

WHAT WAS THE SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC IMPACT OF THE  
ENGLISH CIVIL WAR ON CATHOLICS, 1642-48?

by Simon Stevens

English Catholics suffered from persecution throughout the seventeenth century, but this persecution was by no means uniform through the period. Under Elizabeth, and in the early years of James I's reign following the Gunpowder Plot, JPs enforced the recusancy laws vigorously, but in James's later years, as fears of an immediate Catholic rising wore off, this was gradually (and informally) relaxed. Under Charles I, who had a Catholic wife, Catholics became increasingly prominent at court, but at the same time the king's financial problems meant that the recusancy laws against ordinary Catholics were enforced severely once again. Between 1640 and 1642, following the summoning of the Long Parliament, this persecution was heightened even further. It was at this point that the civil war broke out, and it seems likely that the impact of the war on Catholics had both positive and negative aspects: on the one hand they suffered persecution from the fiercely anti-Catholic parliament and its supporters, but on the other the war meant that much of the traditional judicial system, the tool for their persecution, ceased to function and that, for a variety of reasons, in many areas Catholics were increasingly socially accepted.

During the civil war Catholics perhaps suffered the most at the hands of parliamentarian soldiers. Parliament claimed to be fighting a crusade against popery and papists; in all its declarations the Commons asserted that popery was a major issue, or even *the* major issue, separating it from the king, and constantly reiterated that it was acting 'to maintain and defend...the true reformed Protestant religion...against all Popery and popish innovations'. In Hirst's words, 'sheer anti-Catholicism drove on many conscientious followers of parliament'.<sup>1</sup> A group of parliamentarian prisoners who in 1644 explained to the royalist divine Edward Simmons that they 'took up arms against Antichrist and popery' were typical. In 1642 many parliamentarian battle-standards bore slogans such as 'Antichrist must down'. In these circumstances, parliament gave almost full rein to the anti-popery of its supporters, with the result that, as Miller suggests, 'Catholics suffered more severely than other Royalists...from the depredations of the Parliamentary forces'.<sup>2</sup>

This often took the form of plunder. Clarendon recorded that 'the Papists' houses in all places' were, in 1642, being 'plundered or pulled down, with all circumstances of rage, by the parliament-soldiers' who 'in their march took the goods of all Catholics and eminent malignants as lawful prize'. In his study of Worcestershire, Gilbert suggests rather tentatively that 'Catholics seem to

51. Ibid, p. 616.
52. Ibid, p. 617.
53. Ibid.
54. N White, *Truth Gloriously Appearing from under the sad and sable Cloud of Obliquie* (London, 1646).
55. Lefroy, *Memorials*, p. 601.
56. Hallett, *Chronicles*, p. 51.
57. Wilkinson, *Adventurers*, p. 264.
58. Lefroy, *Memorials*, p. 600.
59. Hallett, *Chronicles*, p. 58.
60. Lefroy, *Memorials*, p. 622.
61. Ibid, p. 627.
62. Wilkinson, *Adventurers*, p. 269.
63. Ibid, pp. 270-1.
64. Ibid, p. 285.
65. Hallett, *Chronicles*, p. 59.
66. N Sainsbury (ed), *Calendar of State Papers Colonial, 1574-1660* (London, 1860), p. 411.
67. Ibid, Introduction, xxxii.
68. Lefroy, *Memorials*, II, 276.

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have suffered particularly heavily from plundering soldiers... one gets the impression that Catholics were especially selected for "visitations" and "visited" more frequently than non-Catholics'.<sup>3</sup> Contemporaries were certain of this. Sir Henry Garraway, an alderman of London with royalist sympathies, asserted to Pym in 1643 that 'if they stay at their houses they are plundered: it is good justification for plundering that they are papists'. No distinction was made between active Catholic royalists and Catholic neutrals, for it was assumed that all Catholics were enemies. In 1647 the trained bands of Colchester attacked the house of a known local royalist and then 'cried out that now they were met together' they should 'deal in the same manner with the Papists'. Several Catholic houses were broken into and pillaged, the mob 'miserably spoiling what they could not carry away'; even quite poor Catholics were robbed of their animals and furniture. Similarly William Sheldon, a Warwickshire Catholic, described in 1649 the hardships he had had to endure during the civil war:

In September, 1643, my house at Weston...was ransacked, and my cattle and goods taken by soldiers...In December following, my house at Beoley...was burned to the ground and all my goods and cattle plundered...Immediately after, all my flock of cattle for my provision of housekeeping was taken from us at Weston by a party of soldiers...[We] removed [later] to a small farm house in the parish of Clifton upon Tyme...where we remained about eight months, until all our goods and horses were also taken by soldiers and the house threatened to be burned

It is of course difficult to ascertain how typical this degree of suffering was, but Mosler concludes from his local study of Warwickshire that this account is to some degree representative and 'illustrates the tribulations of Warwickshire Catholics'.<sup>4</sup>

The widespread plundering was sometimes accompanied by physical violence, and Catholics again seem to have been often selected for particularly harsh treatment. Lawrence Bird of Rowington, Warwickshire, for example, was plundered and physically assaulted by parliamentary troops and Robert Aprece of Washingley, a small landowner in Huntingdonshire, was shot by Puritan troopers simply for being a Catholic. The massacre of the predominantly Catholic garrison of Basing House was one of the few real atrocities of the civil war. The violence of many parliamentary soldiers against Catholic civilians drove many of them to seek refuge in royalist garrisons. In 1651-2, William Birchley, a Catholic apologist who wanted to show that not all Catholics had opposed parliament, asserted that 'a great part of those papists, who are sequestered as absolute delinquents, were never in actual arms against the Parliament, but only fled to the enemies Garrisons for shelter...Since whoever did observe the fury and rage of most of our

common soldiers (at the beginning of the late troubles) against many of that party, will easily conclude that the Papists had reason to distrust their own personal security amongst them'. A similar picture emerges from the records of the Committee for Compounding. John Jones of Monmouthshire, for example, claimed that he had not been in arms against parliament, but had been 'constrained often to repair unto Raglan Castle, being two miles from his habitation, to avoid the soldiers...the violence of the Common Soldier being great against Recusants', and similarly Thomas Empson asserted that 'for the preservation of his life he was forced to fly to a Garrison of the Enemies to Avoid the fury of the Soldiers that at the same time killed a neighbour'.

Lindley terms this 'involuntary royalism' and concludes from his study of the records of the Committee for Compounding that 'instances of Catholics who claimed before the Committee...that they had been forced to seek refuge with the royalists can be found in all [the nine] counties studied in this survey'.<sup>5</sup> In many cases their claims were upheld and this is evidence not only that many Catholics (who, according to Everitt, 'in general...kept their heads low and endeavoured to remain neutral') were forced to take sides and enter royalist garrisons, but that many were punished for it, being sequestered for delinquency as well as recusancy. Some were subsequently able to have this reversed by the Committee for Compounding, but it seems likely that many others were not.

Plundering and physical violence against Catholics was, as it was against all civilians, concentrated in the most contested regions, through which large bodies of troops passed many times (although this was certainly not exclusive: some of the worst attacks on Catholics were in the parliamentary heartlands of Essex and Suffolk). In Warwickshire, for example, the Catholics who suffered the most from plundering troops were those in the south-west of the county, through which there were frequent parliamentary troop movements westward to attack royalist strongholds in Worcestershire. Sequestrations and fines, however, were supposed to affect all Catholics in areas controlled by parliament. In 1643 parliament decreed that the estates of all royalists and Catholics were to be seized as they fell into parliamentary hands: the county committees were to take possession of two-thirds of the estates of all Catholics, and four-fifths of Catholics in arms for the king. Catholics were to be identified by the administration of a new 'Oath of Abjuration', which included an outright denial of papal supremacy and the doctrine of transubstantiation. Gregorio Panzini, an Italian priest, reported that 'these acts were executed with extreme severity on the whole body of Catholics. Few families escaped...The lowest orders suffered in the general sequestration. They even tripartited the day-labourer's goods and very household stuff; and have taken away two cows where the whole flock was but three'. Mosler concurs, suggesting that 'in Warwickshire, this financial anti-Catholic structure placed an extreme burden on the Catholic community' and that few had the money

required to compound (to pay a flat amount for the return of their estates). Certainly there were many examples of severe hardship. Mrs Nicholas Griffin, for example, a widow from Warwickshire, was forced to beg the Sequestrations Committee for relief, on the grounds that she was unable to maintain her extended family of twenty on the £70 p.a. left after her two-thirds sequestration fine and taxes. On other hand, the records of the Committee for Compounding show that many gentry, and a significant number of those below gentry status, were able to compound. Moreover, a significant number of Catholics probably benefited from the connivance of their neighbours or local committee men in reducing the burden upon them (see below). Miller suggests that 'few Catholics were totally ruined by sequestration' since 'by compounding or fictitious sales many avoided having their lands confiscated or quickly recovered them; most emerged at the Restoration with a heavy load of debt but with most of their lands intact'.

