

**Women's experience of violence and suffering as represented in loyalist
accounts of the English Civil War**

Dr Fiona McCall

Senior Lecturer in History, University of Portsmouth & Departmental Lecturer in
Local & Social History, University of Oxford Department of Continuing Education

Biography

Dr Fiona McCall is an early modern historian specialising in sixteenth and seventeenth-century religious and social history. Her work focuses on anti-clericalism, religious conflict, family and memory within parishes during and after the English Civil wars. She has published a book, *Baal's Priests: the Loyalist Clergy and the English Revolution* (Ashgate, 2013) and other papers on loyalist culture. She is currently writing a book on religious conflict in English parishes during the Commonwealth period, funded by the British Academy. She lectures in history at the University of Portsmouth and for the University of Oxford Department of Continuing Education.

Address

41 Clayhill Close, Waltham Chase, Hampshire, SO32 2TT

Tel: 07733114279

Email: Fiona.Mccall@port.ac.uk

Abstract

A long-standing literary and religious narrative tradition positioned medieval and early modern women as the helpless, passive and silent victims of male cruelty and violence. Yet during the English Civil Wars, expressed ideals of female meekness were challenged, as women became notably more assertive, voicing their opinions by preaching, writing and petitioning, or otherwise becoming 'masculine'. After the Restoration of 1660, female agency was seen as a symptom of a troubled past, causing debate amongst historians as to whether the Civil Wars had any significant effect on women's status in society. This paper investigates attitudes to gender and agency engendered by the English Civil Wars, by considering the depiction of women's responses to violence in a collection of letters describing the experiences of loyalist clerical families during the Civil Wars. Although the majority of these narratives were written by men, by embracing a broad concept of authorship that includes both written accounts and oral narratives by women embedded in accounts with ostensible male authorship, over a hundred accounts are found to have some female attribution. In male-authored accounts, the persecution of loyalist clerical families is often purposefully articulated via the experiences of women, with a particular focus on the sufferings of mothers linked to contemporary discourse depicting the English church as a mother, *Ecclesia Anglicana*. These accounts prove receptive to received ideas highlighting and normalising female passivity and lack of agency in the face of violence and suffering. Accounts with female authorship depart significantly from these conventions, placing a more positive construction on women's experiences, often reversing the dynamics of power between males and females and rarely depicting women as victims, preferring to demonstrate, in a variety of ways, examples of successful female agency and resourcefulness.

Acknowledgements

With thanks to the AHRC, to the Women's History Network and the Bath Spa University Life Writing Group for opportunities to present this work, and to Felicity Heal, June Purvis, Sue Bruley, my colleagues and students at Portsmouth and Oxford, and my feminist son Thomas, for many fruitful discussions on gender politics.

Women's experience of violence and suffering as represented in loyalist accounts of the English Civil War

Dr Fiona McCall

In October 1645, during the storming of Basing House in Hampshire, at the end of the first English Civil War, a young woman died defending her father from attack. According to parliamentarian eye-witness Hugh Peters, the daughter of royalist clergyman Matthew Griffith 'came forth railing against our souldiers for their ruff carriges towards her father', and was, in response, 'slaine by the hands of Major Harrison'.¹ Vocal and assertive, yet also a victim, the behaviour of Griffith's daughter seemed to disconcert male authors recalling these events in the following decades, as their clumsy accounts of the incident reveal. One described her (incorrectly) as the only woman in a garrison of 'papists', another noted that her corpse had been 'shamelessly left naked'.² Not one recorded her Christian name.

Her forceful and outspoken behaviour was perceived as anomalous. Her own father, in *Bethel*, one of the better known household conduct books of the seventeenth century, had advised: 'the woman is in subjection', 'silence is her richest ornament'; countless similar statements denied early modern women even the agency of speech.³ Stories from drama and literature like Shakespeare's *Titus Andronicus* and Patient Griselda inculcated the idea that the appropriate response for women to cruelty

¹ A.G. Matthews, *Walker Revised* (Oxford, 1948), p. 49; H. Peters, *The Full and Last, Relation ... Concerning Basing-House* (London, 1645), p. 2.

² J. Heath, *A Chronicle of the Late Intestine War* (1675), p. 91; W. Sanderson, *A Compleat History of the Life and Raigne of King Charles* (London, 1658), p. 835.

³ Matthew Griffith, *Bethel: or a forme for families* (London, 1633), pp. 261, 323; many other examples are cited in M. Lardy, 'From Silence to "Civil Converse": Of the Attempts to Control Seventeenth-Century Women's "Ripe Wit and Ready Tongues"', *Revue de la Société d'études Anglaises et Américaines des XVIIe et XVIIIe siècles*, 73 (2016), pp. 105-122.

or violence was passive resignation or death; the mutilation of Lavinia an epitome of the denial of female ownership even in their own sufferings.⁴ This long-standing narrative tradition positioning women as the helpless, silent, passive victims of others' aggression has never really disappeared; the objectification of dead women's bodies continues in many entertainment genres to this present day.

Embittered by his experiences, Matthew Griffith never spoke of the daughter he lost. Yet the story of this unnamed woman is emblematic of a central paradox of royalist women's experience during the British Civil Wars. Loyalists were unlikely people to challenge traditional values. But Civil War placed Griffith's family in a position he could not have envisaged when he wrote his rules for family conduct. Ideals of meek passivity would not serve when faced with the realities of armed combat. Whether royalists liked it or not, the civil wars had become one of what French historians Dauphin and Farge term *lieux du possible*, 'spaces of possibility', where events take place, which have the potential to disturb the existing social order, including universal male domination over women.⁵ Yet research into the impact of the civil wars on women's lives remains surprisingly underdeveloped.⁶

Loyalist accounts of these times, collected in the early 1700s by clergyman John Walker, recall acute ruptures to the normative life-patterns of clerical families. With thousands of Church of England clergy ejected, often violently, from their livings,

⁴ L. Bliss, 'The Renaissance Griselda: a woman for all seasons', *Viator*, 23 (1992), pp. 301-43; A.J. Weisl, "'Quitting Eve": Violence against Women in the *Canterbury Tales*', in *Violence against women in Medieval Texts* ed. A. Roberts (Gainesville, Florida, 1998), p. 132; K. Solga, *Violence Against Women in Early Modern Performance* (Basingstoke, 2009), pp. 39-40.

⁵ Jean DeJean, 'Violent women and violence against women: representing the "strong" woman in early modern France', *Signs*, 29 (2003), pp. 117-147.

⁶ A. Hughes, *Gender and the English Revolution* (London, 2012) is the most notable recent work; women's petitioning has been a recent focus: see H. Worthen, 'Supplicants and Guardians: the petitions of Royalist widows during the Civil Wars and Interregnum, 1642-1660', *Women's History Review* 26:4 (2017) 528-540; A. Whiting, *Women and Petitioning in the Seventeenth-Century Revolution* (Turnhout, Belgium, 2015).

in a conflict much concerned with religion, members of clerical families suffered as much as any social group.⁷ To what extent might these experiences, which often entailed women left alone to petition authorities or defend family property, have destabilised preconceived ideas of gender and patriarchy? Many of Walker's accounts, many more than has been recognised in previous studies, have some degree of female attribution.⁸ This makes them valuable for assessing how women wrote about the experience of violence, in comparison with how male authors conceptualised such events in terms of norms of female passivity and victimisation. Accounts with female authorship, as will be shown, eschew such conventions, preferring to demonstrate, in a variety of ways, successful female agency and resourcefulness.

The tendency to cast women in the role of victim has many progenitors in secular and Christian tradition: Eusebius's account of the early female martyrs, stories of the physical torments of medieval female saints and newer martyrologies reflecting the doctrines and context of English Protestantism. Although female martyrs in medieval narratives were frequently assertive, the main emphasis in medieval hagiography was on the physical symbolism of the suffering female body, as a 'vehicle of deeper meaning', directing the reader towards a spiritual interpretation.⁹ Protestant

⁷ Matthews, *Walker Revised*, introduction, pp. v-xxvii; I. Green, 'The persecution of "scandalous" and "malignant" parish clergy during the English Civil War', *English Historical Review*, 94 (1979), pp. 508, 522.

⁸ M. Wolfe, "'There very children were soe full of hatred': royalist clerical families and the politics of everyday conflict in Civil War and Interregnum England", (*Studies in Church History* 40, Woodbridge, 2004), pp. 194-204; A. Laurence, "'This sad and deplorable condition": an attempt towards recovering an account of the sufferings of northern clergy families in the 1640s and 1650s', (*Studies in Church History*, 12, Woodbridge, 1999), pp. 465-88; A. Laurence, "'Begging pardon for all mistakes or errors in this writeing I being a woman & doing itt myselfe": family narratives in some early eighteenth-century letters', in J. Daybell (ed.), *Early Modern Women's Letter Writing, 1450-1700* (Basingstoke, 2001), pp. 194-206.

