordered society.[42] The role as innkeeper might, moreover, be conceived as an interlude in its ludic etymology for Frampul, a temporary distraction for him, as also his half-year in the company of the beggars. Psychologically, Frampul may be experiencing the five stages of grief and loss, perhaps, paradoxically, the depressive stage when cares are ignored.[43]

The place of the play also allows a linguistic heteroglossia, the opening up of a Babel or babble of diverse voices, interjections, incomplete comments, interruptions, and registers - displaying the influence of Pantagruel.[44] The proposed rough music and punishment of Stuff and Pinnacia is redolent of *charivari*, although it is technically imposed by a legal authority, the court of love in its judicial remit.[45] The court of love does seemingly represent a temporary inversion for the later restoration of social order and social norms. It is a genuine interlude – temporary. It is intended as an entirely temporary reversal of social

[38] *The Devil is an Ass*, Act I, scenes iv and vi.
[39] Richard Harp, "Jonson's late plays", in *The Cambridge Companion to Ben Jonson*, ed. Harp and Stanley Stewart (Cambridge, 2000), p. 96.
[40] *The New Inn*, Act I, scene iii, lines 50-52.
[41] For carnival and its outcomes, Edward Muir, *Ritual in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge, 1997), pp. 86-98. For Jonson and the carnivalesque, Peter Stallybrass and Allon White, *The Politics and Poetics of Transgression* (Ithaca, NY, 1986), ch. 1 "The fair, the pig, authorship" (Bartholomew Fair).
[42] Susan Amussen, *An Ordered Society: Gender and Class in Early Modern England* (New York, 1988)
[43] Elisabeth Kübler-Ross and David Kessler, *On Grief and Grieving: Finding the Meaning of Grief Through the Five Stages of Loss* (Chicago, IL, 2005); Slavoj Žižek, *Living in the End Times* (London, 2011 edn), p. xi.
[44] Sue Vice, *Introducing Bakhtin* (Manchester, 1997), pp. 18-44
[45] Muir, *Ritual in Early Modern Europe*, pp. 98-104.

order, with the ultimate reversion to proper order. It is contrived and organized, not an eruption nor exhibiting excess. Its remit is the intellect, not the body.[46] There is no expenditure as excess, destructive or deforming.[47] It is an unsuccessful inversion, nonetheless, for at least two reasons. First, Lady Frances Frampul cannot relinquish her sovereignty completely: on more than one occasion she challenges the sovereign of the court of love, her chambermaid ("secretary") Pru, who has to insist on her authority. Second, the reversal to the proper order is defective to the extent that Latimer is enamoured of Pru and in the dénouement becomes betrothed to her.[48] Pru is thus not only temporarily elevated, but raised to a permanent position of gentility. In this respect, the play contrasts with *Cynthia's Revels*, in which Hedon "does not have the means to be a courtier longer than the period of the revels".[49] Her incorporation into gentle lineage can be perceived as a necessary introduction of reason, common sense, and new blood into a tired and resigned old lineage.

Conclusion

In *The New Inn*, Jonson engages closely again with all the cultures and subcultures of society, the various estates and "sorts" of people, in the world and the under-world. Although Lovel has flaws, he represents the nobility which is prepared to stand up to its ancient obligations, unlike the fragile Frampul and the prodigal Lady Francis. The nobility receives strong criticism for not persevering and maintaining social order. The author's derision is reserved, however, for the perfidy of the tailor and his wife and the below-stairs "subhuman" terrain, a *demi monde* with which Jonson, from his earlier existence, was entirely familiar.[50]

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[46] Compare Christopher Kendrick, *Utopia, Carnival, and Commonwealth in Renaissance England* (Toronto, 2004), pp. 76, 88, 92, 93.

[47] Kendrick, *Utopia, Carnival, and Commonwealth*, p. 91.

[48] Barton, *Ben Jonson*, p. 270.

[49] Haynes, *Social Relations of Jonson's Theater*, p. 64.

[50] Donaldson, *Ben Jonson*; David Riggs, *Ben Jonson: A Life* (Cambridge, MA, 1989)

Chapter 9

Conclusion

Much about late-sixteenth and early-seventeenth provincial economy and society is revealed by the possession of coin in porbate inventories. The wide differences in socio-economic prospects are represented by the divergence in access to and accumulation of money. Some difficulties are, of course, encountered. The vast proportion of inventories do not record any money, which could be interpreted that either the deceased had none at all or an insignificant amount. When money is incorporated, it is often associated or compounded with other items, most frequently apparel - as apparel and money in his purse. There exist, however, sufficient inventories which isolate money as a separate item in the inventory for some inferences to be drawn. In Lichfield diocese, between 1533 and 1553, 55 (7.7 percent of the) inventories furnished a figure for the amount of money, amounting in all to £317 3*s.* 11*d.* Between 1554 to 1600, the percentage was slightly lower (6.9 percent), comprising 184 inventories, amounting to a total stock of coin of £906 17*s.* 10½*d.* In the first four decades of the seventeenth century, the proportion increased to 12.4 percent, consisting of 409 inventories, amounting to £4, 133 11*s.* 1¼*d.* The data for the diocese of Salisbury between 1591 and 1639 are complicated by two higher clergy who possessed £1, 783 and £500 in coin. Excluding those two anomalies, 438 inventories (18.1 percent) itemized coin distinctively, amounting in all to £4, 871 9*s.* 11½*d.* Considering the total number of inventories, theoretically there was a fair amount of cash for circulation.

As is indicated by the two exceptional clergy, however, the distribution of coin was significantly skewed. Where money is itemized on its own, the preponderant amount in each inventory was less than £5, and in a considerable number of inventories £1 or less, whilst a small percentage had large stocks of coin.These distributions are exhibited in Tables 9.1 and 9.2 for the respective dioceses.