The imposition of sequestration was thus a severe burden on the English Catholic community, but perhaps not as crippling as might have been expected. In addition it seems likely that during the war many Catholics benefited from a relaxation in the enforcement of the recusancy laws in areas controlled by parliament, for the means for enforcing them had often collapsed. In London there was a vigorous searching out of priests, large numbers of whom were incarcerated in Newgate, and twenty of whom were executed between 1641 and 1646 (compared to just two between 1625 and 1640). However, as Miller argues, most lay 'Catholics were not vigorously persecuted' in this period. The abolition of the Court of High Commission in 1641 had removed one of the main agencies for the persecution of Catholics, and meant that there could be no more special recusancy ecclesiastical commissions (the use of which had in 1627 been revived from the time of Elizabeth's reign to increase the crown's revenue from recusants). Moreover much of the local justice system ceased to function: parliament declared assizes illegal and in many counties quarter sessions ceased to take place. The functions of the JPs were often taken over by the county committees, but these were overburdened, and acted only erratically; Pennington refers to their 'constant struggle to offer some haphazard justice and relief to a community where war had destroyed both respect for law and order and the means of enforcing them'.<sup>6</sup> In contrast to the demands in many of the county petitions to parliament in 1642 for the complete rooting out of popery - six demanded the 'utter abolition of the mass' - the private practice of the Catholic faith does not seem to have been greatly interfered with in the war years. Compulsory attendance at the parish church was no longer demanded, and faced with the huge financial demands of conducting the war, parliament seems to have been more interested in extracting revenue from Catholics than forcibly converting them. As Mosler notes, 'Catholics could be taxed at a higher rate than the general population, and, ironically, it was in the interests of puritans to leave the religion of the Catholics alone'. Although there were

examples of compulsory conversions - for example, the children of Mrs Anderton of Clitheroe were taken from her after the death of her husband in battle and brought up as Protestants, and the wife of William Blundell of Crosby was allowed to retain one-fifth of his estate in trust for her children, on condition that they were raised 'in the Protestant religion' - these seem to have been isolated instances.

In royalist-controlled areas, there was an attempt to ensure that traditional judicial institutions, chiefly the quarter sessions, continued to function, but although the records for these areas are extremely scanty for the war period, it seems very likely that the recusancy laws were not at all vigorously enforced. Certainly there were no prosecutions of priests in royalist areas. Charles's attitude towards Catholics had always been governed by pragmatic considerations; between 1625 and 1640 this had meant that financial impositions weighed particularly heavily on them - his subsidy Acts provided that Catholics should pay double, for example - but during the war Catholics could be used as soldiers, just like anybody else, and it is probable therefore that persecution of them was largely lifted. Nevertheless there is evidence that Charles continued to see Catholics as a source of revenue which could be milked particularly heavily. In September 1642, for example, he negotiated with the Catholics of Staffordshire and Shropshire, and received nearly £5,000 in advances on recusancy fines, and in July 1643 following the fall of all Yorkshire (except Hull) to the royalists, a county committee was set up to extract money from suspected parliamentarians and Catholics, especially neutral Catholics.

Charles's willingness to entertain Catholics in arms probably led to a greater social acceptance of them, by royalists at least, and allowed them an access to positions of public responsibility which they had not enjoyed before the war and would not enjoy again for many years afterwards. On 23 September 1642 Charles wrote to the Earl of Newcastle: 'This rebellion is grown to such a height that I must not look of what opinion men are who at this time are willing and able to serve me. Therefore I do not only permit but command you to make use of all my loving subjects' services without examining their consciences - more than their loyalty to us'. Subsequently, parliamentary propaganda that all royalists were papists led him twice publicly to ban Catholics from his armies, but these proclamations do not seem to have had any practical effect.

Lindley has argued that 'the most remarkable fact that emerges [from his study of the records of the Committee for Compounding] is the extent of Catholic neutralism during the war. In every county studied the majority of Catholics were neutral throughout the hostilities'; 82% of all the Catholics he examined remained neutral. However, while there is no reason to doubt his general conclusion, he himself concedes that 13% of all the royalists he studied

were Catholics, describing this as 'a very small proportion'. When this is related to the percentage of Catholics in the total population, however, (which may have been as low as 1.5% and was certainly no higher than 5%) it is clear that Catholics fought for the king in disproportionately high numbers.