⁹ Weisl, "'Quitting Eve'", p. 123; Roberts, *Violence against Women*, p. 3.

hagiography borrowed from earlier traditions. Although only fifty-eight of the 358 Tudor Protestant martyrs in John Foxe's *Acts and Monuments* were women, their deaths still needed explanation.¹⁰ Anxious not to provide unsuitable female role-models, Foxe understated women's involvement and refashioned their stories to emphasise the Eusebian paradigm of strength in weakness. Yet the stories themselves subverted Foxe's wordcraft from being derived from the 'disorderly' behaviour of real women defying both husbands and the Catholic Church for their beliefs.¹¹

Protestant martyrologists abandoned the medieval obsession with besieged female virginity, along with its eroticism. This change reflected a Protestant doctrinal position which promoted chastity within marriage over celibacy. English martyrologists modified traditional iconography to match. The personification of the church as a woman, *Ecclesia*, has a long history within the Christian church, being ultimately derived from the New Testament. Depicted in medieval sculpture and manuscript illustration as a virginal bride of Christ, in the writings of Protestant martyrologists John Bale and John Foxe *Ecclesia* was reimagined as a weak, homeless, and persecuted wife or widow.¹²

¹⁰ M. Hickerson, *Making Women Martyrs in Tudor England* (Basingstoke, 2005), pp. 7-8; P. Collinson, 'What are the Women Doing in the Foxe's Book of Martyrs', in *Women and Religion in the Atlantic Age*. M Clark, M Laven (eds) (Farnham, 2013), pp. 15-32.

¹¹ See account of Blandina in Eusebius, *The History of the Church* (London, 1989), pp. 141-7; Hickerson, *Women Martyrs*, pp. 8, 159-60; John Foxe, *Acts and Monuments* (London, 1583), Book 12, p. 2036; C. Levin, 'Women in The Book of Martyrs as Models of Behavior in Tudor England', *International Journal of Women's Studies*, 4 (1981), pp. 196-98.

¹² J. Spreadbury, 'The Gender of the Church: The Female Image of Ecclesia in the Middle Ages', (*Studies in Church History*, 34, Woodbridge, 1998), pp. 93-103; B. Kurth, 'Ecclesia and the Angel on the Andrew Auckland Cross', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, 6 (1943), pp. 213-214; Hickerson, *Women Martyrs*, pp. 33-5, 121; Ephesians 5: 23; Revelation 21:2: "And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband."

The identification of suffering as female went hand in hand with a ‘barrage’ of patriarchal injunctions in treatises and conduct books promoting female passivity and submission. Patriarchal ideas were so widely propagated, that some label them a ‘consensus’.¹³ Others dismiss misogynistic literature requiring women to be ‘chaste, silent and obedient’, as worst-case examples.¹⁴ With 60% of seventeenth-century women in gainful employment, actual behaviour was often a far cry from what was recommended in Christian manuals like Griffith’s, ‘more often violated than perfectly followed’, claims Joyce Catty.¹⁵

Subordination is never meekly accepted, argues Foucault, often negotiated, or challenged; early modern women ‘resisted repression’ writes Rosemary O’Day.¹⁶ ‘If patriarchal values were never seriously threatened, their domination was ‘less than total’, argues Bernard Capp, men frequently complaining that women ‘wanted their own will’.¹⁷ Patriarchal authority, argues Dom Herzog, was never ‘naturalized’ or ‘essentialized’, always controversial, with ‘spirited rejoinders’ to misogyny published during the *Querelle des Femmes*.¹⁸

¹³ M. Lardy, ‘Silence’, pp. 123-145.

¹⁴ S.J. Hull, *Chaste, Silent and Obedient* (San Marino, 1982); A. Fletcher, ‘The Protestant idea of marriage’, in A. Fletcher, P. Roberts (eds) *Religion, culture and society in early modern Britain* (Cambridge, 1994), p. 181.

¹⁵ Rosemary O’Day, *Women’s Agency in Early Modern Britain and the American Colonies* (Harlow, 2007), pp. 8, 141; J. Catty, *Writing Rape, Writing Women* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), p. xviii; T. Reinke-Williams, *Women, Work and sociability in Early Modern London* (Manchester, 2014), pp. 2, 116-125; D. Pennington, *Going to market: women, trade and social relations in early-modern English towns, c. 1550-1650* (Farnham, 2015), pp. 44, 60-64, 112.

¹⁶ S. Broomhall (ed.), *Authority, gender and emotions in late medieval and early modern England* (Basingstoke, 2015), pp. 1-17; J.C. Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance* (1990), pp. 1-20; O’Day, *Women’s Agency*, pp. 8, 141.

¹⁷ B. Capp, *When Gossips Meet* (Oxford, 2004), p. 36.

¹⁸ D. Herzog, *Household Politics: Conflict in Early Modern England* (New Haven, 2013), p. 30; R. de Haas, ‘Defences of Women’, in A. Pacheco, *Companion to Early Modern Women’s Writing*, (Oxford, 2002), pp. 248-263.

Determinists question the value of seeking signs of female agency at all, inviting us to think instead in terms of ideological practices constraining both sexes.¹⁹ Later theorists see agency as possible, but emphasise the reciprocal relationship between the 'discursive subject' and their social milieu; discourses are multiple, and themselves changed or stabilised via individual articulation.²⁰ Patriarchal ideals of silence were widely propagated, but the historical debate has shifted to the strategies used by women like Lucy Hutchinson to circumvent them.²¹ As Michele Osherow points out, 1 Corinthians 14:34 merely enjoins female silence in church, not secular spaces, and women countered such injunctions by taking authority from Old Testament passages celebrating rather than negating female wisdom as a 'foundation of invention for argument', appropriating God's authority as a 'divine warrant' for their own thoughts on religion.²² A tradition of the *matrona docta* imparting wisdom to her children existed in classical literature as well.²³

The injunction to passivity and silence was only one of a number of competing discourses surrounding female behaviour, some more enabling for women.²⁴ Shakespeare's success derived much from his ladies 'full of Spirit and yet Nicely Virtuous', as James Wright later wrote, approvingly.²⁵ Independent heroines abound

¹⁹ K. Larson, *Early Modern Women in Conversation* (Basingstoke, 2011) p. 10.

²⁰ J.K. Gardiner, *Provoking Agents: Gender and Agency in Theory and Practice* (Urbana, 1996), pp. 26-7, 31, 76, 184; B. Kane, F. Williamson (eds), *Women, Agency and The Law 1300-1700* (London, 2013), p. 2.

²¹ N.H. Keeble, "'The Colonel's Shadow': Lucy Hutchinson, Women's Writing and the Civil War", in T. Healy, J. Sawday (eds.), *Literature and the English Civil War* (Cambridge, 1990), pp. 227-247.

²² M. Osherow, *Biblical women's Voices in Early Modern England* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2009), pp. 3, 9; K. Narveson, 'Authority, Scripture, and Typography in Lady Grace Mildmay's Manuscript Meditations', in M. White (ed.), *English Women, Religion, and Textual Production, 1500-1625* (Farnham, 2011), pp. 164-94.

²³ D. Clarke, 'Renaissance eloquence and female exemplarity: Coriolanus and the *matrona docta*', *Renaissance Studies*, 28 (2014), pp. 128-146.

²⁴ Gardiner, *Provoking Agents*, p. 203.

²⁵ J. Wright, *Country Conversations* (London, 1694), p. 16.

in early modern popular literature, along with ‘viragos’ revealing cultural anxieties about women’s potential resistance to patriarchy, warning husbands to maintain the upper hand and women of the fatal consequences of the more extreme forms of female assertiveness, scolding, murder or witchcraft.²⁶ Men’s patriarchal authority was shown as hard-fought, precarious or even ridiculous in popular literature and seventeenth-century plays.²⁷

Neither did discourse remain static: many of the more negative statements about female agency date from the early 17th century; more positive ones towards its end. Dahmer shows how the earlier ‘unconditional appeal’ to silence was superseded in 18th century conduct books by behavioural codes calibrated to different social situations.²⁸ Although historians debate the relative significance of change over continuities in shaping women’s lives, few would contest that the 1640s and 1650s witnessed striking challenges to patriarchy.²⁹ Female separatists defied church tradition by preaching, prophesying or disrupting worship.³⁰ Gentlewomen, left in charge of households as husbands went to war, commanded besieged garrisons. Women petitioned authorities for relief from the effects of war and started documenting their own lives.³¹ Legal records reveal ordinary women venting their anger at authority

²⁶ J. Wiltenburg, *Disorderly Women and female empowerment in the street literature of early modern England and Germany* (Charlottesville, 1992), pp. 50, 64; S.F. Williams, ‘Witches, Lamenting Women and Cautionary Tales’, in L.C. Dunn, K.R. Larson, *Gender and Song in Early Modern England* (Farnham, 2014), pp. 33-46.

