2 Pregnancy, Record-Keeping and Respectability

The wife in A. Marsh's parody of the emerging middling sort in *The Ten Pleasures of Marriage* (1682) conceives only months after their wedding. After she has shamefully prattled to her neighbours, a number of medical practitioners and others about her 'barrenness', she insists on buying a host of expensive treatments. It is only a matter of days before she proudly tells her husband that she is pregnant. He joyfully wrote 'the first day of her reckoning', or due date, in his almanac, a form of pre-printed astrological diary popular in the period,[1] 'as if it were printed with a red Letter!' The husband believes himself to be a 'noble Champion' who has behaved himself 'so gallantly' by impregnating her that he would 'continne now to reap the further conquests of your [his] honour'. His almanac publicly proclaims his virility and mastery over his domestic dominion.[2] In this example, the tension between cultural expectations of honourable and suitable conduct in sharing parts of pregnancy beyond the immediate household unit, and what a family might prefer to keep out of almanacs and other paperwork is rendered visible and is even mocked.

As Chapter 1 has shown, women were encouraged to keep the details of their husband's sexual performance and fertility treatment secret – the wife here shamefully tells all and sundry. The husband's desire to inscribe his wife's conception and reckoning so prominently in his almanac (and his suggestion that this victory would beget further fruitfulness) point to the parts of generation people were keen to show off and the desirability of being able to make specific predictions. A pious and chaste woman would be so attentive to any subtle bodily signs as to know she was pregnant quickly. Like fertility, this also rested on women maintaining a heightened awareness of their body and health throughout pregnancy in ways that were seen to reflect domestic piety

[1] See: Bernard Capp, *Astrology and the Popular Press: English Almanacs 1500–1800* (London: Faber and Faber, 1979); Louise Hill Curth, *English Almanacs, Astrology and Popular Medicine, 1550–1700* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007); Lauren Kassell, 'Almanacs and Prognostications', in *The Oxford History of Popular Print Culture: Cheap Print in Britain and Ireland to 1660*, vol. 1 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 431–442.

[2] A. Marsh, *The Ten Pleasures of Marriage Relating all the Delights and Contentments that are Mask'd Under the Bands of Matrimony* (London, 1682), 85–86.

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and order more widely. Records of conception and reckoning in family paperwork, unlike the hidden evidence of treatment for infertility, fulfilled a wider self-examining imperative that reformers thought that families ought to practice individually and collectively. They also provided tangible evidence of marital fidelity and helped to imagine the unborn baby as part of the family.

Ten years earlier, Jane Sharp chastised young mothers-to-be in her midwifery guide, especially those carrying their first baby, because not one out of twenty kept a 'just account' of their bodies, including potential pregnancy and their menstrual cycle. This lack of attention and lax record-keeping caused them to be 'so ignorant commonly, that they cannot tell whether they have conceived or not'.[3] Nicholas Culpeper too criticised 'Some women' who 'do not know when they are conceived with Child'.[4] William Sermon fretted about the 'many women' who were 'foolishly perswaded that they were not with child' and their infants perished 'through indirect means', presumably poor diet and improper conduct, and when delivered were only 'five or six moneths old' (or at a gestational age of five or six months).[5] Knowing one was pregnant early and reliably was represented by medical authors as important in ensuring one's baby was born healthy. In the popular family conduct manual *Of Domesticall Duties* (1622), William Gouge thought that as soon as a woman 'perceiveth a childe to be conceived in her wombe', she 'ought to have an especiall care therof, that (so much as in her lieth) the childe may be safely brought forth'. The first part of the 'childs infancie' was in the womb. To neglect caring for it during this early period was just as morally corrupt as disregarding its welfare once it was born.[6] Writing about conception and pregnancy within households and families facilitated the performance of the preventative healthcare that medical authors expected: pregnant women would be able to promptly moderate their diet and avoid aggressive medicines so as to avoid miscarriage or other poor procreative outcomes, and were therefore represented as a kind of medical tool in their own right. Record-keeping, however, was, as the *The Ten Pleasures of Marriage* suggests, just a way that families sought to impose order and control on a largely unknowable and unpredictable process.

Historians have emphasised that uncertainty was an important feature of being pregnant prior to modern diagnostic testing.[7] The plethora of records

[3] Jane Sharp, *The Midwives Book Or the Whole Art of Midwifry Discovered*, ed. Elaine Hobby, Women Writers in English 1350–1850 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 81, 82.
[4] Nicholas Culpeper, *A Directory for Midwives, or, A Guide for Women* (London, 1675), 100.
[5] William Sermon, *The Ladies Companion, or, The English Midwife* (London, 1671), 17.
[6] William Gouge, *Of Domesticall Duties Eight Treatises* (London: 1622), 505.
[7] Barbara Duden, *The Woman beneath the Skin: A Doctor's Patients in Eighteenth-Century Germany*, trans. Thomas Dunlap (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1991); Laura Gowing, 'Secret Births and Infanticide in Seventeenth-Century England', *Past & Present*, no. 156 (1997): 87–115; Mark Jackson, *New-Born Child Murder: Women, Illegitimacy and the Courts in Eighteenth-Century England* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1996).

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revealed in this chapter and the emphasis on smoothing out moments in which there was debate or confusion about whether a woman was pregnant or when she would deliver support this finding. Cathy McClive, for example, has described how even medical experts in eighteenth-century courts in France were unable to ascertain whether women who 'plead the belly' in order to avoid execution were genuinely pregnant. She notes that ambiguity about whether or not a woman was pregnant was not just a 'socially-constructed guise employed by unmarried women' but a 'medical and physical reality experienced by early modern women'.[8] Laura Gowing has noted that although quickening, the first movement of the child, might be a decisive sign of pregnancy for some women, others felt unsure until they went into labour. Uncertainty, Suzanne Bell and Mary E. Fissell have suggested, was not unique to childbearing in the early modern period but has persisted and continues to persist in different communities and situations when it is productive for gestating people.[9] This ambiguity, like the vagueness with which individuals wrote about fertility treatments, could be advantageous. The ambiguity of pregnancy could be useful for some women – if conceiving was undesirable or if they needed more time to make the pregnancy appear legitimate – and anxiety-provoking for others, who wanted to impose order and coherence on the experience. By subjecting the body to the same rigour that early modern people were increasingly turning to their lives, faith, household expenditure and financial bookkeeping, the 'accounts' that middling and elite families kept of pregnant or potentially pregnant bodies sought to inscribe legitimacy in a way that could not be scrubbed out by time or forgetfulness.

This chapter takes instruction from scholarship on family history and the nature of memory. Families created and continue to create archives that grant legitimacy and authenticity to certain individuals and invisibility to others.[10] Maurice Halbwachs, a sociologist, thus notes that memories are deemed important and hang together as a narrative less because they are events that happened in succession but more because they serve a function in furthering a certain idea or framework.[11] This is what Katie Barclay and Nina Javette Koefoed have called 'familial memory work'.[12] Keeping records of births, deaths and experiences with a view of constructing family history was work that women were

[8] Laura Gowing, *Common Bodies: Women, Touch and Power in Seventeenth-Century England* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2003), 113.

[9] Suzanne O. Bell and Mary E. Fissell, 'A Little Bit Pregnant? Productive Ambiguity and Fertility Research', *Population and Development Review* 47, no. 2 (2021): 505–526.

[10] Anna Woodham et al., 'We Are What We Keep: The "Family Archive", Identity and Public/Private Heritage', *Heritage & Society* 10, no. 3 (2017): 203–220.

[11] Maurice Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*, trans. L Coser (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 52.

[12] Katie Barclay and Nina Javette Koefoed, 'Family, Memory, and Identity: An Introduction', *Journal of Family History* 46, no. 1 (2021): 8.

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particularly involved in, although as we shall see, men were avid compilers of this information too.[13] These interests intersect with the historiography of paper technology and the history of knowledge. Practices of collecting and systematising knowledge was closely linked to scientific endeavours in this period, and thus by collecting what might seem like everyday prosaic information about bodies and routine, early modern individuals were participating in a wider intellectual culture of record-keeping.[14] The records families kept, the pieces of paper they preserved and which memories made it into longer prose accounts of the family's life was not mere coincidence but because families put effort into making these pieces part of a longer trajectory and story. By being pregnant and creating matching accounts, couples and families were literally and figuratively making the family. This chapter follows in the same historiographic impulse to understand the imperatives that lead families to keep certain kinds of records and discard or ignore others.[15] Childbearing thus sat at the heart of the creation of familial identity as well as the daily routine of the household.

Announcing Pregnancy

The same ambiguity around the signs of pregnancy that allowed impoverished and unmarried women to tell courts that their bodies swelled fruitlessly, drove elite women to interpret non-specific symptoms into evidence that they were pregnant within months of conception. This process might be characterised as less one of discovery and more of wilfully deciding to read certain bodily signs as indicative of conception. Thus, in 1608 Anne, countess of Arundel, wrote to her daughter-in-law, Mary Talbot, the countess of Shrewsbury, reporting that Mary's daughter, Althea, was pregnant and in eager expectation of her quickening 'which I think will be about three weeks or a month'.[16] Anna Busbridge of a prominent Sussex family told her daughter, Mary, that she was feeling better in her pregnancy 'since my quicking' in 1651 (the first moment that a foetus moved).[17] The writer John Evelyn noted in his diary in early

[13] Katharine Hodgkin, 'Women, Memory and Family History in Seventeenth-Century England', in *Memory before Modernity: Practices of Memory in Early Modern Europe*, ed. Ericka Kuijpers et al. (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 297–313.

[14] Lorraine Daston, 'The Sciences of the Archive', *Osiris* 27, no. 1 (2012): 156–187; Elaine Leong, 'Writing the Family Archive: Recipes and the Paperwork of Kinship', in *Recipes and Everyday Knowledge: Medicine, Science, and the Household in Early Modern England* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2018), 124–146.

[15] Alexandra Walsham, 'The Social History of the Archive: Record-Keeping in Early Modern Europe', *Past & Present* 230, no. 11 (2016): 9–48.

[16] Anne, countess of Arundel, to Countess of Shrewsbury, 3 March 1608, Lambeth Palace Library, London, MS 3205, fol. 141.

[17] Anna Busbridge to Mary Busbridge, 18 August 1651, East Sussex Record Office, Brighton, Correspondence of the Roberts family, the Temple family, the Busbridge family, the Farnden family and other correspondence, DUN 51/62.

