

Women's Reading Habits and Gendered
Genres, c.1600 – 1700

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Abstract

The history of early modern reading has long been based on narratives of long-term change, tracing the move from scholarly, humanist reading habits to the leisured reading of the eighteenth century. These narratives are normatively masculine, and leave little room for women and non-elite men. The studies of women readers that have emerged have largely been based on case studies of exceptional women. This thesis, then, provides the first diachronic study of women's reading habits in the seventeenth century, offering a fresh perspective on the chronology of early modern reading.

This encompasses an exploration of women's participation in certain reading habits or cultures, such as 'active reading' methods and the rise of news culture. Moreover, there is an examination of the connections between reading and gender. This thesis proposes that reading was often used as a signifier of gender, and that by discussing their reading women entered into a discourse about femininity and identity. The sources, drawn largely from archival research across the UK and the USA, are wide-ranging, and piece together examples of reading, and representations thereof, from a variety of different seventeenth-century Englishwomen. This is both a recovery project, and a reimagining of the field, complicating chronologies and approaches common to previous studies of reading.

Ultimately, this thesis investigates both the practice and act of reading, and the nature of the 'woman reader' herself. It argues that our categories of analysis need to be complicated and nuanced when discussing the history of both reading and women, and proposes that the 'woman reader' is far more complex and varied than is often realised.

This is a redacted version of this thesis.

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Author's Declaration

I declare that this thesis is a presentation of original work and I am the sole author. This work has not previously been presented for an award at this, or any other, University. All sources are acknowledged as references.

Introduction

In her autobiography, Lucy Hutchinson (1620-1681), the parliamentarian poet and biographer, wrote that at seven years old,

My genius was quite averse from all but my booke, and [...] I was so eager of that my mother, thinking it prejudic'd my health, would moderate me in it; yet this rather animated me than kept me back, and every moment I could steale from my play I would employ in any booke I could find, when my own were lockt up from me. After dinner and supper I had still an hower allow'd me to play, and then I would steale into some hole or other to read[.]¹

Hutchinson clearly loved reading, preferring to spend time with her books than playing, even at such a young age. Her mother worried about the effects of this reading, imagining it to have a physiological impact. She therefore tried to 'moderate' her daughter's habits, although Hutchinson was persistent, reading other books in the house when her own were kept from her. Despite not mentioning the texts she read, this passage gives us a valuable insight into reading and women in the seventeenth century, hinting at many themes such as the perceived harmful effects of reading, the spaces and places of reading, and the shared ownership and use of books within the home.²

Hutchinson's books were 'lockt up,' physically kept away from her, but she did have access to others in the house. Moreover, she would frequently use her leisure time in the evenings to 'steale into some hole' to read, demonstrating the covert nature of her

¹ Lucy Hutchinson, *Memoirs of the Life of Colonel Hutchinson, with the fragment of an autobiography of Mrs Hutchinson*, ed. James Sutherland (London: Oxford University Press, 1973), 288.

² Hutchinson's reading and intellectual influences have been explored in a range of articles, drawing on her poetic and biographical works. See, for example, Jerome de Groot, "John Denham and Lucy Hutchinson's Commonplace Book," *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900* 48, no. 1, the English Renaissance (2008): 147-163; Elizabeth Scott-Baumann, *Forms of Engagement: Women, Poetry, and Culture 1640-1680* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013); David Norbrook, "Lucy Hutchinson: Theology, Gender and Translation," *The Seventeenth Century* 30, no.2 (2015): 139-162.

habits. The text indicates both some early modern attitudes towards women reading, and the lived experience of women readers.

Reading has long been recognised as historically variable. Each act of reading has a relationship with the culture in which it is undertaken.³ It is therefore of great interest to historians and literary scholars alike although, as Robert Darnton has noted, ‘we have not yet devised a strategy for understanding the inner process by which readers made sense of words.’⁴ Instead, we must look at the traces that do remain: the practices surrounding reading, where it took place, and the records of reading events. Interest in the history of reading has steadily increased since the 1980s, when Darnton suggested a move from the history of the book to the history of reading.⁵ Writing nearly thirty years after he initially penned the article, Darnton commented that ‘the “First Steps” toward a history of reading that I described in *AJFS* twenty-eight years ago have now turned into something of a stampede.’⁶ In this latter article, Darnton identified two main approaches to the history of reading: micro- and macro-analysis.⁷ Studies have tended to either focus on individual case studies, or tried to map the development of reading on a grand scale, across different periods, peoples and places.