Many Catholics rose to senior positions. Newman has found that of the 101 royalist colonels in the Northern Army who can be identified, twenty-nine were Catholics.<sup>7</sup> Several of these were appointed to high-profile posts: Lord Belayse, for example, was governor of York and lieutenant-general of Yorkshire in 1644, while Lord Widdrington was the president of the Earl of Newcastle's council of war. Many senior Catholics showed favour to their co-religionists, appointing them as company commanders: the Catholic governor of Dudley castle, for example, had a Catholic deputy, and nine of his fourteen other officers were also papists. Many other Catholic junior officers served under Protestant commanders, however. Catholics were also able to serve the royalists in civilian positions: the commission of array for Worcestershire in 1642 included three Catholics, and a fourth was appointed in 1645. One of them, Sir William Russell, became governor of Worcester and sheriff of Worcestershire, and was able to use his influence to favour other Catholics. In October 1643 he was accused of 'returning recusants of the Grand Jury at summer sessions', and the quarter sessions jury list of July that year shows that the charge was probably true, for it included the names of at least two Catholics.

Occasionally other royalists expressed disquiet at the employment of Catholics. The inhabitants of the Close in Salisbury protested when sergeant-major Innis was placed in charge of the fortification of the city, because he was 'of the Romish religion...If so great authority be placed in such a person, great discouragement may arise to your religion'. Similarly, Lord Belayse seems to have been hampered by dissensions among his staff, and his appointment as governor of Newark seems to have excited some animosity. However, in general there is little evidence of distrust of Catholics in the king's armies or on his commissions. Certainly there was nothing like a recurrence of the widespread desertion and mutiny which had taken place in troops commanded by Catholics in the army sent against the Scots in 1640 which had included the flaying to death of two Catholic officers and declarations by soldiers that they would murder all papist officers.

The civil war thus seems in royalist areas to have created the opportunity for a significant minority of Catholics to hold with little animosity positions of responsibility and authority, to which in normal circumstances they would not have been allowed. Protestant royalists seem in general to have accepted this. Caraman goes so far as to assert that for the Catholic gentry the war was a 'heaven-sent occasion, the first in eighty years, to prove that their protestations of loyalty to the Crown were sincere', and suggests that the

acceptance of Catholics by the cavaliers was so great that 'only the plot of a mentally deranged Oates...delayed the understanding between the State and the Catholic body'.<sup>8</sup> This is overstated, for the Cavalier parliament repeatedly threw out proposals by Charles II for Catholic toleration, and panicked in 1673 and 1674 following the revelation that the heir to the throne was a Catholic. Nevertheless it is likely that the activities of the Catholic royalists in the civil war did help to accelerate the general acceptance of the Catholic gentry by their Protestant peers, particularly, as discussed below, in the localities.

Miller suggests with reference to the Restoration period that, 'consciously or unconsciously, [English Protestants] distinguished between Popery as a malignant political force and Papists as people'.<sup>9</sup> The latter were generally well-treated and accepted into the local community. There is clear evidence of the growth of this attitude before the civil war. It worried Pym, who warned the Commons in 1642, 'We must not look on a Papist as he is in himself but as he is in the body of the Church', but it seems likely that the war accelerated the acceptance of this distinction, so that while fear of popery did not diminish in the second half of the seventeenth century, fear of papists gradually did. This was due largely, not to the actions of the minority of Catholics in arms for the king, but to the behaviour of the majority of neutral Catholics who remained in their local communities.

Between 1640 and 1642, a series of panics that local Catholics were plotting to rise up and murder their Protestant neighbours convulsed much of England, including the five largest cities - London, Norwich, Bristol, Newcastle and York - and at least thirty-six other towns and villages, ranging in size from Colchester, Oxford and Salisbury to small hamlets. Only three counties have left no evidence of being affected by the panics. During this period Catholics were treated with intense fear and suspicion, and innocent actions such as buying stocks of food, changing residence, selling land to get cash in hand, or, once the panics had begun, obtaining weapons to defend themselves, were interpreted as preparations for a rising. Even if they attempted to go about their business normally, there were some who observed that Catholics were 'merrier than ever' and interpreted this as a sign that 'there was some new design in hand'. The recusancy laws were enforced with a new vigour: presentments for recusancy in Worcestershire rose from forty-six in 1640 to 223 in 1642. Catholic houses everywhere were forcibly searched for hidden arms, often several times, both by local officials and, sometimes, by local mobs. The searches of the latter were often accompanied by looting and violence. In 1642 in Maldon in Essex, for example, a roving band of townsmen and sailors attacked and searched Catholic houses up to twenty miles away. There were numerous anti-Catholic riots, including outside the Catholic queen's apartments, and in Essex and Suffolk in 1642 the Catholic Lady Rivers was driven from place to place by anti-Catholic crowds. Catholics