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May 1652 that he had received word his wife, Mary, was pregnant and then several days later that she was 'quick'.[18] She gave birth on 24 August. Assuming she carried her pregnancy to term, she discovered and shared her discovery approximately six months after conception. With their second child, she was even swifter. Evelyn recorded she was 'quick' with child on 18 May 1653, when she was around four months pregnant.[19] Alice Thornton noted in her spiritual meditations that she had a particularly challenging first 'quarter' of her pregnancy, before she mentioned feeling the child move.[20] During her second pregnancy, she wrote that she could feel the infant move eleven weeks after conception, but she already knew herself to be pregnant prior to this point.[21] Margaret, Countess of Wemyss, wrote to her daughter, asking her to describe 'how you feell little devil stur', months after her pregnancy had been announced, indicating she knew and shared her suspicions with family members before quickening.[22] It is no wonder, given the intensity of correspondence asking women if they were pregnant discussed in Chapter 1, that women would have been keen to put fears and anxieties to rest by announcing they were pregnant.

In doing so, these women were framing their accounts in relation to the dominant ideal model of pious maternity set out in childbearing guides and other material that assumed married women who were relatively chaste would experience such a transformation in their physical selves that it would be obvious they were pregnant. Women's bodies were meant to feel, sound and look different after conception. This made it even more doubtful that unmarried women who said they had been unaware they were with child were telling the truth in courts. Thomas Chamberlayne described in *The Complete Midwife's Practice Enlarged* (1680) how immediately after 'she hath had the company of her Husband' she would start to experience 'signs of Conception' that were 'certain and apparent', or at least they should be. If 'hath received more content' or pleasure 'than ordinary', this was indicative.[23] Sharp described how after the man had 'cast his seed' into the womb, if she had conceived, the woman would feel 'the womb shut close, and a shivering or trembling to run through every part of her body'.[24] James Wolveridge similarly described the sensation of the womb shutting 'up the seed for

[18] John Evelyn, 7 May 1652, *Diary of John Evelyn: Vol 3: Kalendarium, 1650–1672*, ed. E. S. de Beer (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1955), 65.
[19] *Ibid.*, 11 October 1653, 89. [20] Alice Thornton, BL, Add MS 88897/1, 127.
[21] *Ibid.*, 133–135.
[22] Margaret, countess of Wemyss, to Anne, countess of Leven, 23 November 1695, GD26/13/401/23, National Records of Scotland, Edinburgh.
[23] Thomas Chamberlayne, *The Complete Midwife's Practice Enlarged, In the most weighty and high concernments of the Birth of Man Containing a perfect Directory, or Rules for Midwives and Nurses* (London: 1680), 72.
[24] Sharp, *The Midwives Book Or the Whole Art of Midwifry Discovered*, 82.

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generation'.[25] William Sermon suggested that a woman might feel and hear her belly 'rumbling' as the womb 'suck'd' or drew in the man's seed and began to transform this matter. He similarly thought that a midwife could test to see if a woman was pregnant by inserting a finger or a needle 'into the womb' to see if it was shut.[26]

In the days after a couple had had sex, medical authors provided a list of other symptoms of conception. Chamberlayne described how a woman who had recently conceived might get headaches, vertigo, lose her sight and her eyes would appear sunken. The veins in her tongue would turn green, her neck would get hot and her back cold, her breasts would become cold, her appetite would wane, she would vomit and her belly would swell. Sharp supposed that the belly would initially grow flat, she would get a sharp pain above the navel, lose her appetite, her periods would stop, she would have difficulty defecating, 'sometimes she will be merry, or sad suddenly upon no manifest cause' and she might have 'a preternatural desire to something not fit to eat nor drink, as some women with child have longed to bite off a piece of their Husbands Buttocks'.[27] Robert Barret thought that ten days after conception a woman would have her 'Terms' or period, but this could be white or red, but these would soon cease. He also told readers that her breasts would become 'big and hard with pain, and the Nipples grown red'.[28] Her urine, according to Barret, would be white, and in Chamberlayne's terms, there would be 'certain live things, to creep up and down'.[29] Sharp thought that a pregnant woman's urine would produce worms if left for three days.[30] These symptoms could be seen, heard or felt by others too; 'Signs' could be 'collected', Sermon suggested, from the husband, the unborn child and from the midwife. Chamberlayne described how a midwife might feel the womb close shut.[31] The husband too might know immediately if he took 'extraordinary delight' in sex and felt a 'kind of sucking or drawing at the end of his yard'.[32] Simon Forman recorded in his casebooks that while having sex (or what he termed 'halk') with his mistress Elizabeth, he felt her womb suck his staff ('virgam virilem') and knew she was pregnant.[33] Later in pregnancy women could be sure they had

[25] James Wolveridge, *Speculum Matricis Hybernicum, or, The Irish Midwives Handmaid* (London: 1670), 1.
[26] Sermon, *The Ladies Companion*, 23.
[27] Sharp, *The Midwives Book Or the Whole Art of Midwifry Discovered*, 82.
[28] Robert Barret, *A Companion for Midwives, Child-bearing Women, and Nurses Directing them how to Perform their Respective Offices: Together with an Essay, Endeavouring to Shew the Influence of Moral Abuses upon the Health of Children* (London: 1699), 64–65.
[29] *Ibid.*, 64; Chamberlayne, *Complete Midwife's Practice Enlarged*, 73.
[30] Sharp, *The Midwives Book Or the Whole Art of Midwifry Discovered*, 83.
[31] Chamberlayne, *Complete Midwife's Practice Enlarged*, 72; Wolveridge, *Speculum Matricis Hybernicum*, 1.
[32] Sermon, *The Ladies Companion*, 23. [33] NOTE112, CB.

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conceived when they felt it move like 'the stirring of a flie when he flieth', called quickening.[34]

The complete bodily transformation that sexually continent women would experience when pregnant was a common theme in ballads of the period too. Stories of pre-marital sex and illegitimate conception were apt currency for both entertaining and educating. These narratives were at once instructive – warning younger readers of the dangers of promised marriage and pre-marital sex – and titillating.[35] Some, like *A Lamentable Ballad of the Lady's Fall*, were more sympathetic to the temptations of youth than others. It relayed how a 'gallant Lady' was persuaded to 'lead a wedded life' by a dishonest man.[36] '[E]spousals, bethrothings, assurings, contractings, affirmings (for they are all one)' to marry were in the clergyman Daniel Rogers's words, 'very solemn matters'.[37] For Gouge, this exchange of promise was 'the beginning of marriage' and breaking this contract was sinful.[38] But as there was no standard format for these promises, the formality that reformers imagined transforming couples into spouses was in the eyes of the beholders. If promising to marry was almost or quite literally getting married, then consummation could follow immediately. Ballads often explored this ambiguity between what women might assume was a formal promise but was, in reality, difficult to enforce owing to the often intimate and private nature of these arrangements. Up to 20 per cent of brides were supposedly already pregnant when they got married – the gallant lady's predicament was an all too common one.[39] Her wrongdoing in the ballad is represented as giving the 'consent' to sex 'too soon' upon the promise to get married. Not long after what she perceived as the consummation of the marriage, 'She felt her body alter'd quite':

> Her bright hue waxed pale;
> Her fair red cheeks turn'd colour white,
> Her strength began to fail:
> So that with many a sorrowful sigh,
> This beauteous maiden mild,
> With grievous heart perceiv'd herself
> To be conceiv'd with-child

[34] Sermon, *The Ladies Companion*, 23.
[35] For the instructive and entertaining purposes of ballads, see: Angela McShane, 'Ballads and Broadsides', in *The Oxford History of Popular Print Culture: Cheap Print in Britain and Ireland to 1660*, vol. 1 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 341.
[36] *A Lamentable Ballad of the Lady's Fall (c. 1720)*, BL, Roxburghe Ballads, EBBA 31270.
[37] D. R., *Matrimoniall Honovr, or, The Mutuall Crowne and Comfort of Godly, Loyall, and Chaste Marriage* (London: 1642), 104–105.
[38] Gouge, *Of Domesticall Duties*, 198.
[39] David Cressy, *Birth, Marriage, and Death: Ritual, Religion, and the Life-Cycle in Tudor and Stuart England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 374.

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With the marriage yet to be solemnised, the young woman endeavoured to hide her 'swelling' from her parents. Confronting her perceived husband-to-be, she told him: 'I go with child by thee', and pleads with him to marry her. The baby, she told him, springs in her womb 'To hear the father's voice.' If he refused to get married, she told him she would rather die than raise a bastard and that he should end her life 'with thy rapier'.

To an early modern audience accustomed to bawdy comparisons between swords and men's yards, the message was clear: his 'rapier' had already ended her chance at a normal life through illegitimate pregnancy. Importantly, the lady in this story was the protagonist and the reader is encouraged to view her mistake as a minor misdemeanour with tragic consequences. Several aspects of the story reinforce how close her experience was to the ideal model of married motherhood. She noticed her pregnancy immediately. She was not confused about whether she is ill or simply putting on weight. Nor does she struggle to identify the father, and tells him early that she is carrying his child. The baby also is described as moving vigorously within her, something which, as Chapter 3 suggests, was the kind of thing that elite and respectable women were meant to notice and record during their pregnancy. There was an implicit link between her (relative) chastity and innocence and the immediate and undeniable effects of sex and conception on her body. Such a cautionary tale would no doubt have warned readers how a slight deviation from godly familial life might bring a life of misery; sin begot sin. As Gowing notes, because painless birth was connected to promiscuity and moral disrepute of the mother, an easy pregnancy was also seen as suspicious.[40] Arduous pregnancy was linked to piety and penance. Pamphlets explored this cultural dichotomy and the ways in which women's bodies displayed and embodied their own and their family's piety (or lack of).

In *A Copy of Verses of a Baker and a Mealman*, two men conspire to convince women to have sex with them.[41] The mealman told a 'pretty Maid that in his house did dwell' that he will teach her to dance 'Which some People do report to be Alamode de France'. He deceived her into having sex. Shortly after their tryst, she suddenly experienced a 'Metamorphose' in her body. She thought she was poisioned but she was of course pregnant. Her 'Belly's like a Tun', or a cask of wine, and she is worried that her 'Guts will tumble out' with 'this plaguy Bout'. Here, her ignorance of sex goes someway to exonerate her from her sins. But once again the ballad links unequivocal bodily signs of pregnancy – a 'metamorphose' even – with relative chastity and inexperience.