²⁷ Wiltenburg, *Disorderly Women*, p.107; Herzog, *Household Politics*, p. 41.

²⁸ C. Dahmer, “‘Still, however, it is certain that young ladies should be more apt to hear than to speak’”: Silence in Eighteenth Century Conduct Books for Young Women’, *Revue de la Société d’études Anglaises et Américaines des XVIIe et XVIIIe siècles*, 73 (2016), pp.123-145; Wiltenburg, *Disorderly Women*, p. 129.

²⁹ L. Doan, ‘A Challenge to ‘Change’? New Perspectives on Women and the Great War’, *Women’s History Review*, 15 (2006), pp. 337-343; Kane, Williamson, *Women, Agency and the Law*, p. 3.

³⁰ See Phyllis Mack, *Visionary Women: Ecstatic Prophecy in Seventeenth-Century England* (Berkeley, 1995).

³¹ For women’s Civil War experiences, see Antonia Fraser, *The Weaker Vessel* (London, 1984); Diane Purkiss, *The English Civil War: A People’s History* (London, 2007); Hughes, *Gender*.

via speech, or antagonistic behaviour. Women's volubility was apparent, but also seen as needing control and correction by men.

If the ideals of female silence and passivity were challenged during the civil wars, the genuine sufferings of women prompted recourse to the stereotype of female victimhood, as a trope tailor-made for propagandists. Female petitioners framed their petitions around conventional strategies stressing female helplessness; what Amanda Whiting terms a 'masochistic delight in female abasement'. As Ann Hughes has argued, even female Leveller petitions stressed women's weakness and subordination to male household control.³² Royalist apologists were just as guilty of arrogating female debasement for their own purposes. In the 1650s loyalist images of the English church as a prostrate weeping woman, *Ecclesia Anglicana*, developed the Protestant *Ecclesia* of Bale and Foxe into a visual emblem for the suffering church, appearing first in Harmon Le Strange, *The Reign of King Charles* (1655), then in the 1658 edition of Richard Allestree's bestselling *Whole Duty of Man*.³³ Further examples preface polemical works by John Gauden, Thomas Ken and (posthumously) Jeremy Taylor, amongst others.³⁴

Marina Warner suggests the possibility of a positive relationship between such abstract female 'personifications' and actual female experience.³⁵ John Bale's Protestant *Ecclesia*, for example, could be linked to personal concern for his wife's

³² Hughes, *Gender*, p. 58.

³³ Harmon Le Strange, *The Reign of King Charles* (1655); Richard Allestree, *The Practice of Christian graces, or, The Whole Duty of Man* (London, 1658).

³⁴ John Gauden, *Hiera Dakrya, Ecclesiae Anglicanae Suspiria* (1659); Jeremy Taylor, *Symbolon Theologikon* (London, 1674); George Bate, *Elenchus Motuum Nuperorum in Anglia* (London, 1685); Timothy Puller, *The Moderation of the Church of England* (London, 1679); Thomas Ken, *Lacrymae Ecclesiae Anglicanae* (London, 1689).

³⁵ M. Warner, *Monuments and Maidens* (New York, 1985), p. xx.

maltreatment by Norwich magistrates.³⁶ Joan Landes thinks otherwise: during the French Revolution the embodiment of the French nation as a woman went hand-in-glove with female political exclusion. Landes associates a predominance of female allegorical imagery with a gendered power structure, a male gaze and a female object, and denial of the female viewpoint. The female form is chosen as a 'mystifying practice' to sacralise abstract qualities, its effectiveness lying in its ability to trigger strong feelings to concepts that would otherwise be intangible or unempathetic. Motherhood, in particular, often works together with the 'spectacle of violence' to substantiate an intended message.³⁷

In the 1650s, the traditional values of the Church of England badly needed such a figure to rally its shattered supporters. Many of the *Ecclesia Anglicana* emblems post-date the Restoration, by which time female agency had become tainted by association with the 'distractions' of the Civil Wars and Commonwealth and, as Laura Gowing argues, the 'enshrinement of women in the household' 'more powerfully restated'.³⁸ In 1674 a mock-petition, the *Women's Petition against Coffee*, treated the articulation of female grievance as joke-worthy.³⁹ Silence continued to be deemed a cardinal virtue for women: Bishop Edward Rainbow's 1676 funeral sermon even claimed for the formidable Lady Anne Clifford a 'meek and quiet spirit'.⁴⁰ Consequently historians doubt whether the civil wars had much permanent effect on

³⁶ M. McClendon, *The Quiet Reformation: Norwich Magistrates and the Emergence of Protestantism in Tudor Norwich* (Stanford, 1999), pp. 84-5.

³⁷ J. Landes, *Visualising the Nation* (London, 2001), pp. 13-16, 38-9, 74, 79; F. Dunworth, "'O Hamlet: thou hast cleft my heart in twain": Violence and the mother's body in Elizabethan drama', in D. Grantley, N. Taunton (eds), *The Body in Medieval and Early Modern Culture*, (Farnham, 2000), p. 5; C. Grey, 'Wild Civility, Men at War in Royalist Elegy', in J. Feather, C. Thomas (eds), *Violent Masculinities* (Springer, 2013), p. 172.

³⁸ L. Gowing, *Common Bodies* (London, 2003), p. 9.

³⁹ *The Womens Petition Against Coffee* (London, 1674).

⁴⁰ Edward Rainbow, *A Sermon Preached ... at the Funeral of the Right Honourable Anne Clifford ...* (Carlisle, 1839), p. 44.

women's status. Patriarchal control over political, legal, religious, and economic structures changed little.⁴¹ Yet Patricia Higgins argues for a 'latent female potentiality' surfacing during the Civil War, a new sense of confidence amongst post-Restoration women.⁴² 'Pandora's Box had been opened', writes Alice Hunt.⁴³ Although men still exerted much control over female behaviour, argues Tim Reinke-Williams, women now defined 'their own boundaries of gendered respectable behaviour'.⁴⁴ Catherine Grey contends that the seventeenth-century private sphere, rather than imprisoning women, acted as a forum for political exchange and 'counterdiscourse'.⁴⁵



Harmon Le Strange, The Reign of King Charles (1655), engraving

Documenting these tensions between public and private ideas about gender requires 'ingenious use of sources', writes Rosemary O'Day.⁴⁶ The manuscripts used

⁴¹ O'Day, *Women's Agency*, pp. 8, 141.

⁴² P. Higgins, 'The Reactions of Women, with Special Reference to Women Petitioners', in Brian Manning (ed), *Politics, Religion and the English Civil War* (London, 1973), pp. 178-222.

⁴³ A. Hunt, 'Not Behaving as they Should', *History Today*, 64 (3, 2014), pp. 72-72.

⁴⁴ Reinke-Williams, *Women, Work*, p. 158.

⁴⁵ C. Grey, *Crossing Borders: Women Writers and Public Debate in Seventeenth Century Britain* (Basingstoke, Palgrave; 2007), pp. 6-7.

⁴⁶ O'Day, *Women's Agency*, p. 9.

here at first glance seem unlikely ones to employ: letters sent to John Walker between 1704 and 1711 in response to his request for their memories of the sufferings of royalist clergy during the Civil Wars. These formed the basis of Walker's book, published in 1714.⁴⁷ Most were written by men, often clergy in parishes from which loyalists had been ejected, relatives or loyalist sympathisers. But female relatives and associates also had their memories pumped, resulting in over a hundred accounts with some kind of female attribution. These range from long autobiographical letters to anecdotes from oral tradition embedded in accounts ostensibly written by male authors, sometimes with minimal acknowledgement that these are *heteroglossia*, the product of multiple voices interacting.⁴⁸ In over forty percent of cases the source is a daughter of royalist clergyman; in around a sixth, a wife. Some describe events witnessed as children or teenagers, or even, with two lively ninety-year olds, Anne Winnel and Mrs Moreton, a clergy wife and daughter respectively, as adults.⁴⁹

⁴⁷ J. Walker, *An Attempt Towards Recovering an Account of the Numbers and Sufferings of the Clergy of the Church of England ...* (London, 1714).