In the table, columns two to four enumerate the number of inventories with the specified amount of money. The proportions are consistent over the cohorts.[1]

[1] Spearman's rank correlation for cols 1 and 2 = 0.899, for cols 2 and 3= 0.87, and for cols

Table 9.1: Distribution of money in inventories: Lichfield diocese

Amount (£s)	1533-1553	1554-1600	1601-1639
<1	17	67	135
>1-5	22	72	124
>5-10	8	22	58
>10-15	3	6	24
>15-20	0	4	20
>20-25	1	7	8
>25-30	2	2	4
>30-40	2	2	12
>40-50	0	1	8
>50-60	0	0	6
>60-70	0	1	0
>70-80	0	0	2
>80-90	0	0	2
>100	0	0	6

The availability of coin was thus distorted. Most inhabitants had difficulty in accessing coin. When they had the capacity to acquire some coin, the amounts were minimal. By contrast, small numbers of wealthier inhabitants were withdrawing coin from circulation, to the detriment of their neighbours. Multiple reasons can be adduced. The poorest had few resources with which to attract coin and could not retain it for any period. The resort to gages and pawns is an associated feature. Those successful in agrarian enterprise or craft had difficulty deploying their accumulated capital. Despite the development of opportunities for enterprise, there remained paradoxically restrictions on outlets for re-investment. From the evidence of leases above, access to land was limited, otherwise than exceptional circumstance. Marginal acquisitions of land allowed flexibility and more livestock, but the extent of expansion was restricted. Status or position goods allowed disinvestment or diversion of capital, but the amounts involved were also constrained. Re-investment in technology had limits and in materials definition by the local market. The final recourse was a store of liquid capital - money. Equally, the incentive to store coin was a condition of the environment. Gresham's law obtained, but it was extended to all coin. Not only good coin but any coin was withdrawn from circulation. The scarcity of coin in circulation was a self-fulfilling prophecy: as access became difficult, so there was recourse to hoarding. Secondly, those who accumulated capital could get involved in finance capitalism - specialties - even in the countryside.

Any attempt to define the social composition of accumulators of liquid capital is complicated, because only about a third of these inventories (and their wills where testate) provide information about the status of the deceased. Accepting that third, and omitting still the two higher clergy, the analysis in the

1 and 3= 0.823.

Table 9.2: Distribution of coin in inventories: Salisbury diocese, 1591-1639

Amount (£s)	N of inventories
<1	76
>1-5	176
>5-10	68
>10-15	26
>15-20	27
>20-25	12
>25-30	10
>30-40	14
>40-50	7
>50-60	10
>60-70	1
>70-80	6
>80-90	0
>90-100	1
>100	4

Table 9.3: Social categories and money in inventories: Salisbury diocese

Status	N inventories	% all money	% all money: status defined
Gentle	7	5.1	29.5
Clergy	7	4.6	22.8
Widows	41	17.9	7.0
Single women	13	5.4	9.0
Undefined women	6	4.2	7.6
Yeomen	28	13.8	5.2
Husbandmen	11	3.2	8.3
Crafts/trades	28	6.5	10.6

diocese of Salisbury can be extended a little further, as in Table 9.3.

To a large extent, column four is otiose, since most of those of undefined status were probably of the "middling sort" in the countryside, but the numbers are included for comprehensiveness. Equally, many of the widows probably pertained to the same social category of rural "middling sort". What can be deduced, therefore, is that a section of the agrarian "middling sort" withdrew coin from circulation and was engaged in lquid capital accumulation.

A few examples from the Lichfield inventories will place some colour on this phenomenon. The yeoman Richard Brette, of Seighford, had £13 8*s.* 2*d.* in his chest on his death in 1598, his total personal estate evaluated at £92 13*s.* 0*d.* Another yeoman, with just slightly more inventoried worth (£119 16*s.* 0*d.*), William Brooke of Kinver (1617), possessed gold and money in his chamber amounting to £32 11*s.* 6*d.* Money amounting respectively to £30 and £38 4*s.*

2*d.* was discovered amongst the possessions of the yeomen, Edward Brincknell of Clifton on Dunsmore (1616) and William Bentley of Wem(1618), their respective personal estates totalling £277 1*s.* 0*d.* and £365.

This divergence in access to coin demarcated local society. Stocks of coin allowed for discretionary spending; those without coin were restricted to necessary spending and credit constraint. Lack allowed for disparagement. "What is it you lack?" demeaned, implying imperfection, not just shortage.[2]A surfeit of coin enabled entry into the incipient finance capitalism which expanded particularly from the 1580s. Successful capital accumulation presented serendipitous problems. Investment in technology and land was limited. Lending on specialties provided one solution, even outside the City. The acquisition of land was possible through leases, but often only in marginal acreages which allowed some flexibility in husbandry. The purchase of position or status goods differentiated the successful from the indigent, but the "investment" (or disinvestment) was both circumscribed in expenditure and to traditional things, plate and more pewter, objects of "fetishism" lacking novelty. The purchase of position goods did not constitute at this time a "consumer revolution". The evident inequality of the early sixteenth century was exacerbated by demographic and inflationary pressures over the succeeding century. The rungs on the social ladder were stretched. Success for some was counterbalanced by increasing pauperization for others. By concentrating on probate inventories, the lowest echelon in view includes a sample of the poorest in provincial society, but not the absolutely indigent. By and large, the spectre is part of the settled, not the migrant and impoverished who fell outside local society.

[2] *Thomas Dekker. The Honest Whore Parts One and Two*, ed. Nick de Somogyi (London, 1998), scene vii, lines 1-8 (p. 48).

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