[40] Gowing, 'Secret Births and Infanticide in Seventeenth-Century England'.

[41] *A Copy of Verses of a Baker and a Mealman: Giving an Account of their subtle Intreagues with their Mistresses, and how the Mealman got his Maid with Child*, EBBA 217071 (London, 1690–1700).

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While she was unsure of the cause of her malaise initially, it is only too clear to the reader that the dishonest mealman has made her an unmarried mother-to-be against her will.

The Amorous Lady's Garland played on this pervasive fear that young unmarried women would be persuaded into having sex with men who promised to marry them and get pregnant almost legitimately.[42] A young lady met a butcher in St James's market, fell in love and got married. They kept their nuptials secret for twenty weeks until 'My lovely creature did begin/to thicken in the waist'. Her mother began to suspect she was pregnant, and given she assumed her daughter was still unmarried, she fretted to her husband 'alas! she is with child,/my jewel I do fear'. When confronted, the young woman pretends ignorance and says that her parents bid her to 'buy the best of meat' and she liked the offerings of the butcher so much 'Of it I made a hearty meal,/ which made my belly swell', before revealing they wed four months ago.

Other ballads representing the duplicitous and devious nature of women told of those who used their pregnancies or ability to get pregnant for gain and to trap men. Moggy in *Scotch Moggy's Misfortune* set her sights on the newly widowed Robin (Figure 2.1). She flirts with him and even visits a well to increase the likelihood of conception. Getting pregnant secures him as her new husband. She tells Robin 'gard my Belly swell' and loudly proclaims 'Robin he chash me about the stack,/Robin laid me on my Back,/Robin he made my Rump to crack,/Kind Robin loves me.' Such ballads expected readers would understand the tension between the assiduous bodily knowledge that married godly women laid claim to, which aided infant and maternal wellbeing, and the ways in which this same knowledge might be used for insidious and sinful purposes. Going to the well and noting how her belly swelled were not troubling in and of themselves but they transformed these normative parts of the experience of pregnancy into acts of feminine subversion.[43] Notably although her belly gets bigger, Moggy is not troubled with the dramatic transformation in response to getting pregnant in the same way that the more innocent women who were deceived into having what they hoped and expected would be marital sex were in ballads.

This helps to reveal the contours of an early modern cultural association between being certain one was pregnant and being morally and bodily continent. It is no wonder then that elite women announced their pregnancies quickly and assertively in diaries and letters. Added to this as well as gesturing to their

[42] *The Amorous Lady's Garland, Shewing how a young Lady going with her maid to St James's Market fell in Love with a young butcher, who desir'd him to walk with her into St James's Park, after some discourse they both agreed to be married the next morning* (London, c. 1740), EBBA 34197.

[43] *Scotch Moggy's Misfortune: Together With her cheerful Hops, that Shakum Guie will bury his Wife, and then make Moggy a happy Mother* (London: 1683–1696), EBBA 33786.

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Figure 2.1 *Scotch Moggy's Misfortune: Together with her cheerful Hops, that Shakum Guie will bury his Wife, and then make Moggy a happy Mother* (London: 1683–1696). EBBA 33786, EBB6SH, Houghton Library, Harvard University.

relative chastity and bodily attentiveness, knowing one was pregnant early and certainly facilitated their engagement with preventative healthcare. First, if they knew they were pregnant as soon as they had conceived, women could eat appropriately, avoid certain activities and medicines, and be attentive to the medical needs of the baby within them and was therefore intertwined in the domestic labour of being a wife, mother and healer. Second, writing about pregnancy was part of a broader, particularly protestant, trend to keep 'good' accounts, financial and otherwise, creating and fostering a familial identity. Finally, these records proved and displayed the legitimacy of the conception.

Keeping Accounts, Health and Spirituality

When Jane Sharp encouraged women to take 'just accounts' and warned of the dangers of not doing so, she was not simply referring to noticing one's menstrual cycle, but a more extensive attentiveness to the body of the kind medical writers assumed in descriptions of the symptoms of early pregnancy.[44]

[44] Gowing, *Common Bodies: Women, Touch and Power in Seventeenth-Century England*, 121.

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In this way, being certain about pregnancy would be much easier if individuals and families were keeping appropriate and attentive track of their bodies and health in their paperwork anyway. This was first because the authors of childbearing guides were adamant that the cessation of menstruation alone was not a reliable sign of conception. Women could menstruate well into pregnancy, and therefore relying on one's periods as an indicator of how long one had been pregnant would lead to inaccurate reckonings. The author of *The English Midwife Enlarged* (1682) explained that if women dated their pregnancy from their first missed period, they might be out by a month, if they had conceived when menstruating, or even longer if she continued to bleed for the first several months of gestation.[45] The cessation of menstruation was more commonly thought to be a symptom of disease from a blockage or imbalance rather than conception. Menstruation was fundamental to the maintenance of health generally for women, not just in fertility, as discussed Chapter 1.[46] 'False' conceptions also mimicked the signs of pregnancy, making it even more difficult to rely on periods.[47] Knowing when one ought to be menstruating and keeping a record, however, was important. For Jakob Rüff, this meant women could appropriately take medicines with an 'expulsive vertue' to bring their period on.[48]

Knowing one was pregnant early also meant women would not take other treatments that might threaten the pregnancy. When in May 1651 Mary Evelyn took 'physick' for what she thought was a sickness, her husband, John, noted in his diary they had not known she was pregnant and the medicines had caused a miscarriage.[49] Domestic recipe books contained remedies to help women carry infants to full term that again suggest it was deemed medically important to be certain one was pregnant as close to conception as possible. Joanna Suddell's book, for example, contained a recipe to 'preuent Abortion approued by all that made use of the same Directions', which ought to be taken 'When you apprehend your self with child'.[50] A receipt 'To preuent Miscarriage' in an anonymously penned seventeenth-century recipe book

[45] *The English Midwife Enlarged* (London: 1682), 24.
[46] Alexandra Lord, '"The Great Arcana of the Deity" Menstruation and Menstrual Disorders in Eighteenth-Century British Medical Thought', *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* 73, no. 1 (1999): 38–63; Cathy McClive, *Menstruation and Procreation in Early Modern France* (London: Routledge, 2015); Gianna Pomata, 'Menstruating Men: Similarity and Difference of the Sexes in Early Modern Medicine', in *Generation and Degeneration: Tropes of Reproduction in Literature and History from Antiquity to Early Modern Europe*, ed. Valeria Finucci and Kevin Brownlee (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2001), 109–152; Sara Read, *Menstruation and the Female Body in Early Modern England*, Genders and Sexualities in History (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2013).
[47] Sharp, *The Midwives Book Or the Whole Art of Midwifry Discovered*, 84.
[48] Jakob Rüff, *The Expert Midwife, or An Excellent and Most Necessary Treatise of the Generation and Birth of Man* (London, 1637), 49.
[49] Evelyn, 2 May 1651, *Diary of John Evelyn*, 31.
[50] Joanna Suddell, 'Receipt book, 1688', Clark Library, UCLA, MS.1950.023.

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instructed women to take a piece of leather, spread it with civet (a yellow, musky-smelling liquid from the perineal glands of civet cats) and place it on the stomach 'as soone as they think themselues with child and weare it till they are deliuered'.[51]

These accounts sat within a web of other kinds of notes and observations that early modern people were encouraged to make and keep for themselves and their families. Reformers encouraged believers to engage in a continual process of self-examination in which paper became an important tool. But this paperwork was not just a space in which people evaluated their conduct, but also one in which they could justify their own perceptions, uphold their reputation, dispute the account of others, settle scores, convey cultural information and invent desirable futures.[52] This was also attended by an intensified interest in financial bookkeeping (another kind of account). Paperwork that was supposedly transparent, honest and accurate was venerated but this 'reality' was one 'manipulated to create the appearance of fiscal probity'.[53] James Aho has argued that while in counter-Reformation Europe double-entry bookkeeping emulated penitential confession, in England, this paperwork was often materially and functionally indistinguishable from other kinds of records that were kept to manage home spending. It was nevertheless bound up with epistemological practices that produced and systematised knowledge.[54] Domestic paperwork like recipe books were, as other historians have shown, an important space in which knowledge about the natural world and health were produced. Early modern individuals turned to paper to document their symptoms, diagnoses and cures. Practitioners too kept records.[55] These records were, it is important to remember, also part of the material culture of the early modern home, or at least the literate one. Keeping financial accounts was a moral act that reflected the 'compiler's moral worth' and projected 'that quality to the wider public' and records materially displayed this.[56] The author of a 1683 guide described how account keeping allowed one 'in an Instant' to see

[51] Anonymous, 'Seventeenth century receipt book', Whitney Cookery Collection, New York Public Library, New York, v. 8, recipe no. 92, p. 12.

[52] Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson, *Reading Autobiography: A Guide for Interpreting Life Narratives* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010), 10.

[53] Jason Scott-Warren, 'Early Modern Bookkeeping and Life-Writing Revisited: Accounting for Richard Stonley', *Past & Present* 230, no. supplement 11 (2016): 152.

[54] James Aho, *Confession and Bookkeeping: The Religious, Moral, and Rhetorical Roots of Modern Accounting* (Albany: State University of New York, 2005).

[55] Roy Porter, 'The Patient's View: Doing Medical History from Below', *Theory & Society* 14, no. 1 (1985): 175–198. See also: Lauren Kassell, 'Paper Technologies, Digital Technologies: Working with Early Modern Medical Records', in *The Edinburgh Companion to the Critical Medical Humanities*, ed. Anne Whitehead et al. (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2016), 120–135.

[56] Adam Smyth, *Autobiography in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 69.

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'(as he doeth his Person in a mirror) his whole estate and what posture it is in at the time'.[57] The accounts that Sharp and other medical writers expected women to keep were therefore part of this paperwork that materially, practically, spiritually and emotionally ordered and defined the household. These diaries, spiritual meditations and recipe books sat on shelves in people's homes. Perhaps they were on occasion retrieved, looked at and shared and were part of collective and embodied memory practices.