⁴⁸ Bodleian Library MS J Walker C1, fo. 26; C5, fo. 17 (hereafter cited in the form WMS C1.26)

⁴⁹ WMS: C2.252; C5.25; C7.29; C8.83r; for details of each letter see the calendar in G.B. Tatham, *Dr John Walker and the Sufferings of the Clergy* (Cambridge, 1911).

Table 1 Female informants' relationship to the sequestered clergyman

Relationship	No. of Accounts
Daughters	46
Wives	18
Female parishioners	11
Servants, tenants or their family	6
Daughters-in-law	6
Grand-daughters	6
Nieces	4
Sister	1
Cousin	1
Patrons or their family	2
Widow of landlord	1
Widow of clergy associate	2
Wife of parish clerk	1
'Intruding' clergyman's daughters	1
Daughter of the 'Grandee' who ejected the clergyman	1
Relationship unclear	1

Anne Laurence first considered what these letters reveal about the lives of women in two papers, the second looking at female authorship of eight letters.⁵⁰ But to describe most of Walker's female informants as authors we must eschew canonical ideas of authorship. Although the written testimonies in the archive are revealing, even including letters from the proto-feminist Mary Astell, female literacy, only 10% in the mid-17th century, was still no more than 30% by the early eighteenth century, and lower in the country districts from which most of Walker's accounts came.⁵¹ Although some clergy daughters were 'well brought up both to book and needle', even highly-accomplished, like the mathematically-trained daughters of Dr Edward Davenant,

⁵⁰ A. Laurence, "Begging pardon".

⁵¹ Hughes, *Gender*, p. 7; J. Raymond, *Pamphlets and Pamphleteering in Early Modern Britain* (Cambridge, 2003), p. 89; Astell's letters are WMS: C3.14; C8.199-203.

Salisbury Cathedral Treasurer, in the times of poverty following the loss of a clerical livelihood, their schooling was rarely prioritised.⁵² By expanding concepts of female authorship to include oral sources and accounts with compound authorship, the evidentiary basis increases seven-fold. Modern literary theory also suggests sound reasons for doing so. Women's contributions to Walker's archive form a part of a cumulative and collaborative process of production. From Elizabethan plays to scientific papers, this form of authorship, argues Harold Love, has been more common, perhaps, than the single author acting alone. Although John Walker was the 'executive author', his network of sources shared in the authorship.⁵³ Much relied on oral transmission within families and parishes, a process of authorship which is never complete but passed from agent to agent. The 'precursory authors', the first link in the chain, even if long-dead clergy wives transmitting family legends their children wrote down decades later, were also collaborators. By focusing on these women as authors, we counter what Anna Roberts terms the 'immascultation of women's literary presence in text transmission', the tendency for their words to be filtered by male emmanuenses.⁵⁴

Accounts in the Walker archive typically have a loyalist clergyman as their protagonist. Masculine honour is central, often inextricably intertwined with royalist identity. A 'Cavalier is a Child of Honour, a Gentleman well borne and bred ... the onely Reserve of English Gentility and ancient valour', preached Edward Symmons to royalist soldiers in 1644. Many royalists were proud of their military allegiance. Yet

⁵² WMS C8.53; John Aubrey, *Brief lives*, ed. A. Clark (Oxford, 1898), i, 202, 405.

⁵³ H. Love, *Attributing Authorship* (Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp. 33, 37.

⁵⁴ Roberts, *Violence*, p. 21, S. Mendelson, P. Crawford, *Women in Early Modern England* (Oxford, 1998), p. 11.

when recounting such experiences in the service of the Church, it was not easy to square martial values with Christian doctrine. 'That which is from above', is pure, peaceable, gentle', wrote Symmons. Only a 'right commission' made a 'lawfull Souldier': 'let God direct the bullet ... 'tis God, and not man that killeth'.⁵⁵ Walker's correspondents, evidently uneasy about the compatibility between the clerical profession and the violence associated with hegemonic versions of masculinity, typically glossed over any military honours of their clerical forbears, preferring what Connell identifies as an 'alternative inflection' of masculinity valorising rationality and emotional restraint instead.⁵⁶ The more the clergy suffer, the more they are praised for their Christian fortitude and moderation. 'The solution to the problems faced by masculinity is the erection ... of a perfect and impermeable masculinity, capable of opposing assault ... at the psychic level', writes Diane Purkiss.⁵⁷ There was perhaps a particular need for this with the clergy, due to residual uncertainties concerning clerical gender identity, as a distinct form of masculinity, and amongst Anglicans especially, who deemed emotionalism an affectation characteristic of nonconformists and Catholics.⁵⁸ John Donne advised inward reflection instead, 'a weeping soule, though it have a dry eye'; the word maudlin, newly-coined after the tears of Mary Magdalen, denigrated tearfulness as sentimental and womanish.⁵⁹ Although psychological distress is apparent in the loyalist clergy's own writings, in memory male emotional trauma was downplayed, and the place of victim given instead to their

⁵⁵ Edward Symmons, *A Militarie Sermon* (Oxford, 1644), pp. 13, 16-17, 26.

⁵⁶ R.W. Connell, *Masculinities* (Cambridge, 2005), p. 165.

⁵⁷ D. Purkiss, *Literature, Gender and Politics during the English Civil War* (Cambridge University Press, 2005), p. 51.

⁵⁸ R.N. Swanson, 'Angels Incarnate: Clergy and Masculinity from Gregorian Reform to Reformation', in *Masculinity in Medieval Europe* (London, 1999), pp. 160-77.

⁵⁹ T. Dixon, *Weeping Britannia* (Oxford, 2015), pp. 36, 38.

female dependents.⁶⁰ Emotionalism was of proven power when conventionally expressed in the female voice, as a token of the necessity attached to the cause.⁶¹

A.G. Matthews, in his abridgement of Walker, *Walker Revised* (1948), noted how often Walker accounts mention female suffering, but was of his time in failing to appreciate its significance as a central rhetorical trope, writing, dismissively, 'there is scope for the writing of a memorable chapter'.⁶² Loyalists represented their Church visually as a suffering women, and in their discourse referred to that woman as a mother. In 1647 imprisoned Newcastle vicar Yeldard Alvey identified himself as 'a Compassionate Sonne' to his 'much distressed and unjustly Defamed Mother, the Church of England'.⁶³ Christopher Hindle, preaching in 1650, extended the metaphor further, evoking 'our dear mother stript, mangled, and wounded to death by the sons of her own bowels'.⁶⁴ Such symbolism co-existed with contemporary concerns highlighting the fate of clergy wives following clerical ejections. In 1655, George Hall described the 'mournful widows', 'the Relicts of Worthy Servants of God ... Eating Ashes as bread, and mingling their drink ... with weeping'.⁶⁵ For those bred up in a church tradition which promoted marriage, and envisioned the church as a suffering married woman, the most emotive and effective way to attract sympathy for a clerical caste previously stereotyped as proud and pushy, but now outcast and down on their luck, was to focus on their wives' sufferings instead.⁶⁶ Sometimes the allegorical and

⁶⁰ See F. McCall; *Baal's Priests* (Farnham, 2013), chapter 5.

⁶¹ Whiting, *Women and Petitioning*, p. 237.

⁶² Matthews, *Walker Revised*, p. xvi.

⁶³ Yeldard Alvey, *Humble Confession* (1647); Thomas Pestell junior used the same expression in 1646, see WMS C11.11.

⁶⁴ WMS C3.4r; see also Daniel Getsius, *Tears Shed in the Behalf of his Dear Mother the Church of England, and her Sad Distractions* (Oxford, 1658).

⁶⁵ George Hall, *Gods Appearing for the Tribe of Levi* (London, 1655), p. 28.

⁶⁶ McCall, *Baal's Priests*, pp. 176-7.

the actual seem deliberately conflated: Francis Wilde, whose widowed mother was eking out a subsistence on a Gloucestershire smallholding following ejection from Painswick, described leaving a 'Poor Persecuted Mother at home (The Truth and Religion Professed in the Church of England) ... more lovely ... than them all.'⁶⁷

Walker narrators similarly interwove figurative and literal representations of motherhood. 'To the last I will serve ... the interest of our Dear Mother, to the confusion of her enemies', wrote Devonshire correspondent Henry Bagley, before relating his own mother's experiences during the Civil Wars.⁶⁸ Others began letters relating past clerical sufferings by expressing their concern for the current state of 'our Mother the Church of England'. 'I know not how soon a Cloud may Cover our sacred Mothers Beautys', warned Luke Milbourne, 'Saints Martyrs and Confessours have been among her Children, though too many seem to desert her now'.⁶⁹ By focusing so many of their accounts on violence directed at clergy wives and mothers, Walker's narrators were able to exploit secular and religious traditions highlighting and normalising female passivity and sufferings in the cause of mother *Ecclesia*, and employed narrative and rhetorical forms patterned on those of earlier martyrologists.