attending the embassy chapels in London were mobbed. Tensions were so high that in Staffordshire Protestants 'were in such fears...[that] they durst not go to Church unarmed' and such behaviour in Chester led to a skirmish in January 1642 between Catholics and Protestants in which several men on each side were killed.

Clifton has observed that these panics were concentrated around political crises: - 'five distinct concentrations can be seen between April 1640 and August 1642, each coinciding with a period of major political crisis' - and he suggests that this was because 'serious occurrences in national politics were understood at popular level in terms of a papist/anti-papist dichotomy'.<sup>10</sup> It might have been expected, therefore, that during the war, the greatest political crisis of all, these local panics, tensions and attacks would have continued or even intensified. In fact the reverse was true, for while there were a few minor alarms in early 1643, the panics then fizzled out. After 1643 there were still numerous fears of conspiracies, but in contrast to 1640-2, these were very rarely pinned on Catholics. One London panic in 1643, for example, was based on the fear that 'surely the Danes were in Kent and would presently be in London'.

The reason for this decline during the war in attacks by local civilians on Catholics seems to have been, as Clifton suggests, that 'the first months of fighting exposed the true weakness of English Catholicism - in terms of numbers, arms, organisation and crusading spirit - which decades of peace had hidden'. The same idea was recorded by alderman Garraway in 1643: 'I confess I have not any fear of danger from [Catholics], and the truth is this bugbear is grown less terrible to everybody'. The terrifying Elizabethan stereotype of Catholicism, as described by Weiner<sup>11</sup> - that all English Catholics were the tools of foreign powers, inherently disloyal, and part of a 'tightly organised...treasonous monolith' controlled by the Jesuits and the Pope - was shown up by the war, and by the behaviour of the vast majority of Catholics who remained peaceably at home, for the bogey it was. In particular, the fear that there were innumerable secret papists who would declare themselves when they judged the time to be right to destroy Protestantism (Clarendon recorded that 'their strength and number were then [in 1642] thought so vast within the Kingdom...that if they were drawn together and armed under what pretext soever, they might...be able to give the law both to King and Parliament') was shown to be unfounded. When the expected Catholic hordes failed to materialise, fears instead turned to the sects, whose members were commonly accused of being Catholics in disguise. The fear of popery was not diminished by the war, but the fear of individual papists was, and with it the attacks and persecution of them by local people also declined. It was not until a generation later, when memories of the Catholics' weakness in the 1640s had faded, that Catholics were once again believed to be capable of armed rebellion.

Catholics were gradually being accepted into the local community in the seventeenth century: Clifton suggests that 'local sympathies were stronger than religious divisions' and that 'toleration was associated with the very strong regional or county feeling in the seventeenth century'. Again the civil war seems to have accelerated this process, by intensifying local loyalties. Everitt suggests that during the war 'local attachments were, if anything, becoming deeper rather than more superficial' and that 'the civil war period, by greatly adding to the complexity and volume of local government, increased this sense of county awareness'.<sup>12</sup> Pennington, Roots and Woolych all concur; Roots, for example, refers to the 'intensified localism' as the central government's weapons for coercing the localities, such as the Courts of Star Chamber and High Commission, the assizes, and the Councils of Wales and the North, were swept away after 1640.<sup>13</sup> As the internal bonds of the local community were strengthened, Catholics were increasingly accepted into it. There are numerous examples of this in the civil war period. In Ingatestone in Essex, for example, local villagers came to defend the house of the Catholic Lady Petre against the marauding trained bands in 1647. Similarly, although in many counties large numbers of Catholics fled to nearby royalist garrisons to escape the violence of parliamentary troops, Lindley notes that 'in Suffolk, where the most violent anti-popery riots took place, most Catholics did not in fact flee but managed to remain at home as neutrals'. Significantly there were no royalist garrisons near to Suffolk, and it seems that in these circumstances most Catholics chose to remain within their local community, and the protection that it might afford, rather than completely abandoning it by fleeing to the royalists. Moreover there are numerous examples of Protestants willingly participating in fraudulent transfers of land to preserve their Catholic neighbours' estates from sequestration, and even examples of county committee-men deliberately under-valuing the estates of Catholics and royalists for the purposes of sequestration, or sequestering Catholic royalists as 'papists' only and not as 'delinquents', in order to lighten the burden on them.