The ways in which keeping written accounts of pregnancy was intertwined with spiritual practice is deftly displayed in the diary of Sarah Savage, living near Nantwich in Cheshire, wife of John Savage and the daughter of the nonconformist minister Philip Henry. She paid attention to all manner of things in her life and kept a written account of them for posterity. In the early years of her marriage, she was particularly concerned with noticing and recording things that might indicate she was pregnant. Four months after she married John, she expressed in her diary that she was 'a litle desirious yt God w[oul]d please to make me a fruitfull vine if hee see good'. If not, she vowed to 'submit to him'.[58] For Savage, keeping track of her body was a way that she spoke directly to her maker and placed her within a wider community of Christians, as well as being a practical medical tool to direct her diet and routine. These two facets were inextricable. Savage could wish, but she could not long for a child. That would be covetous and err too close to being desirous for something that contravened divine will. This led to a tension in such records between apparent attentiveness to generation and a shyness about naming it explicitly. Thus, three months earlier, she wrote on 8 March 'Lord supply mee . . .' but left a blank space where her desire should have been written. She was also 'drowsie' and reassured herself that 'my God will supply all my needs' (and if we read between the lines the needs of her suspected unborn baby).[59] On 12 May, she noted she was 'somth[ing] tired w[i]th house busines, yet on my bed my meditations of God w[e]r[e] sweet' and she 'run over in my mind' sermons she had heard.[60] By June, she still had not conceived and was a 'little discomposed by a fear of a disappointm[en]t tho it came not upon consideracon I was willing to submit yn had wt I desired viz'. In July, she was in hope again that 'he w[oul]d fulfill ye desire of my soul in a Partic. Thing', but only 'if hee see it good for mee'. A Tuesday later in July she still 'had hopes' that God would grant her 'lawf[ul] desires of my soul as far as is good for mee yet I trust all concernm[en]ts w[i]th him'. She crossed the next two lines out completely obscuring their legibility. In October she became

[57] Robert Colinson, *Idea Rationaria, or The Perfect Accomptant* (1683), 2. Cited in: *ibid*., 71.
[58] Sarah Savage, 'Diary, 1686–88', Cheshire Archives and Local Studies, Chester, ZD/Basten/8, unfoliated.
[59] *Ibid.* [60] *Ibid.*

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much bolder about her wishes and wrote 'If God should see good to delay or totally deny the mercy of children to me still by his grace I will wait on him, and love him not one jot the less, tho' I sometimes can scarce quiet my spirit as I would.'

It is not accidental, as Chapter 1 suggested, that her husband and his fertility were left out of these reflections, which were as much an attempt to prove her piety and wifely submission as they were a genuine concern for her ongoing childlessness. Despite a difficult beginning, including two miscarriages between 1687 and 1688, Savage went on to have nine children. Savage's use of her diary displayed her commitment to God and to her role as wife and future mother. She did not necessarily do so as an act of self-fashioning but also to bolster the family name and godly respectability. Making records of pregnancy and her body was part of the work of creating and recreating the family.

We can see this collective use in the ways in which husbands also wrote about their wives' health and bodies. Sometimes this was focused on discovering or verifying pregnancy, but at other times, it similarly served this broader culture of attentiveness that was encouraged at home. When Elizabeth, Samuel Pepys's wife, did not have her period for seven weeks, he wrote in his diary that he had been 'in hopes of her being with child', which were dashed by its eventual arrival several weeks later in January 1660.[61] For four months in 1654 Helen, the wife of Sir Archibald Johnson, a Scottish judge and statesman who would be executed by Charles II in 1663 for having served under Cromwell, had been unwell. Archibald noted that his wife was suffering with a 'seaknesse' in January and he had instructed her that it was most likely 'correction for hir neglect of secret worship and wayring [wearing] her strength and health on uther business'.[62] Later that month, Archibald recorded that Lady Libertoun suspected that Helen was pregnant, rather than unwell. We know from later entries that her period had stopped. On the 30 January, she 'grew unweal at night', which she and her 'friend' interpreted as the God preparing her 'eyther for great doings or great sufferings for His nayme'.[63] On the 24 and 25 February, she got a 'sore brash' (a sudden onset of pain), 'rysing of the spleen and bairnebed', a Scots word for womb, and her physician, Doctor Hayes, fretted for her life.[64] Archibald banished himself to the back-chamber and prayed incessantly that the Lord would 'pitye, pardon, sanctifye, and saive me and my wyfe and children, and to compassionate our present condition in

[61] Samuel Pepys, *The Diary of Samuel Pepys: A New and Complete Transcription Vol. 1 1660*, ed. Robert Latham (New York: Harper Collins, 1983), 1.

[62] Archibald Johnston, 20 January 1654, *Diary of Sir Archibald Johnston of Wariston 1650–1654, Volume II*, ed. David Hay Fleming, Publications of the Scottish History Society (Edinburgh: University of Edinburgh Press, 1919), 196.

[63] *Ibid*., 30 January 1654, 199. [64] *Ibid*., 24 and 25 February 1654, 209.

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soule, body, estate and nayme,' a clear indication of the stakes if she miscarried. Physic in the form of a clyster appeared to resolve many of the more concerning symptoms. In March, Archibald still thought she was pregnant. Friends urged her not to travel in case it endangered the baby's life. He prayed that the Lord 'preserve hir and the chyld she is thought to haive'.[65] On 22 April, Helen announced that she had her 'flouers' [flowers], her period, 'which shew that she is not with chyld'.[66] For the Johnstons, the absence of her periods created an ambiguous state, but their resumption was conclusive proof she was not. It was only then, when it was clear that it was not pregnancy that was causing her ill health, that Archibald meditated on the 'dangerousnesse of hir condition'.[67] Archibald's record-keeping, which in turn rested on his wife's attentiveness to her body, reveals the focus families had on deciding whether a woman was pregnant and the resulting need to alter routine and regimen and, finally, that this process of noticing and writing was not something women did alone. Husbands, friends and doctors were all eager to notice potentially pregnant bodies and interpret them, even when this involved disputing the convictions women had. Good wives and mothers would supposedly know certainly and intuitively they were pregnant but were not always trusted in this knowledge.

At other times, husbands made notes about women's menstrual cycles or when couples had sex not deliberately to discover pregnancy but because, as we have seen, women's bodies and providing records of them redounded to male domestic honour. John Dee, the mathematician, astrologer and antiquary, made a note when his wife menstruated in his almanac as well as when they had sex. He also kept a record of the births of their children and episodes of ill health of family members.[68] Ralph Josselin recollected in his diary in 1640 that he 'began to have some hopes of my wives breeding', which he noted 'proved so', although he left out the things that led to their certainty.[69] In the eighteenth century, the wig maker Edmund Harrold documented his and his wife Sarah's health in great detail as well as his conduct and its spiritual significance. He also took care to record when, where and how he had sex with, or 'did', his wife. On the 9 June 1712, for example, he recorded that at night he 'did wife 2 tymes, couch and bed, in an hour and ½ time'.[70] For Harrold, the way he assiduously recorded his and Sarah's sexual habits was not always motivated by an interest in fertility or potential pregnancy. He 'did' his wife on the 16, 17 and 18 November, less than a week before she delivered their fourth

[65] *Ibid*., 7 March 1654, 213. [66] *Ibid*., 22 April 1654, 238. [67] *Ibid*., 22 April 1654, 238.
[68] Lauren Kassell, 'Exhibit 14: Jane Dee's Courses in John Dee's Diary', in *Reproduction: Antiquity to the Present Day* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018).
[69] Ralph Josselin, July 1640, *Diary of Rev. Ralph Josselin 1616–1683*, ed. E. Hockliffe, vol. XV, Camden Third Series (London: Royal Historical Society, 1908), 12.
[70] Edmund Harrold, 'Diary, 1712–1716', 9 June 1712, Chetham's Library, Manchester, fol. 2v.

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daughter, also called Sarah.[71] In Harrold's diary, having sex was an indicator of the tone of the relationship; on 17 November, he 'did w[i]f[e] fine' and recorded that 'Shes very good now we live lovingly and contetedly blessed be God'. Other times he 'did' her 'clean', 'oddly', 'tit[e]ly', 'avi[d]ly', in the 'new' and 'old' fashion and 'stand[ing at the] ba[c]k [of the] sh[op] titely'. All of these details helped Harrold in the examination of his own and his family's conduct and show that knowing intimate things about one's body and having the accounts as of substantial interest to middling and elite families in early modern England. Harrold's accounts were not explicitly part of monitoring fertility but they sat within a web of written records of the self and other family members that early modern people were encouraged to make. Writing out these observations of daily life helped to furnish longer narratives about family and its identity with specific verifiable details, but it also helps to explain why elite families were able to announce their pregnancy so early. This culture of bodily knowledge was related to embodied devotion in complex ways that intertwined marital fidelity with clear verifiable signs in women's bodies, that implicated men and their honour too.

The Difficulty of Being Unsure

Ambiguity or confusion about whether a woman was pregnant was something that many families put considerable effort into resolving. In the same way that medical texts simultaneously expected women to know they were immediately pregnant but then also directed that many women would continue to menstruate throughout pregnancy, the guidance that authors gave on ascertaining pregnancy within months of conception was similarly contradictory and complex. Authors continually referenced the fact that it was difficult to reliably ascertain whether a woman was pregnant for medical practitioners. William Sermon's 1671 *The Ladies Companion* noted that midwives should be 'very careful' in such interactions. There was nothing more 'ridiculous' than assuring a family they were expecting only for the woman's belly to fall 'flat again' and for her to start menstruating again. A medical practitioner that had previously been 'well esteemed of' would become 'slighted and undervalued'.[72] He described an altercation with two women, both over fifty, who were adamant that they were pregnant. When their imagined due dates came and went, Sermon offered purgatives that showed they were simply unwell and they returned to perfect health once their bodies were purged. This was a common narrative in childbearing manuals written by physicians and midwives that served to verify their own credibility and claim to medical expertise:

[71] *Ibid*., fol. 22r–v. Sarah Harrold was born 23 November 1712 and died 1 April 1713.
[72] Sermon, *The Ladies Companion*, 16.

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women falsely believing they were pregnant only for this to be disproved by the intuition and expertise of the author. Sermon was cautioning midwives not because it was impossible to know for sure whether a woman was pregnant but because he assumed they would not have the knowledge and instinct he did.