Tropes of suffering maternity recur repeatedly in the Walker narratives. A consistent motif was the use of violence against wives refusing to quit the parsonage following their local committee's decision to remove their husband from the living. 'My Mother (with those Children she had with her) was fetchd out of the vicaridge house by Troopers', wrote Henry Bagley, 'and might have lain without doors for any pitty

⁶⁷ Francis Wilde, *Legenda Lignea* (London, 1652), preface; Wilde was living in London.

⁶⁸ WMS C2.412r.

⁶⁹ WMS C2.464r.

those saints took on her'.⁷⁰ The suffering wives' identity as mothers was underscored: dozens of Walker accounts associate ejection with the disruption of childbirth. Dorset rector Daniel Sagittary related how Mary Lindsey, refusing to give possession to the incoming minister at Blandford Forum, was carried into the churchyard, where the fright threw her into labour.⁷¹ John Reeve described how a neighbour, 'Major Raemes', stabbed the bed where his mother had recently given birth, correctly surmising that his father, Norfolk rector Thomas Reeve, was concealed beneath.⁷² Not only does this story closely link the cleric's own suffering with his wife's status as a mother, but it is one of many similar accounts suggesting ritual defilement of the birthing chamber, seen at the time as such an exclusively female preserve, with its own rituals, that fearful civil authorities sometimes tried to control the number of the women attending.⁷³ Women's private domain had become exposed to the masculine gaze of a stranger, creating disorder in the conventionally-gendered social geography, in which the idealised wife was firmly 'riveted' to the home, as the source of her 'power, status and alignment'.⁷⁴ She must have 'her household cognations wherever she goes' advised Matthew Griffith, 'shee is called a House-wife, ... nor a street-wife ... a good wife is for the most part at home.' Wandering out of doors, as these women were forced to do, she entered the domain of the harlot and the 'planet-stricken'.⁷⁵

Walker narrators' images of beds being turned over or displayed to the outside world resonate with the feelings of indecency associated with the private made forcibly

⁷⁰ WMS C2.412r.

⁷¹ WMS C4.111.

⁷² WMC C.78.

⁷³ A. Wilson, 'The Ceremony of Childbirth and its Interpretation', in V. Fildes (ed), *Women as Mothers in Pre-Industrial England* (London, 1990) pp. 68-107; M-C. Bodden, *Language as a Site of Revolt in Medieval and Early Modern England* (London, Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), pp. 34-36.

⁷⁴ A. Fletcher, *Gender, Sex, and Subordination in England, 1500-1800* (Yale, 1995), p. 120.

⁷⁵ Griffith, *Bethel*, pp. 412-4.

public, the violation of the household, the microcosm of religious and political order and feminine virtue in seventeenth-century thought. Disruption of the household was a trope familiar from women's petitions of the 1640s, its breakdown explicitly linked by Clarendon to the wider troubles of the time.⁷⁶ Soldiers 'rippd open the Beds and Bolsters' at the Orpe family home, 'shakeing out the feathers and flocks upon the Ground'; 'cold children' were turned out of bed 'onto the floor' with 'sheets and bedding taken from under them', 'blewing the feathers about the house' in accounts from Devon and Shropshire.⁷⁷ John Newte described his family spending nights sleeping out in the woods on beds sympathetic neighbours had sent them.⁷⁸

At Baxterley in Warwickshire a child in a cradle was reportedly taken outside and set upon a dung hill, a hopeful offspring treated like disposable trash.⁷⁹ This idea of a blighted progeny combined with a sense of trespass against the mother's body in repeated stories of miscarriage in the Walker archive. Frances King related how her mother miscarried from terror after being body-searched by a parliamentary soldier, Grace Hill that John Parson's wife 'died of grief' after the stress of ejection caused her to lose the baby she was carrying. Pregnant women of the time were seen as highly vulnerable to frights and fears, which might permanently deform the unborn child or risk the pregnancy; in contemporary street literature violence against women often similarly involved women's reproductive functions.⁸⁰ The pregnant female body

⁷⁶ A. Walsham, 'Holy Families: the spiritualization of the early modern household revisited', (*Studies in Church History*, 50, Woodbridge, 2014), pp. 122-160; Herzog, *Household Politics*, pp. 205-6; Hughes, *Gender*, pp. 40, 60; *Continuation of the Life*, in *The Life of Edward Earl of Clarendon* (Oxford, 1759), p. 22; Larson, *Early Modern Women*, p. 44.

⁷⁷ WMS: C1.35r; C3.53; C8.29r.

⁷⁸ WMS C8.27r.

⁷⁹ WMS C11.3.

⁸⁰ Fletcher, *Gender*, p. 72; Wiltenburg, *Disorderly Women*, p. 197.

functioned as 'a blank tablet on which everything from economic disaster to ungodliness could be inscribed', writes Laura Gowing.⁸¹

Scripture associated female virtue with childbearing, so the opposite must be true of those who disrupted it.⁸² A tort or wrongful act, legally defined, could as equally be verbal as physical; John Payne attributed his grandmother's miscarriage to anger at the taunting of her son, following which her enemies rejoiced at the death of the 'calf', wishing that the 'cow' had died also.⁸³ The civil war propensity for comparing enemies to animals, applied to a pregnant mother, instead condemns the speakers' own capacity for violence, and is redolent of a witch's curse.⁸⁴ The 'terrible' noise of the puritan minister Christopher Jellinger praying in Hebrew, which frightened his patroness into miscarrying 'of a goodly boy', was also cast as demonic:

it seemd that the Old Nich was come to serenade them, with musick farr more harsh than a Catterwawling of Witches ... the affright proved ... fatall to the fruit of her Womb.⁸⁵

Walker accounts harked back to medieval martyrologies in their obsession with the mortified female body, only substituting a pregnant for a virginal one. The allegorised rape of the mother suggested in Reeve's account is echoed in John Kemble's description of the scene at Painswick when the replacement minister George Dorwood sought to evict the mother of Francis Wilde, whose own rhetoric of suffering maternity has already been quoted.⁸⁶ By locating the intruding minister Dorwood amidst the action, Kemble casts him in the role of symbolic rapist:

⁸¹ Gowing, *Common Bodies*, p. 134; Hughes, *Gender*, pp. 91, 121.

⁸² 1 Timothy 2.15.

⁸³ K. Stavreva, *Words Like Daggers* (Lincoln, Nebraska, 2015), p. 5; WMS C3.304.

⁸⁴ W. Lamont, S. Oldfield, *Politics, Religion and Literature in the Seventeenth Century* (London, 1975), p. 61; Stavreva, *Words Like Daggers*, p. 1.

⁸⁵ WMS C8.51v.

⁸⁶ See p. 18.

Mrs Wild ... big with child ... disputing the last Inch, clasp'd her arms round ... a long table to prevent being drag'd out ... to force her from her hold, one (in the presence of the intruder) turn'd up her coats, and she to conceal her sex, loos'd the table, and with her children were turn'd out.⁸⁷

Stories and allegories of rape were a common literary device of the time: stormed Magdeburg became the 'Magdeburg Maiden'; in his commonplace book Durham Prebendary Thomas Carr compared the fate of his 'Nursing Mother', the Church of England, to the rape and murder of a fair lady, 'sliced and slit' into 'many sects heresies and schisms'.⁸⁸

Henry Gandy, mimicking the phrasing of a rape allegation, described how a soldier pointing a gun at his mother, 'took her by force with a sucking Child (my sister Spurway) at her breast and ... bolted the Gate upon her'.⁸⁹ There were many stories like this, exploiting the disruptive power of the maternal body, by counterpoising the nurturing action of breastfeeding, with the phallic symbolism of the pistol.⁹⁰ Frances King evoked a scene of terror, soldiers' 'swords drawne', 'pistols lockt', to turn the family out, herself sucking on her mother's breasts.⁹¹ John Newte further emphasised the physicality of the transaction: 'his wife, when great with child hath had a Pistol put to her Breast to terrifie her, and asked whether she would have a base of Bullets in her body', a disturbing image, suggesting both violent perversion and sterility.⁹²

Breasts were a powerful symbol of the fecundity of the suffering mothers, elsewhere interpreted as providential. Personal suffering turns Thomas Paske's wife fruitful after nine years of barrenness, thereafter producing nine children 'one Yeare

⁸⁷ Walker MS C5.25r.

