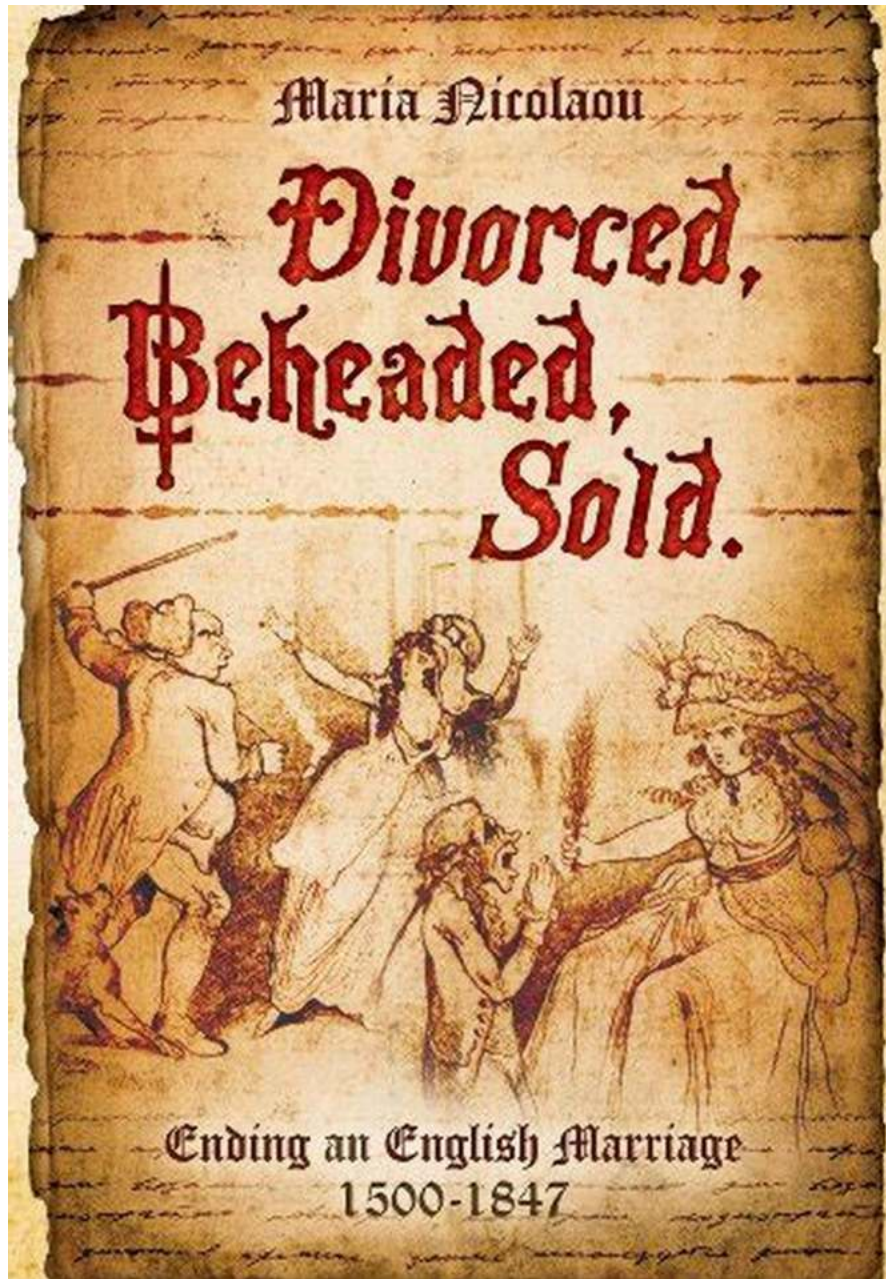


# Divorced Beheaded Sold: Ending An English Marriage (1500-1847)

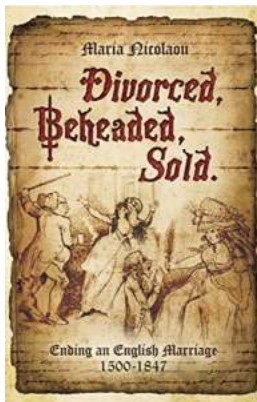


Divorces have always been a topic of great fascination, especially when it comes to historical accounts. One such period that witnessed intriguing marital endings was between 1500 and 1847 in England. From the annals of history emerge tales

of unions dissolved by the official methods available at the time: divorce, beheading, or sale.

## The Struggle for Termination

During this era, obtaining a divorce was easier said than done. Marriage was considered an unbreakable institution, and the process of dissolving a union required substantial evidence to claim any form of legal release. The grounds for divorce were typically limited to adultery, cruelty, or desertion. Proving these allegations was burdensome, often leading couples to explore alternative methods of separation.



### Divorced, Beheaded, Sold: Ending an English Marriage, 1500–1847 by Maria Nicolaou (Kindle Edition)

★★★★☆ 4.5 out of 5

Language	: English
File size	: 14672 KB
Text-to-Speech	: Enabled
Screen Reader	: Supported
Enhanced typesetting	: Enabled
Word Wise	: Enabled
Print length	: 224 pages
Lending	: Enabled



## Divorce: A Rarity

Divorce itself was a rare occurrence during this period, mainly due to the strict legal and religious constraints surrounding the dissolution of marriage. The Church of England held immense power over marriage matters, and divorces granted by the church were few and far between. Couples who desired a divorce

were faced with immense societal pressure, financial consequences, and disapproval from religious institutions.