Percival Willughby, a Derby man-midwife, offered a tale that had a similar moral in the published account of his professional activities. Midwives should 'bee cautious of their promises, and circumspect in their sayings and undertakings' he noted.[73]A 'good woman', meaning one of relatively high status, living near Nottingham had been assured she was expecting a baby when she actually had a 'swel'd cancerous tumour in the womb'. The midwives tried to deliver the imagined baby injuring her womb in the process.[74] Chamberlayne reported that a 'young Lady' thought herself to be four months pregnant, but she had not felt the baby move in some time. He told the reader he decided to believe her testimony – that she was pregnant and the baby had died – but doubt lingered that perhaps it was a false conception. When her day of 'Reckoning' came and went he asked her 'Friends and Physitians' whether they believed her to be with child and they corroborated her account. She was, as she and her friends had said, eventually delivered of a dead child sometime after.[75] The eighteenth-century German physician Johann Storch was often asked to determine the cause of symptoms that could or could not be parsing through women's testimony, that of her friends and family, and his own judgements. A thirty-year-old 'artisan's wife' complained of a growth. She had not felt her baby quicken and she continued to menstruate. A midwife determined her to be pregnant with a 'live child' and she gave birth shortly after.[76] Conversely, a forty-seven-year-old noblewoman was sure she was pregnant. She had not menstruated in months and she claimed to feel the child move within her. Storch notes 'I deferred to her opinion until the calculated date of the birth had passed, even though I never entirely concealed from her my reservations about the matter' that she was, indeed, not pregnant.[77] Storch explicitly waited until 'the whole thing would come to light by itself' before providing an unequivocal judgement about pregnancy to avoid appearing ignorant.[78] The irony that many of these practitioners expected women to know they had conceived from the moment they stopped having sex but fully comprehended the ambiguity and complexity of how difficult this might be reveals the ways in which being pregnant necessitated navigating between order and disorder.

Perhaps because of this, women and their families frequently sought the help of medical practitioners in trying to work out if they were expecting. The

[73] Percivall Willughby, *Observations in Midwifery by Percival Willughby*, ed. Henry Blenkinsop (Warwick: H. T. Cooke, 1863), 9–10.
[74] *Ibid*., 1. [75] *Ibid*., 2–3. [76] Duden, *The Woman beneath the Skin*, 160. [77] *Ibid*., 161.
[78] *Ibid*., 160.

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astrologer-physicians Simon Forman and Richard Napier were asked close to 1,500 times to verify whether a whether a woman was pregnant. Relying on the stars, as well as other signs, Forman and Napier rarely displayed the reticence that other practitioners did in telling women whether they were with child. Elizabeth Gyniver was determined to be pregnant in no uncertain terms by Napier on 11 October 1600 and her 'courses haue bene stop this 10 or 12 weeks'.[79] When Elizabeth Borase asked Forman whether she was pregnant in 1597, Forman noted beneath the astrological chart 'She supposes her self with child, but I think it was not so.' Forman returned to his entry at a later date to note 'She proued shortly after not to be w[i]th child.'[80] Mary Braunch was told her symptoms were the result of a 'falls conceptio' but she described having felt her child move for the past thirty weeks.[81] At other times, the astrologers were also uncertain. Luce Ashmore visited Forman early July 1601. She had not had her period and was 'paind in the stomacke', 'mother [womb]', and 'head & backe'. He determined that not only was she pregnant, but it would only be four weeks until she delivered.[82] She returned later that month asking again whether she was pregnant to be told that it was a false conception.[83] Forman, however, again changed his mind. On 2 November 1601, Luce came again offering the dates that she suspected she had conceived with her husband Richard March, curiously described as a 'gent that lai w[i]t[h] here [her] 23 March'. Now he noted that she was '32 wicks' (weeks') pregnant. He calculated that she would give birth 21 December 'at 2 in the morninge'. Forman returned to his notes after the consultation recording 'She was deliuered of a boi' the 3 December at 9.45 pm.[84] The astrologers also had to negotiate with family members seeking help on behalf of women or weighing in. Mrs Froick brought her daughter's urine to Richard Napier's nephew, desiring 'to know whether she be with child'.[85] Mr Knight came to Forman to find out whether his wife, Alice, was pregnant in August 1600 without her 'consent'.[86] Alice herself came to Forman two months later in October for the same question to be told 'yt will not proue,' or she would never carry her child to full term.[87]

The philosopher Anne Conway and her husband, Edward, consulted a number of different medical practitioners in 1658 to confirm whether or not she was expecting a child. Anne suffered from an illness that evaded diagnosis for most of her married life. In 1658, her condition had deteriorated and her husband, Edward, the politician wrote to his private secretary and brother-in-law, George Rawdon, that the couple had resigned themselves to her inevitable death. He told Rawdon that they had long considered the possibility that her

[79] CASE8281, CB. [80] CASE2294, CB. [81] CASE6282, CB. [82] CASE9478, CB.
[83] CASE9529, CB. [84] CASE9846, CB. [85] CASE79869, CB. [86] CASE7996, CB.
[87] CASE8291, CB.

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condition was not disease but pregnancy, but the severity of her symptoms suggested otherwise and these hints 'served only to torment' the family. The Conways consulted the 'best doctors and midwives' so they could be 'resolved' in the diagnosis, but the variety of opinions plunged them into the 'greatest uncertainty' for they were unequivocal that she was not carrying a child and had few explanations for her malaise. Finally, his wife felt something move within her, a symptom Edward described as 'not compatible with any disease'. He described how he and 'others' had placed their hands on her stomach and felt this movement that he compared to a 'fitt of the ague'. With relief, he told Rawdon that 'the violent extremity' she was in 'tended not to the concluding of her own life, but to the giving life to another'; Anne was pregnant for sure he thought. Although Edward was greatly relieved and delighted with the news, he was also embarrassed about how long it had taken to arrive at a diagnosis. Edward ruminated on how he and his wife had been 'so perfectly ignorant of the truth' and asked that Rawdon keep these details 'private as it is possible, till we have more assurance'. He fretted that they could all too easily 'be made a town-talk' and that only Rawdon's wife, Dorothy, should be told the circumstances of Anne's condition. In the same letter, he asked Rawdon to get an eagle stone, which would ease her pain and difficulties. Eagle stones were walnut-sized hollow rocks that rattled when shaken that ancient sources thought were carried by eagles to their nests to facilitate egg-laying. By the seventeenth century, they were increasingly regarded as a superstitious practice.[88] Again, he wanted Rawdon to be discreet; it was Anne's 'wish' that 'few people be aware' of her request and Edward asked that, if possible, the seller should be kept in the dark about their identity.[89] She gave birth to a little boy, Heneage, four months later who died in 1660 of smallpox. As the avid epistolary culture of writing about fertility and pregnancy indicates, the Conways were not unjustified in their fear that they would be gossiped about, and that her uncertainty would be a central theme. It was troubling when families could not understand bodily symptoms and knit them into an appropriate narrative. The interaction between Rawdon and Conway is yet another hint of the ways that record-keeping was narrativised in ways that elevated family status.

[88] Sandra Cavallo, 'Exhibit 17: Pregnant Stones as Wonders of Nature', in *Reproduction: Antiquity to the Present Day* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 180–181; Mary E. Fissell, *Vernacular Bodies: The Politics of Reproduction in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 50–52; Ann-Sophie Thwaite, 'Magic and the Material Culture of Healing in Early Modern England' (Cambridge, University of Cambridge, 2020), 11–12.

[89] Edward Conway to Major Rawdon, 12 October 1658, Marjorie Hope Nicolson and Sarah Hutton (eds.), *The Conway Letters: The Correspondence of Anne, Viscountess Conway, Henry More, and Their Friends 1642–1684* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), Letter 92.

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Even once a couple had announced they had conceived to family members and others, doubt could arise when the pregnancy did not appear to have progressed in an imagined or predicted way. In 1689, Anne Syderfin, the sister of James Lawes-Wittewronge, believed herself to be pregnant. In March, her brother James wrote to his father, Sir James Wittewronge, expressing his sadness that she had 'miscarried and in so great danger' but hoped that the next letter would bring news that she had recovered.[90] The miscarriage was seemingly staved off and her symptoms abated. Two months later he wrote noting that 'dayly' he prayed for his sister's safe delivery 'being much concerned for her'.[91] In a following letter, he noted that he had been 'in great hopes' that there would be 'wellcom newes of my sisters safe deliuery' but no sooner had he opened the letter 'then I perceiue'd the things I have long feard is like to proue true'.[92] The fear was that she had been deceived in her account and was not actually pregnant. On 5 June, he wrote offering his sister hope that she was simply overdue, 'you may please to tell her that Mr Musgraves' lady her neighbour in the country is lately brought to bed of a brave boy, haveing gone ten weeks beyond her reckoning'.[93] Only three days later, however, the situation appears to have become desperate, for he prayed that 'God send my sister well ridd of her supposed great belly.'[94] Towards the end of June, James's letters simply expressed his joy that Anne was well again, and no baby was born. For these families, uncertainty begged to be resolved one way or another. Interactions with medical practitioners show considerable ambiguity and anxiety around interpreting women's bodies as either pregnant or not. Even their professional reputation was embroiled in the politics of uncovering the secrets of women's bodies in the same ways that households and families felt that uncertainty reflected poorly on their family name. The next section shows how the pressure placed on women to know and moderate their behaviour only intensified once a woman had announced her pregnancy.

Being Cheerful and Careful: Preventing Miscarriage

One reason women were encouraged to know they were pregnant soon after conception was so they could do everything in their power to prevent miscarriage. Pregnancy was represented as delicate and easily disrupted by medical authors, and necessitated constant vigilance and immediate responsive action to ill health. John Oliver reminded women to be 'very careful of their bodies

[90] James Lawes-Wittewronge to Sir James Wittewronge, 11 March 1689, Hertfordshire Record Office, Hertford, DE/Lw F29, unfoliated.
[91] *Ibid.*, 6 May 1689. [92] *Ibid.*, 16 May 1689. [93] *Ibid.*, 5 June 1689.
[94] *Ibid.*, 8 June 1689.