⁸⁸ Catty, *Writing Rape*, pp. 9-10; H. Medick, P. Selwyn, 'Historical Event and Contemporary Experience: The Capture and Destruction of Magdeburg in 1631', *History Workshop Journal*, 52 (2001), pp. 32-35; Durham Cathedral Library, Hunter, fo. 31, p. 32.

⁸⁹ WMS C2.344r.

⁹⁰ C. Hanson, 'The Maternal Body', in D. Hillman, U. Maude (eds), *The Cambridge Companion to the Body in Literature*, (Cambridge, 2015), p. 87.

⁹¹ WMS C1.26v.

⁹² WMS C8.29v.

after another', a tale given metaphorical power in relation to the story of Joseph in Egypt.⁹³ Providence works in the opposite fashion for the children of loyalists' enemies. After the intruding minister at Painswick preaches that he hopes to see Charles I's children 'forc'd to pick up Worms from a dunghill for their food', his own children fail to prosper; all John Nye's children die as punishment for occupying John Manby's parsonage.⁹⁴

Walker accounts were selective in what they commemorated from past experiences, employing symbolism shaped around received notions naturalising the sufferings of women to give human form to those claimed for the 'mother' church. Male narrators were more educated in this discourse. Female narrators do describe female suffering: maidservant Mary Bild remembered the widow of Northamptonshire rector Henry Wilde being ill-treated after the siege of Grafton House.⁹⁵ Elizabeth Thompson related how her lodger Susanna Hyde was imprisoned at Lambeth, dragged about her chamber and died as a result a few days later.⁹⁶ Female correspondents record their own sufferings: Christopher Baitson's daughters recalled attempts to 'ravish' one of them; John England's daughter threatens to her own life.⁹⁷ But the accounts that dwell on female suffering and objectify the women involved were usually male-authored. The nephew of Mary Smith of Richard's Castle in Herefordshire related how she was kicked in the belly by the intruding clergyman William Woodward, suffered a rupture and died as a result.⁹⁸ Of the twenty-seven most extreme accounts of women being humiliated, stripped of clothes, injured, or dying, only four are attributable to a female

⁹³ WMS C5.90r; Genesis: 41.

⁹⁴ WMS: C1.26v; C7.4.

⁹⁵ WMS C4.32.

⁹⁶ WMS C1.279r.

⁹⁷ WMS C1.26v; C2.337r; C3.114r.

⁹⁸ WMS C1.326r.

source. Mostly it is men who heighten women's role as victims of violence. There is little interest in these women as individuals. Christian names are often not recorded or unknown: 'I wish you could find where Mr William Crompton my predecessor at Colompton was first put into a sequestred living' wrote John Gilbert from Warwickshire, 'I have beene credible informed he tooke possession of the place by violence with some Troopers, and the ministers wife holding by the staple of the dorr, the Flesh of her hands was torne of'.⁹⁹

A few insuppressible women of 'spirit' do feature in male-authored accounts, their resistance to ejection aligning them with the contemporary trope of the 'masculine' woman, capable of rising about the limitations of her sex. The wife of Huntingdonshire minister Paul Prestland is described as a 'woman of Extraordinary parts' and 'undaunted Courage', 'indefatigable' in securing 'divine justice of Oliver himself'.¹⁰⁰ Such conceits probably arose from a more fluid concept of sexuality, prior to the development of more fixed gender identities in the eighteenth century, with sexual difference perceived as a 'matter of degree' subject to the flow of bodily humours.¹⁰¹ The type had literary antecedents, but during the civil wars of the mid-seventeenth century in England and France there were celebrated real cases of women's active leadership in siege warfare: Lady Brilliana Harley, commended for her 'masculine bravery' and Lady Bankes, for 'courage above her sex'.¹⁰² The fifth

⁹⁹ WMS C2.15v.

¹⁰⁰ WMS C3.74.

¹⁰¹ L. Gowing, 'The Manner of Submission', *Cultural and Social History*, 10 (2013), pp. 25-45; T. Laqueur, *Making Sex: Body and Gender from the Greeks to Freud* (London, 1990), p. 124, see Hughes, *Gender*, p. 13 for a review of recent debates on this topic.

¹⁰² DeJean, 'Violent Women'; D. Dubosc, 'Des vertueux faits des femmes (1610-1660)', in A. Farge, C. Dauphin, *De la violence et des femmes* (Paris, 1997), pp. 53-72; J. Eales, 'Patriarchy, Puritanism and Politics: The Letters of Lady Brilliana Harley (1598-1643)', in Daybell, *Early Modern Women's Letter Writing*, p. 154; Fraser, *Weaker Vessel*, p. 211.

Marquess of Winchester, who probably witnessed the actions of Matthew Griffith's daughter at Basing, in 1652 published an English translation of Pierre Le Moyne's *Gallery of Heroick Women*.¹⁰³ But 'heroic values were not accessible to all the female sex': female assertiveness had negative connotations in women of less exalted or enemy status.¹⁰⁴ John Croker depicted the nonconformist Mrs Whitehorn as an interfering bully who publically reduced his predecessor at Woolfardisworthy to tears.¹⁰⁵ Identifying a woman as masculine often had a humorous or theatrical purpose within narrative, signifying the exceptionality of circumstances which left women without men to lead. In Walker accounts, assertive royalist women strike the moral high ground in verbal challenges to their oppressors, a trope probably influenced by literary and martyrological tradition. 'Deep clerks she dumbs', writes Shakespeare of Marina's 'verbal fencing' in *Pericles*, recalling the verbal acuity of the Protestant martyrs Anne Askewe, 'educated, pert', and a 'formidable disputant' and Elizabeth Young, 'not afraid to argue with the best doctor in the land'.¹⁰⁶ A Walker account describes a disputation between Rutland rector's wife Mrs Halles and a parliamentary trooper:

The last party of horse entred into their Inventory the pot hanging over the fire, upon which the good Gentlewoman askd them whether they intended to enter the beef and pudding boyling in it for the childrens dinner, They sayd no, for they intended to eat that. Then she sayd Pray Gentlemen be pleas'd to enter my Children amongst the ... goods.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰³ Pierre Le Moyne, *The Gallery of Heroick women ... translated into English by the Marquesse of Winchester* (London, 1652).

¹⁰⁴ C. Gheeraert-Graffeuille, 'Margaret Cavendish's Femmes Fortes: The Paradoxes of Female Heroism in Bell in Campo (1662)', *Revue de la Société d'études Anglaises et Américaines des XVIIe et XVIIIe siècles*, 73 (2016), pp. 243-265.

¹⁰⁵ Laqueur, *Making Sex*, pp. 122, 124, 236; Walker MS C8.55.

¹⁰⁶ C.M. Varholy, 'But she would not consent': Women's narratives of sexual assault and consent in early modern London', in J.P. Ward (ed), *Violence, Politics and gender in Early Modern England* (Basingstoke, 2008) p. 42; W. Shakespeare, *Pericles*, Act 4, scene 6; A. Dailey, *The English Martyr from Reformation to Revolution* (Notre Dame, Indiana, 2012), pp. 11, 27, 33; Levin, 'Women', pp. 201, 203.

¹⁰⁷ WMS C1.264r.

Although this reported conversation illustrates a moral point with humour, it is futile; nothing changes as a consequence. In Walker narratives, verbal exchanges frequently take place at the threshold of the parsonage, the habitual place where women conducted day-to-day transactions and policed household boundaries from outside threats, underlining the wife's banishment from her rightful domain.¹⁰⁸ William Bispham's wife pleads with Mr Golbourn, the intruder in her husband's living, for money to buy shoes, 'but he ... would not give her one peny, tho' she came to him in the humble and suppliant way of a beggar'.¹⁰⁹ Joseph Barnes's wife sends her 'little daughter', 'hoping her innocence might move him ... the child sayd wee must all starve if not releived, Mr Francis answer was, starving is as near a way to heaven as any'.¹¹⁰ By putting the plea in the mouth of a small girl, and by its complete failure to shift the minister's hardheartedness, women's helplessness is underlined, their inability to remedy their situation.

Numerous examples are provided by male narrators of the ineffectiveness of women's actions.¹¹¹ Lady Aylofffe refuses to pay tithes to the replacement minister at Great Braxted in Essex, so troopers distrain her cattle instead.¹¹² Humphrey Betty's wife is 'rudely treated and thrown down stairs' after addressing the Cornish Committee for relief.¹¹³ When Henry Robinson breaks his arm while imprisoned at Cawood Castle in Yorkshire, his wife thinks to make 'good use' of that 'unhappy accident' and solicits 'hard' to the commissioners for his 'enlargement', but is 'ineffectual' and leaves with a

¹⁰⁸ Larson, *Early Modern Women*, pp. 46-7.

