

## SEXUAL EXPERIENCES

[Her penance is to say:]

Good people I do here before God and you all confess that whereas I have been a married wife unto Henry Shepherd for the space of twenty years I (forgetting god and my duty unto my husband) have committed adultery and played the harlot with one Richard Mathewe my servant now of late time. And for the same I am by order of law divorced from my husband and enjoined to do this my penance. And therefore I desire you all to take example by me and I do promise hereafter to lead a chaste life and this her penance is to be done upon Sunday next following in the parish church of St Mary Woolchurch in London in service time.

## RAPE, ASSAULTS, AND ATTEMPTS

### 5.16 'A simple body': Agnes Clement, 1609

Agnes Clement, a husbandman's wife from Midsomer Norton in Somerset, reported her assault by a man she knew to the quarter sessions in April 1609. A note at the foot of the document recorded: 'he hath attempted other women for the like: which shall be proved'.

Somerset Quarter Sessions Rolls, Somerset Archives, Q/SR 3/1/10 (19 April 1609).

The examination of Agnes Clement the wife of John Clement of Midsomer Norton in the county of Somerset husbandman

Who saith that between Midsummer and St James tide last, John Peyrce thelder of Midsomer Norton aforesaid, sent for this examinant by a boy of his to request her to come presently to his house to winnow whilst that the wind did serve which she then refused. Whereupon the said John Peyrce sent for her again, within a quarter of an hour after. At which time, she this examinant went presently to his dwelling house, where the said Peyrce was, she saying unto him I am now come to winnow your corn. But the said John Peyrce, then presently took his privy parts in hand, and informed her to take the same in her hand, striving with her, for the use of her body. And further this examinant saith that the said John Peyrce was too strong for her, and with long striving did with force use her body against her will, throwing her against a board, in such violent manner, that he brake the skin of her hand. And this examinant crying out, that he was the utter undoing and spoil of her, she saying that she was but a simple body for any such matter: Who answered that he did account of her to be as fit for such a purpose, as the best lady in the land and willed her to hold her peace, and said, thou durst not know what is good for thine self, who hath to do with me, and also further saith that the said John Peyrce sent for her again within some fortnight or three weeks after, by the same boy, that she this examinant should come again unto his uncle Peyrce, who would be very angry, he said,



if she came not. But this examinant refused to go, her husband demanded of her, why she went not, who answered she would not go any more unto him, but the cause wherefore, she was loath to discover. And being troubled in mind and conscience, did afterwards confess it, first to a friend of hers, named goodwife Miller, desiring to know of her, what was left to be done in it, who advised her to speak the truth and no more. But afterwards this examinant saith, she could not choose but make it known to her husband how wickedly the said Peyrce had used her and taken her against her will.

### 5.17 Resistance with all her strength: Joan Brown, c. 1601

Joan Brown testified in the prosecution of Thomas Hellyer for illicit sex with a number of unmarried women in Lottisham, near Datchett, Somerset. Her testimony is a particularly long and detailed one, recording her anger at her assailant and her attempts at self-defence, as well as her experience of powerlessness as a woman and a servant. Her description of Hellyer's 'careless' assumption of her complicity, in line with the other servant he has abused, is particularly striking. It suggests that this was at least one working woman who expected the court to hear her complaint of attempted rape with an outrage to match her own. Unusually, as well, Brown signed her own deposition.

Consistory Court of Bath and Wells Deposition Book, Somerset Archives, D/D/cd34 (1601/2).

[Joan Brown of Lottisham, spinster, who has lived there for a year and a half and previously lived in West Bradley for half a year, born in Baltonsborough in the same diocese, aged 40, she has known Thomas Hellyer well for the last half year.]

[To the third, fourth and fifth articles she knows nothing to depose:] saving that on a certain Sunday, or holy day in the afternoon happening about some fortnight or three weeks next after the feast of Whitsuntide last past before this her examination, and within fortnight next after that the articulate Marie Loxton was delivered of child or near thereabouts, this examine did see the articulate Thomas Hellyer to lift up the latch of a barn's door of the articulate Thomas Quarman's, in which barn the said Marie was delivered of child, and finding the door to be locked so that he could not get in, he departed away again. . . .

[She deposes and says] that on a certain Sunday or holy day happening about St James tide now last past, and in the afternoon of the same day, the articulate Thomas Hellyer came unto this deponent as she was in the backside of her master the articulate Thomas Quarman's house in Lottisham within the parish of Datchett articulate, going to fetch in a tankard of water, and took away the tankard from her, and thrust her by violence into the entry of the said house, and closing the door thereof with his heels, he by main force threw her down upon the ground, lay down upon her, and told



her that he would occupy her, and earnestly entreated her so to do, and finding her in no wise consenting to his lascivious and filthy lust, he took up her clothes near as high as her girdle notwithstanding any resistance she could make, which she did with all the strength she had. And then the said Hellyer took forth of his breeches his privy member or yard, and strived and struggled with her in the said entry for the space of an hour or near thereabouts, assaying by all means to have the carnal knowledge of her body, and in the end seeing that this jurate at no hand would consent to his attempted devilish purpose, he left her and went his way.

[And further she deposes and says] that on the next Sunday then following in the afternoon, the said Thomas Hellyer again opening the back door came into the hall of the said house, and there finding this deponent took her by the arm, and requested her to go into a certain chamber of the same house within the hall, this deponent demanding him with what she should do there, he (after many foul and unseemly speeches, uttering and bewraying his lecherous intent) told her saying I'll occupy thee. But this deponent utterly refused the same and requested him to depart and suffer her to go about her master's business. And thereupon he took her by main force in his arms, and violently and altogether against her will, carried her into the said chamber, and threw her down upon the bed, notwithstanding that as he was bearing of her in that sort, this examinant caught hold of a certain cupboard standing in the said hall. And there kept her upon the said bed for the more part of an hour, and notwithstanding that she continually resisted him with all the might she possibly could, yet he pulled all her clothes very near as high as her middle leaving her body bare so far. And when this examine strived to hide her shame, and to put down her clothes again, the said Hellyer took both her arms and wrested them back over her head. And all this whiles he continued sometimes entreating by all lecherous, and lustful means and sometimes violently, and forcibly striving, and wrestling with her to have the carnal knowledge of her body: but in the end departed without his purpose as aforesaid.

And she further deposeth and saith that on the Sunday then next following at evening prayer time the said Thomas Hellyer came to this deponent the third time as she was dressing of her masters grist<sup>1</sup> in the kitchen of the said house, and again very earnestly did solicit this deponent's chastity, and again by force carried her in his arms into the said chamber threw her upon the bed, pulled up her clothes, and in all respects both in words and deeds, used himself, and her, for the space of half an hour or thereabouts as he had done the second time: But at that time this deponent being willing to be discharged from his company told him saying I pray thee be gone, my master will come anon and find us, whereunto the said Henry carelessly made this answer following, or the like in effect Whiewe, is that such a matter, I know I have

1. Corn.

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been playing here with Mary at one door whiles thy master hath been coming in at the other and could be welcome still, and she hath let me out at one door when her master hath been coming in at the other, meaning one Marie Loxton as this jurate doth verily believe, for that the said Marie Loxton dwelt with the said Thomas Quarman not above half a year, or thereabouts next before this deponent came to dwell with him. . . .