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while they were with child'.[95] Authors were particularly concerned about the flimsiness of the fibres and sinews that held the baby in place. Sharp explained how babies were held by 'cups' that kept the infant nourished could be easily broken by 'strokes, sudden fears, much sneesing, coughing, violent motion, extream joy, sorrow or trouble of the mind; or by medicaments that corrode, or bitter drinks the infant loaths'.[96] A 'Corrupt diet' governed by 'Gluttony and surfeiting', eating too much meat or drinking too much wine could supposedly choke the infant.[97] The author of *Every Woman Her Own Midwife* described how 'vehement motions or exercise' could disrupt the 'internall membrane of the Womb' and 'abortment presently followeth'.[98] So too could raising her arms too high, carrying things or sitting on 'hard and uneasie seats'. Instead, she could have her body gently 'rubbed and stroked'. Some activities like spinning and carding wool could 'stretch the body' in beneficial ways. Eating immoderately or drinking wine that was too strong could similarly cause miscarriage.[99] She should avoid all extremes of emotion: 'fasting, thirst, watching, mourning, sadnesse, anger, and all other perturbations of the mind'.[100] The imperative to be calm and happy in order to be fertile and conceive described in Chapter 1 also applied in pregnancy, and was yet another way in which family members thrust themselves into the experience of childbearing.

Conduct and medical texts constantly fretted about women being unhappy or scared while pregnant. Barret described the 'Tragical Consequences' when women did not 'qualifie' and 'temperate' their 'Humour Upon every Surprize' in pregnancy. If they were afraid, they should get into bed 'and indeavour to forget what's past'. She should abstain from 'all Mourning, Sighing, and extraordinary Grief'. Being happy and content during pregnancy was not just advantageous for the infant and mother but for those around her; it was important to Barret that 'her Company be agreeable'.[101] Culpeper also espoused the benefits of women leading '*contented* lives, that so their conception may be well formed'. To 'fret and fume, and flight and throw, and murmure and repine, and fill their minds all full of distracting cares and fears' was, Culpeper suggested, like 'an Egg full of meat, making a tumult in their spirits, and bringing all their thoughts into such confusion, that they look more like beasts then women', and would destroy and 'murthers both Body and

[95] John Oliver, *A Present for Teeming Women. By Their Husbands or Friends; Containing Scripture-Directions for Women with-child, how to prepare for the hour of Travel* (London: 1663), sig. Aa2v.
[96] Sharp, *The Midwives Book Or the Whole Art of Midwifry Discovered*, 147. [97] *Ibid.*, 147.
[98] *Every Woman Her Own Midwife, or, A Compleat cabinet opened for child-bearing women furnished with directions to prevent miscarriages during the time of breeding* (London: 1675), 2.
[99] *Ibid.*, 2. [100] *Ibid.*, 2. [101] Barret, *A Companion for Midwives*, 66.

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Mind'.[102] He recommended Mr Jeremiah Burrough's *Christian Contentment*, a conduct book reprinted a number of times over the seventeenth century that provided guidance on how to accept the hand of God joyfully.[103] By the mid seventeenth century, there were several conduct books that were explicitly for women, or at least contained chapters directed towards them. In these texts women were encouraged to be 'chaste, silent and obedient'.[104] Mary Rich, the Countess of Warwick, was praised for her 'peculiar delight' in rendering 'the lives of all easie and pleasant and free from discontent, that they might serve God with chearfulness'.[105] Hannah Woolley instructed readers of the very popular and oft-reprinted *The Gentlewomans Companion* that 'greater assistance' was required in 'the framing and fashioning of a Woman' because her 'behaviour should be such as to please in all good companies'.[106] The conduct author Richard Brathwaite proclaimed that 'A cheerefull modesty' was a woman's 'best *Complement*, which shee ever weares about her as her chiefest ornament'.[107] Implicit in such advice was the expectation that women would manage the feelings of other household members. Women were also thought to be more permeable to the effects of emotion. Their bodies were especially impressionable to grief, sadness and fear.[108]

A vision of maternity here emerges in which women were expected to intensively manage their own pregnancies in a way that was pleasant and not disruptive for others. Her domestic responsibilities may have morphed while pregnant, but they did not stop. She may have been excused from strenuous household tasks but breeding a baby did not mean she was to stop ministering to the spiritual and bodily welfare of her husband, servants, other children and other family members, quite the opposite. Pregnancy then appears not as a moment of social or domestic inversion, but instead one in which women quite

[102] Culpeper, *Directory for Midwives* (1675), 93–94.
[103] Jeremiah Burroughs, *The Rare Jewel of Christian Contentment. By Jeremiah Burroughs, preacher of the Gospel to two of the greatest congregations in England; viz. Stepney and Cripplegate, London* (London: 1648).
[104] Suzanne W. Hull, *Chaste, Silent, and Obedient: English Books for Women, 1475–1640* (San Marino, CA: Huntington Library, 1982).
[105] Anthony Walker, *Eureka, Eureka The Virtuous Woman found Her Loss Bewailed, and Character Exemplified in a Sermon Preached at Felsted in Essex, April, 30,* 1678 (London: 1678), 95.
[106] Hannah Woolley, *The Gentlewomans Companion; or, A Guide to the Female Sex Containing Directions of Behaviour, in all Places, Companies, Relations, and Conditions, from their Childhood down to Old Age* (London, 1673), 33.
[107] Richard Brathwaite, *The English Gentlewoman drawne out to the full Body: Expressing What Habilliments due best attire her, What Ornaments doe best adorne her, What Complements doe best adorne her, What Complements doe best accomplish her* (London, 1631), sig A5r.
[108] Olivia Weisser, *Ill Composed: Sickness, Gender, and Belief in Early Modern England* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2015).

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literally heaped labour upon labour by an almost obsessive attentiveness to theirs and others' bodies within the household.

Family members writing to pregnant women freely used the threat of miscarriage in admonitions to eat certain things, behave a certain way and to stay cheerful, in a way that must have done anything but relax women. Anna Temple, for example, told her pregnant daughter, Ann Busbridge, that she could 'haue the mayron of beefe at the Butchers upon the greene, & the marrow, or pith of the sheepe'. She told her she had 'had expereince [of] it' and it was 'very good and strengthening'.[109] Likewise, Barbara Compton wrote to Walter Bagot, both of the Staffordshire aristocratic Bagot family, requesting he send obtained venison, a term used to mean meat obtained via hunting in the period, for her pregnant daughter for 'many times, great-bellied women think of such novelities'. Barbara had extended a loan she had made Walter and jested that this would be his recompense.[110] In childbearing guides, unsatisfied cravings were related directly to the ability of the maternal imagination to imprint on the child. Craving strawberries might cause children to be born with a sympathetic birth mark. If a woman thought about another man or saw an image of him while having sex with her husband, her baby would look like him rather than her spouse.[111] In her *Observations*, Sarah Stone, a midwife that practised in Bristol and London, recalled how she had attended a heavily pregnant woman who had lost a 'gallon' of blood and was afflicted by constant pains that came in waves. Stone believed she was suffering from unsatisfied cravings. Confronting her, Stone recorded in her observations that the woman continued to deny her longings, 'till I told her that both she and the Child would lose their lives, unless she speedily had what she had an Inclination for'. The mother-to-be responded, 'What should poor people Long for?', before eventually confessing that she was preoccupied with a desire for fresh peas. Stone, playing the role of the good midwife, told her charge that she would get anything in her power 'let the price be what it would'. When the patient eventually ate the longed-for peas, her pains ceased instantly and her health returned. Stone delivered the baby, a healthy baby boy, a month later. In this example, it was the woman who was responsible for recognising and interpreting her cravings, but those around her who needed to supply this need. 'Discreet women' would manage their imagination by avoiding 'lamentable, fearfull tales or storyes' and avoid seeing 'pictures or persons which are uglie or deformed, least the imagination imprint on the child the similitude of the

[109] Anna Temple to Ann Busbridge, 10 November 1632, The Keep, East Sussex Record Office, 51/48.

[110] Barbara Compton to Walter Bagot, 6 July 1616, Folger Shakespeare Library, Washington, DC, L.a.145, fol. 1.

[111] For a discussion of the maternal imagination, see Fissell, *Vernacular Bodies*; Marie-Hélène Huet, *Monstrous Imagination* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993).

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said person or picture'.[112] Ulinka Rublack notes that German towns often ordered beggars to hide visual evidence of their disability for fear it could cause pregnant women to pass on these features to their offspring.[113]

Attentiveness and vigilance were seen as paramount to preventing miscarriage. In draft letters to 'Mrs Tulloch' by an unknown correspondent, the writer was adamant that if the pregnant woman had 'taken any pains ab[ou]t' her health she 'might haue been perfectly ... well before ys [this] time', almost two months after she had supposedly conceived on 1 May 1721. It was 'easier to preuent yn [than] cure' the writer chastised, the same sentiment that childbearing guides expressed when they demanded husbands, but especially wives, moderate their diet and behaviour while trying to conceive. The writer warned that if Tulloch continued to 'neglect, & disregard yt w[hi]ch is so very valuable to all your acq[uaintan]ces & that be so to your self, your disease may end in ane incurable Decay' and she would come to 'repent your Indiffer [en]cy'. Seemingly, Tulloch did little to change her poor habits for another note was penned 8 August 1721 that warned that if she wanted to preserve her own life and that of her infant, she should 'begin to use' the medicine an unnamed doctor had prescribed, snidely noting that 'the sight of a Rec[ei]t' alone would not cure, only the taking of it. Again, on 28 September, the author was desirous of an update on Tulloch's health stating,

> I'm well convinced yt if you take ye proper care of your self, your Disease will not prove so dangerous as you imagine. But if you be careless & indifferent, & your illness prove obstinate or mortal (wch God forbids) you'll have your self to blame.[114]

Anna Temple similarly used the threat of a previous miscarriage to try and cajole her pregnant daughter Ann to be 'chear full' and not take 'a conceit'.[115] Families commonly proferred emotional distress as the cause of miscarriage. Isaac Archer, for example, described how his wife miscarried twice in 1622, once in April and again in August. The first baby was lost 'upon no occasion' but the result of her ongoing 'griefe and ilnes'. He judged that the baby 'was corrupted', meaning dead and so 'twas well it came away'.[116] She became pregnant again quickly and miscarried again in August 'through a sodaine fright, upon an unhappy occasion' but thought it impertinent to record who had caused the fright 'because 'twas beyond the intention of him that occasioned

[112] Jacques Guillemeau, *Child-birth or, The Happy Deliverie of Women Wherein is set downe the government of Women* (London, 1612), 26.
[113] Ulinka Rublack, 'Pregnancy, Childbirth and the Female Body in Early Modern Germany', *Past & Present* 150, no. 1 (1996): 96.
[114] 'Note on Mrs Tulloch's pregnancy, and copy of a note sending her advice and shoes, 1721', National Records of Scotland, Edinburgh, CH12/12/795.
[115] Anna Temple to Anne Busbridge, 10 November 1632, DUN 51/48.
[116] Isaac Archer, 'Diary', 25 April 1676, University of Cambridge Library, Add 8499, 179.