¹⁰⁹ WMS C3.250r.

¹¹⁰ WMS C3.329.

¹¹¹ See also patterns in seventeenth-century texts ventriloquising female voices in C.C. Relihan, 'Fishwives' Tales: Narrative Agency, Female Subjectivity, and Telling Tales Out of School', in N.C. Liebler (ed.), *Early Modern Prose Fiction* (New York, 2007), pp. 46-59.

¹¹² WMS C2.102r.

¹¹³ WMS C5.140r.

'sharp reprimand'.¹¹⁴ Women shame their oppressors with their speeches, but rarely affect the final result; indeed they may make it worse. Mrs Viney's verbal challenges only provoke the soldiers to return and attack her.¹¹⁵ The sister of the parliamentarian Colonel Fry begs her brother to prevent soldiers plundering her husband's royalist family; her entreating enrages him, and he makes an example of her husband to 'deter the rest of his brethren the Cavilleers'.¹¹⁶

Female authors resolutely reverse these gender stereotypes. Firstly, they focus on the ordeals of the clergy themselves, rather than their female dependents. Male subjects in female accounts are not objectified; their individuality is clearly recognised. But female narrators outdo male correspondents in emphasising the physicality of their suffering. Anna Mogford relates how her father John Snow was 'beaten black and Blew' and his 'Head Broken' for refusing to reveal hidden goods.¹¹⁷ Male bodies are penetrated by phallic weapons, swords thrust in the shoulder or thigh, while hiding from parliamentary soldiers.¹¹⁸

Female authors provide graphic descriptions of male debasement. A maidservant, Mary Bild, relates how common soldiers surrendering after the siege at Grafton House in Northamptonshire were left 'stark nak'd, except a piece of Church matt tied about 'em to cover their nakednesse', then 'pinioned two and two.' Many reported incidents of clergy being subjected to ridings are told by female narrators: Richard Long of Chewton Mendip in Somerset, 'His surplice and Hood were tyed to His Middle and flung down Backward At His Horses Taile'; similar treatment meted out

¹¹⁴ WMS C8.13v.

¹¹⁵ WMS C5.6v.

¹¹⁶ WMS C1.139r.

¹¹⁷ WMS: C7.29, C8.83r.

¹¹⁸ WMS: C2.365r; C8.84r, 93v.

to William Pestell in Leicestershire, and to Michael Dolling, whose grand-daughter Katherine Comyns details his later years suffering an 'extremity of pains' from a resultant rupture.¹¹⁹ Male emotional weakness is also highlighted: the fearfulness of the mayor of Exeter to show support for Mrs Weynell's imprisoned husband, saying 'hee derst not' for then they might 'serve him as they had the doctor'; Henry Owen and Thomas Woodcock's daughters remember their fathers as 'disconsolate' and weeping 'bitterly' at their respective situations.¹²⁰

Secondly, female authors prefer tales of active and successful female agency over those that depict women as victims. Olive Sayer relates how the wife of Royalist plotter and future bishop of Chichester Guy Carleton, equipped with a boat and a rope, saved him from almost certain execution as a royalist plotter.¹²¹ A Wiltshire maltseller, Mrs Hayward, described as a 'woman of a good spirit' in an anecdote passed down to Edmund Hickman by his grandmother, cons plunders parliamentary soldiers into thinking that a 'great Herd of cows coming down the hill about a mile off' is a marauding party of royalist horse. 'Not doubting but they was cavaliers', the plunderers disappear with 'the greatest precipitation imaginable'.¹²² A loyalist widow compels the intruding minister at Ashton in Northampton to make a public recantation for unjustly accusing her of horse theft.¹²³ Margaret Swanson's mother browbeats Mr Strickland, a 'great' 'enemy' to church ceremonies, into baptising her baby using the traditional methods.¹²⁴

¹¹⁹ WMS: C1.239r; C2.376r; C4.12.

¹²⁰ WMS C2.252v, 3.214r; C8.91v.

¹²¹ WMS C2.476r.

¹²² WMS C5.20r.

¹²³ WMS C4.33.

¹²⁴ WMS C1.149r.

In female-authored accounts, female agency sometimes extends to overt defiance as an expression of group outrage against unjust authority. Margaret Dutton described how the 'women of the place' prevented the arrest of her elderly, one-armed father Dr James Dugdale, by throwing stones at those coming to arrest him.¹²⁵ Groups of female protestors were perceived to be less culpable under law, although in practice this was 'tightly circumscribed' and also risky.¹²⁶ Griffith Vaughan's mother's childbirth attendants instead appealed to the sequestrators' humanity, begging hard 'in her behalf' not to seize her goods 'at such a time', thus postponing her ejection.¹²⁷

Mimicking descriptions of wealthy women's condescension towards poorer neighbours in contemporary *encomia*, female authors particularly emphasise the benevolence of female patrons in assisting loyalist families: the Duchess of Somerset who procured James Dugdale's release after ten dark weeks in London's Poultry Compter prison, according to Dugdale's daughter Margaret; the 'Good Lady' who relieved Benjamin Stone in captivity on shipboard, in Stone's daughter's account.¹²⁸ Even where sponsors were married, female narrators made a point of expressing gratitude to the female partner: 'Mr Gravells wife' maintained Guy Carleton's daughter; James Dugdale retired to 'his Eldest Daughters Estate in Evercreech', his daughter Margaret stressing her own agency in a phrase that hardly acknowledges her husband's patriarchal rights over their joint property.¹²⁹

¹²⁵ WMS C1.179r.

¹²⁶ J. Walter, 'Faces in the crowd: gender and age in the early modern crowd', in H. Berry, E. Foyster (eds), *The Family in Early Modern England* (Cambridge, 2007), p. 118; Whiting, *Women and Petitioning*, p. 46; Michel Dalton, *Countray Justice* (London, 1618), p. 196; Pennington, *Going to Market*, p. 146; Hughes, *Gender*, p. 57.

¹²⁷ WMS C3.64r.

¹²⁸ R. Anselment, 'Anthony Walker, Mary Rich, and Seventeenth-Century Funeral Sermons of Women', *Prose Studies*, 37 (2015), p. 216; WMS C1.56, 179.

¹²⁹ WMS: C1.179r; C2.476r.

The conventional male-female power dynamic is surprisingly often reversed by female authors. In Mrs Weynell's account, the 'old lady', her mother-in-law, commands her distinguished son, Dr Weynell, how her jointure money, salvaged from the sequestrators, should be disposed.¹³⁰ Robert Clark's daughter Mrs Moreton relates how the 'mistress' of the house where he was hiding refused to surrender him to her former apprentice, the 'poor weaver' Lewis, now the arresting corporal. Within her own domestic space, and in terms of her familial relationship with Lewis, she was the one with authority. Lewis is forced to procure more aid, Clark dons the disguise of stonemason and, thanks to female obstinacy, escapes.¹³¹ Theophilus Hart's daughters ('all very vertuous good women' says the narrator) criticise their lecherous father:

this wench would come to warm his bed ... his Daughters ... were very jealous of it, and would intimate their dislike of Her staying so long ... with Him, above stairs ...¹³²

As Bernard Capp has highlighted, patriarchy was full of internal contradictions; there were many male-female relationships beyond the directly patriarchal where correct status relations were uncertain.¹³³ By her own account, William Thorpe's sister has no hesitation in expostulating with Mr Sellars, a 'buisy sequestrator' who comes to her brother's Derbyshire parsonage to inventory his goods for confiscation. While there Sellars' companion, a 'meaner' person, 'clerk' or 'under-writer', suddenly feels a 'sickness at his stomach'. She helps him to a chamberpot and gives him medicine, all the time lecturing him that this is a 'judgment on him, for being employed in an unjust

¹³⁰ WMS C2.252v.

¹³¹ WMS C5.25r.

¹³² WMS C4.108.

