



Courtship, Illegitimacy and Marriage in Early Modern England

By Richard Adair

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A study of illegitimacy in England between 1538 and 1754, this text assembles data from over 500 parishes across the country, providing a detailed reconstruction of the lives and marital histories of the women and men who had children, both inside and outside marriage. A regional perspective is explored, providing evidence of a clear cleavage in the texture of courtship in England during this period. The survey shows the concept of national demographic data, often the basis of past research, to be deeply flawed. Offering a fresh look at contemporary attitudes towards marriage, the research is synthesized with original material from the ecclesiastical courts, in order to illustrate hitherto unsuspected regional contrasts in courtship behaviour in this period.

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