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it'. This is another subtle reminder that journals and diaries were composed with an audience in mind and as a record of events – including both pregnancy and miscarriage – for posterity, of which generation, birth and miscarriage were important.[117]

Margaret, the Countess of Wemyss, wrote to her daughter, Anne, that 'there is nothing so good for you & ye childe both as to be merry so I intret you let not anie thing yt falls out, disquiet & vex you'.[118] In another letter, Margaret wished that her daughter would 'be soe wise and kinde to the childe in y[ou]r belly as not to grieve much as you did last'. Anne was particularly worried that her husband would be unable to be at the birth. She warned that as she was further along in her pregnancy now than she had been when she had been plagued by fear in her previous pregnancy, she would do far more damage.[119] This was not always just about infant welfare, however, but the wellbeing of the whole family. Anne's distress 'troubles us' Margaret explained '& does much displeass & dishonours God'.[120] When Anna Temple wished her daughter would be 'chear full' in her pregnancy, she asked her to consider that her fate was in the hands of the Lord and both living and dying were outcomes worthy of celebration.[121] These pregnant women were constantly scrutinised and subjected to considerable pressure to eat and behave in a certain way by family members. They were simultaneously encouraged to do everything within their power to avoid miscarriage but told that all experiences and events, including or perhaps especially carrying children, were ultimately the expression of divine will and therefore to a degree, unchangeable. Poetry that explored miscarriage and stillbirth similarly focused on God's hand, rather than maternal wrongdoing.[122] Although elite and middling women have been represented as occupying a privileged position during pregnancy and in particular being able to resist patriarchal imperatives, in fact their bodies were examined and laid open to scrutiny in family correspondence that childbearing guides and religious texts encouraged.

[117] *Ibid*., 22 August 1697, 179.
[118] Margaret, countess of Wemyss, to Anne, countess of Leven, 23 November 1695, National Records of Scotland, GD26/13/401/23.
[119] Margaret, countess of Wemyss, to Anne, countess of Leven, 30 November 1695, GD26/13/401/24.
[120] Margaret, countess of Wemyss, to Anne, countess of Leven, 23 November 1695, National Records of Scotland, GD26/13/401/23.
[121] Anna Temple to Anne Busbridge, 10 November 1632, East Sussex Record Office, Brighton, DUN 51/48.
[122] Jennifer Evans and Sara Read, '"Before Midnight She Had Miscarried": Women, Men, and Miscarriage in Early Modern England', *Journal of Family History* 40, no. 1 (2015): 2–23; Pamela Hammons, 'Despised Creatures: The Illusion of Maternal Self-effacement in Seventeenth-Century Child Loss Poetry', *English Literary History* 66, no. 1 (1999): 29–49.

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In hoping that women would be cheerful, conduct authors sometimes noted that husbands might also have a responsibility in this. John Oliver in *A Present for Teeming Women* (1663) noted that 'many Husbands' needed reminding of 'their duty' towards their wives during pregnancy.[123] He asked them to forget 'all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamour, and evil speaking' and have a 'tenderness for her health, protection, quiet, and tranquillity, a bearing with her infirmities, procuring all possible helps and supplyes'. Husbands had to promote their wives' 'cheerfulness and content in all fit and lawful wayes'.[124] Men that failed to do so were 'Divels or Monsters'.[125] *Every Woman Her Own Midwife* (1675) thought that women's 'familiar friends' had a responsibility too in shielding her from 'unwholsome' things lest 'she should desire it, and not be able to get it'.[126] Many of these instructions focus on actionable tasks that those around the pregnant women could do: remove unsightly things and provide food, medicine and safety. Whereas women are often instructed to be cheerful, men were simply asked not to be bitter, wrathful, angry or speak evilly. Male family members were also, crucially, not the recipient of letters that threatened miscarriage or infant illness. When Lord Lanesborough wrote to his mother-in-law about his wife's pregnancy, he noted that he understood it was important that all 'care' be taken to 'satisfy all scruples and apply as early preventatives as is possible', even though she had had a good pregnancy so far.[127] Although Margaret, Countess of Wemyss, was quick to warn her daughter that if she did not cheer up she might miscarry, she heaped praise on her son-in-law, the Earl of Leven, for his perceived attentiveness. She told her daughter she was sure that he had taken 'care of having every thing done for' her that would 'contribut[e] for her beter health'. He was 'one of the most carefull kinde husbands I ever saw, & yt makes me the less anxious of coming home this winter since she is in so good hands'.[128] This was despite the fact he had spent most of the pregnancy away from home and could not give his wife the certain promise of his return for her impending birth.

While husbands and other family members often viewed pregnancy and childbirth as a joint venture, airing their views and offering advice, adjudicating what would lead to positive procreative outcomes, they did so in a way that reinforced generation was women's work, even if they were constantly weighing in. Men 'got' material goods and wives worked to bring this to fruition. Being a 'good' husband or father-to-be during pregnancy was tangible, observable and, simply put, easy. Being a 'good' wife and mother was intangible and was measured constantly and inconsistently. Writing about

[123] Oliver, *Present for Teeming Women,* sig. Aa2v. [124] *Ibid*., sig. Aa3r.
[125] *Ibid*., sig. Aa4v. [126] *Every Woman Her Own Midwife,* 3.
[127] George Lane to Lady Frances Cranfield, 1 August 1674, KHLC, U269/C21/1.
[128] Margaret, countess of Wemyss, to Anne, countess of Leven, 8 October 1695, GD26/13/401/8.

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pregnancy often policed women and conditioned what they claimed to know about their own bodies, but it also imposed order on an otherwise unknowable and uncertain experience.

Reckoning and Fidelity

Beneath the need to be certain was the very real possibility that the child within might not be legitimate. In this way, making specific predictions, especially with regards to when the baby would be born, was related to verifying wives' sexual fidelity. This was yet another intensive focus for families that was displayed in obvious ways in their paperwork, but it was also a concern for women themselves who might seek the advice of medical practitioners to help them in making 'reckonings'. Thus, Elizabeth Underhill asked Napier whether her 'reckening is past' and Goody Phillips was 'according to her [rec]kning a fortnight past the tyme of her accounte'. This delay in being delivered had led her to be 'extreme sicke & looketh euery hour to be deliuered & yet is not'.[129] Goody Morgan told Forman that her daughter, Ann Gale of Goldington, 'looketh to be delivered about sonday', which was the 'last day of her reckning'.[130] It is no accident that the other common meaning of 'reckoning' was meeting one's maker. Birth forced women to confront their mortality but also labour painfully but redemptively.

Although Protestant reformers saw having sex as a marital debt that spouses owed one another and, crucially, an intrinsic part of the formation of godly families, there were delicate parameters to the amount of sex even spouses should be having. Too much sex, as we have heard, was thought to have deleterious consequences for health and prevent the conception of healthy infants. Although the Church of England was no longer as concerned with enforcing abstinence on days of the liturgical calendar such as Lent and Advent, as sermons and religious texts constantly reminded parishioners, marriage and the sexual license it provided was to avoid other kinds of fornication and for the perpetuation of the Church through procreation. Sex within marriage was therefore acceptable, even encouraged, but not carte blanche for indulgence. A woman who did not know she was pregnant quickly might not be keeping 'accounts' but she might also be having sex so often it was difficult to even work out when she could have conceived. Accounts and reckonings served as tangible and material records of the child's legitimacy. In making these predictions, couples helped to place themselves and their prospective issue within certain family narratives, albeit in ways that were often difficult for women.

[129] CASE20595, CB. [130] NOTE5484, CB.

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As well as this role, establishing a reckoning helped families practically prepare for when delivery was going to happen. Goody Phillips asked when she would be delivered so as to know how long to keep her midwife with her 'for shee loketh every day for a happy delivery wch god granite her'.[131] Goody Bird, a midwife, came to Napier to ask when her patient, Goody Lane, would be delivered.[132] Ellen Selby used her sister's 'reckening' to calculate when she might be able to visit her. If Mary Arthington was able to 'hold out' until then, it would be possible and, in the meantime, wished her 'many prayers' as Mary's had brought her comfort when she was heavily pregnant.[133]

Yet again, however, the expectation that women could be accurate and specific in their reckonings was undermined by the fact that even medical authors could not agree on how long pregnancy was meant to last. Helkiah Crooke described how an infant could be born after seven, eight, nine, ten or eleven months of pregnancy, but those who gave birth after eleven months were probably 'deceiued in the time of her conception'. Babies born at eight months 'do neuer liue' and 'The birth at nine months is most legitimate and to Nature most familiar.'[134] Barret claimed he was drawing on Hippocrates, stating that a child would be formed in forty-five days, a woman would normally quicken ninety days after conception and give birth after 270 days or nine months. The rule was that the time from conception to quickening could be tripled to get the day of birth, although he admitted that girl babies were often born in the tenth month of pregnancy because they needed extra time for the 'increase and perfection of the infant'.[135] The distinction between full term and premature or undeveloped babies, however, was not always clear. In her meditations, Alice Thornton described giving birth to a daughter that lived an hour and a half as a 'miscarriage'. She was seven months pregnant.[136]

Despite this, the pressure to give specific and accurate due dates meant women were encouraged to overcome this potential confusion. Lady Frances Cobham wrote to Elizabeth St Loe, later the Countess of Shrewsbury and known as Bess of Hardwick, in October 1564, stating that she had travelled to Cobham in preparation for delivery 'wher I intend god wyllynge to be browght a bed i loke a weke before sente anderous day' [St Andrew's Day, 30 November].[137] Anne Meautys wrote to Jane Bacon in July 1630, telling her 'I am now with child; my time if God permit me life, will bee about

[131] CASE20595, CB. [132] CASE24397, CB.
[133] E[llen] S[elby] to Mary Arthington, undated and copied out into 'Letter book c. 1680–1700', Bodleian Library, Oxford, MS Add A 119, fol. 1r.
[134] Helkiah Crooke, *Mikrokosmographia a description of the body of man* (London: 1615), 269–270.
[135] Barret, *A Companion for Midwives*, 57 [136] Thornton, BL Add MS 88897/1, 129.
[137] Frances Brooke, baroness Cobham, to Lady Elizabeth St Loe, 21 October 1564?, Folger Shakespeare Library, Washington, DC, Cavendish-Talbot MS, X.d.428 (16).