¹³³ Capp, *Gossips*, p. 36.

undertaking'. Although his superior bids the sick man not to heed 'the foolish woman', the clerk lays aside pen and paper, saying 'he would write no more'.¹³⁴

This story is one of several examples of female authors allowing female speech the power to win over opinion. Less literate than men and communicating their stories orally, women were correspondingly more alert to the power of speech in general, with speech acts often driving or adding colour to their narratives. Mrs Weynell, replicating the verbal exchanges at her husband's trial, demonstrates the efficacy of humorous speech to transform a dangerous situation:

His sectary ... said Doctor Weynell was a limb of Anty Christ for hee preached up sedition and was for popery ... Mr Weynell tould him if that was all the prooffe hee could bring Ergo hee was a fooll: this sent the whole Court in to such a laughter as made him rune out.¹³⁵

Later in her account, Mrs Weynell turns to the power of female intercession, relating how she persuaded her husband to talk with the parliamentary officer who later saved him from execution for coining.¹³⁶ But as female authors were aware, the greatest obstacle to female verbal agency was always the need to overcome men's reluctance to hear women's voices. Initially, the two men 'not regarding what she said' ignore Miss Thorpe. But eventually the sick sequestrator is affected by the woman's words 'and melted by the fire of the Coales of Charity which she had heaped upon his head'.¹³⁷

Women's accounts do not ignore the difficulties these women faced. But in female narratives, rather than being subsumed by their troubles, more commonly women transcend them, with intelligence and resourcefulness. They manipulate threatened assets: 'I have heard my mother say that ... she made it Appear to the

¹³⁴ WMS C5.80v.

¹³⁵ WMS C2.252v.

¹³⁶ Ibid.

¹³⁷ WMS C5.80v.

Comity at Hertford by non payment and Taxes she had not above £10 per Annum to maintain her Family', writes Elizabeth Bentham.¹³⁸ In Frances King's account, it is the women who keep things afloat: her aunt shelters the family when everyone else is afraid to; her sister attempts to run a dairy, until the cows are confiscated and sold.¹³⁹

Patterning themselves on Esther, a popular biblical exemplar, women negotiate and supplicate towards the desired outcome.¹⁴⁰ Mrs Weynell nimbly importunes her way past several layers of authority, from a hostile engineer at the gates of Exeter to the town's military governor Lord Stanford, to ensure a petition for her husband's release is presented. Later, meeting angry opposition from 'Alderman White' she remains coolly ingratiating, questioning why he was so against the doctor 'that had been old frends'.¹⁴¹ Similar behaviour from Suffolk minister John Turner's wife towards parliamentary committees gains her husband release from a London prison.¹⁴² Habits of deference also frame the letters women wrote to Walker: they boast of their reluctance to contribute; their inferiority as females. But as Pender argues, the 'rhetoric of modesty', should not be read as a 'straightforward gesture of submission' but as a calculated gesture, a sign 'that she has internalised the commands to silence prevalent in her culture' and by using 'self-cancellation', steer past them towards agency.¹⁴³

¹³⁸ WMS C2.97r.

¹³⁹ WMS C1.26.

¹⁴⁰ M. Suzuki, *Subordinate Subjects* (Farnham, 2013), p. 177.

¹⁴¹ WMS C2.252v.

¹⁴² WMS C7.159.

¹⁴³ P. Pender, *Early Modern Women's Writing and the Rhetoric of Modesty* (Basingstoke, 2012), pp. 1-2.

Continuing civility, even to enemies, comes across as an important facet of these women's self-identity. Mrs Gandy's son-in-law Benjamin Spurway describes how she dealt with the 'rude and boisterous' soldiers occupying her house:

Mrs Gandy told them, that she belived some of 'em might have wives of their owne and begg'd that they would consider her, as a woeman bigg with Child, and not afright her ...
¹⁴⁴

While Henry Gandy related comic stories at the expense of the intruding minister, German exile Christopher Jellinger, his sister Elizabeth recalled that her mother, 'would never Heare' Jellinger or the sequestrators 'ill spoken of'.¹⁴⁵ Deference and civility, taking the guise of submission, were more like its opposite, identifying these woman as people whose 'quality' and family status remained unsullied by sequestration, indeed often played a vital role in preserving the family after ejection.

Female narrators were also especially apt to highlight an axis of influence driven by female relationships with those then in power. A 'potent female' drove the saintly John Travers out of Brixham in revenge after the ecclesiastical courts had been 'some what rough with her', according to the woman's kinswoman.¹⁴⁶ Frances King related how the extremely rich Cambridgeshire living her father had himself gained by marrying the bishop's daughter was parcelled out after his ejection to enrich the female relatives of those in power: to Peter French, married to Oliver Cromwell's sister Robina, and then to John Nye, married to Stephen Marshall's daughter.¹⁴⁷ 'Widow Tucker', former servant to Hugh Peters's uncle, told stories about the protection offered to a neighbouring clergyman by bribing Peters's sister.¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁴ WMS C2.283r.

¹⁴⁵ WMS C2.298r.

¹⁴⁶ WMS C8.48r.

¹⁴⁷ WMS: C1.26r; C5.17r.

¹⁴⁸ WMS C2.446r.

Female accounts also attributed disruptive power to the potential female enemy within, the family maidservant, whose ambivalent status between family companion and potential betrayer Tim Reinke-Williams has noted.¹⁴⁹ Frances King described how several servant maids 'supened up to the parliament' to report her father's 'private discourse'.¹⁵⁰ In Florence Shepheard's account, a maid betrays Shepheard's uncle to the parliamentary soldiers who kill him.¹⁵¹ Mary Astell attributes John Squire's troubles to the enmity of a maidservant who 'calumniated' against him for years, falsely claiming promise of marriage, occasioning 'Tumults' whilst he was preaching, encouraged by a 'Mrs Jerom', a 'great Professor of Religion'.¹⁵²

Women's accounts capture the lived experience of women during times of conflict, instead of treating women as mere ciphers for a higher meaning. Violence is part of the story, but not its end. Several female-authored narratives are long, circuitous and gossipy.¹⁵³ 'My account has ... exceeded; the just bounds ... it is extended to the length of 3 large Ballads', laughs Elizabeth Trosse.¹⁵⁴ They often depart from the loyalist script. Sarah Rudkin's account is puritan in tone, describing her father Christopher Barnard as a 'painfull laborer', ministering to a congregation of 'saints'; German Goldston's daughter refers to 'the mobb of both parties'.¹⁵⁵ Women interviewed orally may have had little notion of the political purposes for which their accounts were intended. The end-result is a more variegated picture of Civil War experiences, and one in which women were actively engaged.

¹⁴⁹ Reinke-Williams, *Women*, pp. 89-90.

¹⁵⁰ WMS C1.26r.

¹⁵¹ WMS C2.479r.

¹⁵² WMS C8.200r.

¹⁵³ WMS C2.252.

¹⁵⁴ WMS C2.341r.

¹⁵⁵ WMS C1.45r.

Patriarchy has often been seen as an overwhelming negative force, stereotyping women as bound by male control and aggression, the eternal victims of war. Of course there are many examples of women's historic ill-treatment. But we also need to be wise to the ways convention has cast women in the role of victim to naturalise and perpetuate the idea of their oppression. 'Women are everywhere and nowhere in the archives' write Crawford and Mendelson, 'few were able to express their own views directly'.¹⁵⁶ More readily accessible are narratives constructed around them, 'violence against women is represented not as it is suffered by women but as it is recognised by men', what Roberts terms the 'patriarchal theft of women's sufferings'.¹⁵⁷ The loyalist women's accounts discussed here make us question such narratives. These women preferred to believe women had scope for action than to depict them as passive victims. They did not share the 'dominant cultural devaluation of their role', believing women as strong and effective as the men around them.¹⁵⁸ There is little sense of an explicit feminist consciousness, rather such beliefs appear to be implicit and deep-grained, perhaps nurtured by the female spaces of withdrawal that Mary Astell found so enabling and enriching.¹⁵⁹ Men and women interacted in early modern society and shared many values and it is not the attention here to exaggerate the differences between them, particularly considering that some of the accounts used here have mixed authorship. But we should be alert to the subtle distinctions as well. Many women, like Matthew Griffith's unnamed daughter, had no

¹⁵⁶ Mendelson, Crawford, *Women*, p. 9

¹⁵⁷ Weisl, 'Violence', p. 116; Roberts, *Violence*, p. 10.

¹⁵⁸ Wiltenburg, *Disorderly Women*, p. 254.

¹⁵⁹ W. Kolbrener, 'Slander, Conversation and the Making of the Christian Public Sphere in Mary Astell's *A Serious Proposal to the Ladies* and *The Christian Religion as Profess'd by a Daughter of the Church*, in S. Apetrei, *Religion and Women in Britain, c. 1660-1760* (Routledge, 2016), p. 138.

means to articulate their story, or power to prevent themselves being cast as victims to serve a wider purpose. But the women who contributed their stories to the Walker archive tell a different story, of a refusal to acknowledge the constraints of patriarchy, a belief surely strengthened by women's will to survive the terrible experiences they described.