## **Beheading as a Marital Solution**

In scarce instances, couples took more extreme measures to permanently end their marriages. Beheading, a shocking but occasionally employed method, was typically associated with accusations of treason, adultery, or other severe transgressions against the crown. These rare occurrences often became sensationalized in royal courts, drawing public attention and fueling the curiosity of the masses.

## **The Unheard-of Practice of Selling a Spouse**

As absurd as it may sound, selling a spouse was a practice that had some legal standing during this time period. Due to the difficulty of obtaining a divorce, couples resorted to selling the unwanted spouse as a means of ending the marriage. While frowned upon by society, it provided an unconventional route for desperate couples seeking separation. The practice involved having a third party act as a mediator for the transaction, which would involve an agreed sum of money changing hands.

## **The Social and Emotional Impact**

The practice of selling a spouse left an indelible impact on society and individuals involved. It highlighted the power dynamics within marriages and the desperation people felt in their pursuit of freedom. The emotional toll on both parties was immense, with many experiencing humiliation, resentment, and long-lasting trauma. These stories serve as a reminder of the lengths people were willing to go to escape unhappiness in their marital lives.

## **Legal Reforms: A Glimmer of Hope**

In the mid-19th century, England underwent significant legal reforms that gradually eased the process of divorce. These reforms, such as the Matrimonial Causes Act of 1857, brought about a more accessible and secular approach to marital dissolution. Adultery, cruelty, and desertion were still the primary grounds for divorce, but the burden of proof was lowered, offering a ray of hope for individuals seeking separation.

## **A New Chapter**

With the arrival of the Victorian era, societal attitudes towards divorce began to change. The emphasis on domestic happiness and the recognition of the detrimental effects of unhappy marriages led to a shift in public perception. The newfound acceptance of divorce paved the way for a new chapter in the history of marriage, one marked by more modern and compassionate laws that better served the needs of individuals trapped in irreconcilable relationships.

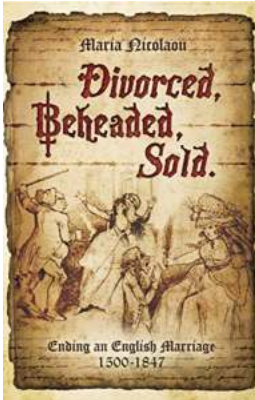
## **Looking Back**

Divorced, beheaded, sold - three unconventional ways to end a marriage during a particular period in English history. This era serves as a reminder of the complexities individuals faced when seeking separation from their spouses and the lengths they were willing to go to regain their freedom. These stories, though often sensationalized, shed light on the struggles and social dynamics surrounding marriage in a bygone era, leaving a lasting impact on the way we perceive and navigate relationships today.

Keywords: Divorced Beheaded Sold, ending an English marriage, 1500-1847, divorce in England, historical divorces

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A fresh perspective on the seamy side of history. Maria Nicolaou has done considerable research into the largely unexplored area of divorce and marital separation from the Tudor period to the early Victorian era. *Divorced, Beheaded, Sold* is full of scandalous, little-known stories of wife sale, marital discord and audacious escapades of errant spouses, this is an interesting, as well as informative read in the same vein as Maureen Waller's *The English Marriage* and Kate Summerscale's *Mrs Robinson's Disgrace*. Maria Nicolaou reveals how people ended their marriages in the days before divorce was readily available from committing bigamy to selling a wife at market. Her book is full of colourful characters and warring spouses, like Con Philips, who fought off her husband with a gun filled with firework powder; the Duke of Grafton, who hired an army of detectives to spy on his wife and obtain proof of her adultery; and Marion Jones, who recruited a gang to take back her property from her husband.



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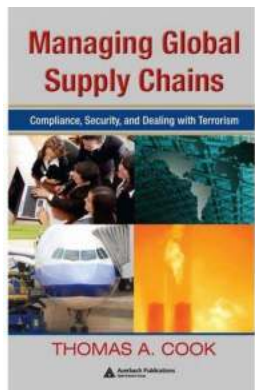
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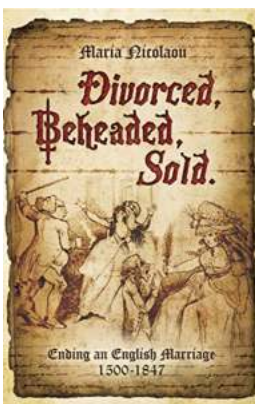
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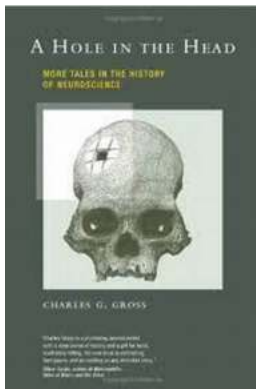
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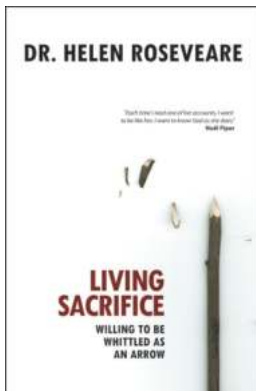
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