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Crismas.'[138] When Lucy Scrope wrote requesting updates from her pregnant sister, Abigail Newton, she noted that, 'I shall not be long after you for I recken at the beginning of July'.[139] Other women sought the assistance of astrologers to be able to profer a certain time when they would give birth. In 1609, Richard Napier's sister-in-law asked how many weeks it would be until she gave birth.[140] One woman who 'hath bene 21 weekes quick as she supposeth' could not 'tell whe[n] she shall be brought a bed but is desyrous to know it'.[141] Margaret Morley of Lumbard Street, twenty-five years old, asked 'Vtrum sit sit grauida *et quado ptriet* et vtru sit mascul aut femina' [Whether she is pregnant and *when she will give birth* and whether it will be male or female].[142] Elizabeth Russell, forty-five years old, asked 'Whether she is pregnant and when she will be delivered'. The judgement was that she would be delivered '23 days hence'.[143] At times, women were not necessarily told when they would deliver but when they had conceived so as they might come to their own reckonings; Margaret Bedall asked whether she was pregnant and told she was carrying 'a boy of ten dais', or was only ten days pregnant.[144] Like being able to announce pregnancy early, families also frequently turned to astrologers to calculate their reckonings. Julian Wilson, fifty years old, who asked Forman whether she was pregnant, reported to him that she only had '12 daies to goe' until delivery.[145] It is unclear from the notes whether he reified her calculations.

Perhaps the clearest indication that reckonings were intertwined in proving fidelity is found in the tensions that arose when babies were born before or after the time they were expected. What might otherwise seem a quirk – writing out reckonings – became part of husbands' interrogations to pinpoint marital indiscretion in their wives. *Aristotle's Master-piece* explained how 'Many bitter Quarrells happen between Men and their Wives, upon the Man's suspition that his Wife comes too soon; and by Consequent that he could not be the Father.' Instead, it was his want of 'Understanding the secrets of Nature that brought the man unto that Error'. One woman, the book narrated, a married woman of 'a noble family of unspotted Fame', delivered a baby a mere twenty-seven weeks after the calculated date of conception. Rather than simply assuming that the woman had been inaccurate in her prediction, the author of *Master-piece* suggested that instead the baby had been born early for the baby did not appear to look like others born at 'full 9

[138] Anne Meautys to Jane Bacon, 2 March 1641, in Joanna Moody (ed.), *The Private Correspondence of Jane, Lady Cornwallis Bacon, 1613–1644* (London: Associated University Presses, 2003), 263–264.
[139] Lucy Scrope to Abigail Newton, 11 May c. 1690, Lincolnshire Archives, Lincoln, MON 13/122.
[140] CASE35256, CB. [141] CASE23810, CB. [142] CASE949, CB.
[143] CASE7684, CB. [144] CASE7446, CB. [145] CASE1249, CB.

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Months'.[146] Edward de Vere became estranged from his wife, Anne, countess of Oxford, when he suspected her of unfaithfulness because 'he lay not with his wife but at Hampton Court, and that the child could not be his because the child was born in July' and he was under the impression that it took twelve full months for a child to be gestated.[147] Once he was corrected and reassured his wife had been faithful, he accepted the child as his own and reunited with his wife. Consultations in the astrologers' casebooks also point to the importance of reckonings to working out whether a woman had been faithful. On 5 November 1618, Mr Cowley was 'wonderfully desyrous to know' from astrologer Gerence James when Vere Bouth would give birth.[148] This was in addition to the five consultations of her own.[149] William Bouth also asked when his wife would give birth in 1618. Napier notes that 'his wife is mistaken in her c[oun?]t', which he had taken 'impatiently & was troubled in his hed & could not rest well that night'. The dates his wife had given him were confusing and he sought external validation that she had been faithful.[150]

Ballads similarly explored the ways that men might be able to discover infidelity through interrogating the reckonings that women proffered. In the *Lass of Lynn's New Joy*, the protagonist has a tryst with an unnamed man only to find herself pregnant. Initially, she tries to hide her state by lacing her stays 'So hard all day' that they 'Pinch'd both her Back and Side'. With her mother, she conspires to find a husband to be a 'Cloak' for her 'Great Belly'. She convinces George the Tapster at the Bull to marry her, and on their wedding night, ensures the match is consummated. As they lay in bed, he placed his hand 'On a soft place' and 'found she'd a Rising Belly'. Although he suspects she is pregnant with another man's child, he is quickly satisfied by her assurances that she is simply 'fat and plump' from the wedding feast, and she quickly enlists the help of a midwife to fudge her reckoning so as to make the new baby appear legitimate. She flatters his ego by suggesting that it is because he is so virile that the baby has come surprisingly early and tells him that pregnancies last last 'Five Months by Days, and five by Nights', and so she has 'gone her full time to a day'. Here creating accounts and predictions about her reckoning is a crucial part of the lass and midwife's collusion.

This fear of misplaced reckonings opening families to accusations of infidelity is perhaps the reason that elite families, and particularly husbands, were eager to publicly correct reckonings retrospectively. Hugh Cholmely noted in

[146] *Aristotle's Master-piece; Or, The Secrets of Generation Display'd in all the Parts thereof* (London, 1690), 51.
[147] Johanna Rickman, *Love, Lust, and License in Early Modern England: Illicit Sex and the Nobility*, Women and Gender in the Early Modern World (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008), 30.
[148] CASE47793, CB.
[149] CASE47609, CASE47608, CASE47607, CASE47606, CASE47583, CB.
[150] CASE47770, CB.

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his memoirs written for his sons that when his wife gave birth to their first child, Richard, in 1624, earlier than expected, she was adamant that she 'went full forty weeks'.[151] The fact that families noted when women were mistaken in their calculations points to the importance of these dates in the narratives families told about their own generation. Judith Isham described in a letter to her husband how her sister had been 'deceived in her reckoning' and gave birth earlier than she had expected to.[152] Likewise, Isabella Wentworth wrote to her son c. 1712, telling him that although Lady Bathurst had 'reckoned a month after y[ou]r Lady', she had been wrong in her calculations and 'yesterday brought to bed of a very Little Girl'.[153] The astrologers sometimes returned to cases in which women had asked when they would deliver to add the day and time that the child was born. Goody Phillips was 'brought a bed the 29 of febr about 9 of the clocke' and Goody Lane 'the next morning about six'.[154] As with keeping accounts, accuracy was important to ways people tried to understand and fashion generation into ways that accorded them and their families honour, even if this accuracy was an invented one. Getting it wrong led to the kind of 'town talk' that Edward Conway fretted about when he asked his brother-in-law to keep the uncertainty of Anne's pregnancy to himself.

By sharing reckonings, women sought to declare the legitimacy of their pregnancy but in doing so they simultaneously laid their marriage open to scrutiny and interrogation. This also helped to define the boundaries of the family and involve others in the creation and recreation of this lineage. It also meant individuals could have their accounts doubted and corrected. Margaret, the countess of Wemyss, told her daughter that she doubted she would give birth at the end of January. Margaret told her that if she did give birth before February, 'it will be before your time', but promised if this was the case to 'haste over so soon as I can'.[155] In another letter, she reassured her daughter that even if she went beyond her reckoning, it would not necessarily endanger her or her child's life – 'wee have severall women in this place that has gone by there [sic] reckoning, one of them was delivered yesterday & had a very good Labour'. One woman had had very similar symptoms to Anne 'had pains these 9 weeks & is a Lean small woman' and had had a healthy child.[156]

[151] Hugh Cholmley, *The Memoirs of Sir Hugh Cholmley, Knt. and Bart. Addressed to His Two Sons* (London, 1787), 40.
[152] Judith Isham to Justinian Isham, 23 April 1666, Northampton Record Office, Northampton, MS IC 583.
[153] Isabella Wentworth to Thomas Wentworth, 24 February c. 1712, BL, Wentworth Correspondence, Add MS 22225, fol. 373.
[154] CASE20595, CASE24397, CB.
[155] Margaret to Anne, c. 1675, National Records of Scotland, GD26/13/401/14.
[156] *Ibid.*, GD26/13/401/13.

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Prognosticating together served the dual purpose of starting to make preparations for the delivery and involving Margaret in the pregnancy and family that Anne and her husband were perpetuating. Isabella Wentworth similarly used correspondence to offer her own interpretation of when her daughter-in-law would give birth in 1712. '[I]t being my Ladys first', she figured 'she may come at 38 weeks which is the 16 of next month', which would be February but 'she may goe on to ye end of ffeb or ye first week in march,' because 'none can be exact' she admitted.[157] Sir Anthony Denton wrote to Sir John Isham in 1608, telling him that his sister 'is near a good tyme, God thanked'.[158] These kinds of letters were only written to close members of family. Sharing this knowledge enveloped them in the couple's marriage and procreative experiences in intimate but important ways.

Conclusion

Looking at the records that families, and particularly women, kept, domestic paperwork reveals that announcing pregnancy early and making accurate reckonings imposed order on what was otherwise a fluid and unpredictable experience. But these notes served a greater purpose in making certain respectable aspects of childbearing public, whilst downplaying others like efforts to increase fertility, and, as we shall see, pain and difficult recoveries. Authoritatively knowing when one had conceived was firmly linked to marital fidelity and (relative) chastity, and the resultant paperwork formally inscribed this commitment to the family project, as well as involving others within the fold of the new family. This involvement, however, often left women open to scrutiny and criticism. Family members were all too quick and willing to blame women for regrettable procreative outcomes. Writing about conception and pregnancy was a key part of the experience of having babies for middling and elite families. Although Sharp expected that women would keep 'just accounts', it is apparent that these accounts were both intellectually and practically connected to broader cultures of record-keeping and representing familial identity as well as spiritual practice.

[157] Isabella Wentworth to Thomas Wentworth, 27 January 1713?, BL, Add MS 22225, fol. 353.
[158] Sir Anthony Denton to Sir John Isham, 28 December 1608, Northamptonshire Record Office, Northampton, IC/137.

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