Thus, in conclusion, the civil war caused great suffering for many Catholics, in particular they were targeted for plundering and violent treatment by fiercely anti-Catholic parliamentary troops. They also suffered particularly severely economically, from parliamentary sequestrations, and, it appears, from the demands of the king. At the same time, however, the disruption the war caused to the judicial system seems to have meant that the recusancy laws were rarely enforced, in either parliamentary or royalist areas, and that the private practice of Catholicism was not generally interfered with. The war also meant that the significant minority of Catholics who fought for or aided the king were generally accepted in positions which in normal circumstances would have been barred to them. Above all, the civil war, and the neutrality of most Catholics, showed many of the traditional conceptions about

Catholics to be completely false, and as a result fear of individual Catholics began to diminish. Catholics were consequently increasingly accepted into their local communities, whose internal bonds the war was strengthening anyway. Nothing similar to the suspicions and attacks of 1640-42 occurred again until almost a generation later, in 1666 following the fire of London. The panics then, and during the Popish Plot, show that the civil war certainly did not mark a watershed in the treatment of Catholics, but it did perhaps cause an acceleration in the trend during the seventeenth century from the pervasive Elizabethan phobia and intolerance of Catholics towards *de facto* toleration of them.

#### Notes.

1. D Hirst, *Authority and Conflict: England 1603-58* (London, 1986).
2. J Miller, *Papery and Politics in England, 1660-88* (London, 1973).
3. C D Gilbert, 'The Catholics in Worcestershire, 1642-51', *Recusant History* 20 (1991).
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6. D H Pennington, 'The county community at war', in E W Ives (ed), *The English Revolution, 1600-60* (London, 1968).
7. P R Newman, 'Catholic royalist activities in the north', *Recusant History* 14 (1977).
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9. Miller, *Papery and Politics*.
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This essay, by Simon Stevens of Wolvercote, Oxford, won the 2001 Cromwell Prize Competition in the 15-18 age group.

## DID THE CIVIL WAR AND ITS AFTERMATH TO 1660 OFFER ANY LASTING NEW OPPORTUNITIES TO WOMEN?

by Heather Delonnette

Life for women at the beginning of the civil war in England was a life ruled and administered by the men in their lives. Women themselves had few rights and privileges. In most cases they were seen as chattels of their husbands or fathers. It was these men who would do what they considered best for the women under their control. Men were considered as the head of their household and responsible for all those living within it. The upheavals caused by civil war provided some women, at least, with an opportunity to break from the social and cultural bonds that bound them. Brian Manning suggests that seeds of discontentment with their lot were already present in women before the outbreak of war, the war just allowed them to germinate.<sup>1</sup> It must, however, be stressed that this change in women's roles was not a nation-wide phenomena; it seems to have occurred in pockets and for many women life would have carried on virtually as normal.

Some areas of influence became available to women purely because of the absence of their men-folk. The defence of property often fell to the female inhabitants left behind by combatant male relations. Antonia Fraser recounts many episodes of high born ladies defending their homes, which were also the strongholds of whichever faction they supported, against opposing armies.<sup>2</sup> Many of their maidservants and other female members of the household were also caught up in the ensuing sieges and violence but were rarely mentioned or praised for their bravery, although their mistresses were. Gender was not the only discrimination taking place. The social status of women had a bearing on the way they were treated and represented.

Women without large fortified homes to guard did, however, get involved with the fortification and protection of their villages and towns. Many women raised money for the fortifications and defences, and some even helped to build and maintain them. Money was also raised to supply the army with troops. These troops were known as 'virgin' or 'maiden' troops because of their female patrons. Other women went one stage further, following the army around the country. Some of these women were prostitutes who saw the business potential of several hundred men away from home for months at a time. Soldiers' wives were also camp-followers, often adopting male dress to protect themselves from other soldiers. Sometimes women enlisted into the army as a way of staying close to their men and earning a living. This was usually the case when the wife had no other way of earning an income with her husband gone.