This latter approach has allowed scholars to develop a narrative of change from the earliest literate societies to the modern day. Alberto Manguel traced different readers and acts of reading from across history and across the world, concluding that ‘*The History of Reading*, fortunately, has no end.’⁸ Roger Chartier and Guglielmo Cavallo took a more geographically-specific road, looking at reading in the western world, from

³ See James Raven, Helen Small and Naomi Tadmor, ed., *The Practice and Representation of Reading in England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

⁴ Robert Darnton, “First Steps Towards a History of Reading,” *Australian Journal of French Studies* 51, no. 2-3 (2014): 165.

⁵ Robert Darnton, “First Steps Towards a History of Reading,” *Australian Journal of French Studies* 23 (1986): 5-30.

⁶ Darnton, “First Steps,” (2014), 152.

⁷ Darnton “First Steps,” (2014), 155.

⁸ Alberto Manguel, *A History of Reading* (London: Flamingo, 1997), 319.

Ancient Greece to the future of reading.⁹ Questions surrounding the *act* of reading come up recurrently in this body of work: does reading take place alone or in company? In silence or aloud? Is reading done for pleasure or for education? These histories are often predominantly (though not exclusively) male-oriented, although there have been contributions to the field presenting *longue durée* histories of women's reading, such as Belinda Jack's *The Woman Reader*, published in 2013. Jack set out to illuminate the woman reader, from the ancient to the modern world in light of the many anxieties that have often accompanied women's reading. She noted the difficulties in creating such a broad history, writing that 'any comprehensive history, were such a thing possible, would run to innumerable volumes and in its scope would be virtually unreadable.'¹⁰ Her approach does not make any claim to universality but does attempt to give some rough, overarching narratives. To do so, Jack 'tried to provide typical as well as unusual examples of women readers so as to sketch some sort of overall geography.'¹¹ She argues that women's reading has always held anxieties for men (and some women), leading to attempts to control women's access to the written word and define acceptable and non-acceptable reading. However, alongside this anxiety, there have always been women who read, in their own individual ways.¹²

In almost all of these *longue durée* studies, the sixteenth, seventeenth and eighteenth centuries merit a dedicated section of their own, and are usually framed as a turning point, ushering in new methods and practices of reading.¹³ However, histories of early

⁹ Guglielmo Cavallo and Roger Chartier, ed., *A History of Reading in the West*, trans. Lydia G. Cochrane (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1999). Also see Roger Chartier, *The Order of Books: Readers, Authors and Libraries in Europe between the Fourteenth and the Eighteenth Centuries*, trans. Lydia G. Cochrane (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1994) for a more chronologically-specific, but still long-term, study.

¹⁰ Belinda Jack, *The Woman Reader* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013), 18.

¹¹ Jack, *The Woman Reader*, 18.

¹² Jack, *The Woman Reader*, 1-8.

¹³ For general studies of reading in the early modern period, see Jennifer Anderson and Elizabeth Sauer, ed., *Books and Readers in Early Modern England: Material Studies* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002); John N. King, ed., *Tudor Books and Readers: Materiality and the Construction of Meaning* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010); Eugene R. Kintgen, *Reading in Tudor England* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1996); H. S. Bennett, *English Books and Readers, 1475-1557: Being a Study in the History of the Book Trade from Caxton to the Incorporation of*

modern reading and books have been surprisingly ungendered. The *Cambridge History of the Book in Britain* covering the period 1557-1695 contains only one chapter specifically dealing with women, as does the volume covering 1695-1830.¹⁴ The *Cambridge History of Libraries in Britain and Ireland* (1640-1850) does not have any chapters dedicated to women, and the term 'women' merits only four entries in the index.¹⁵

Reading in the early modern period was, however, a 'deeply gendered activity.'¹⁶ As Edith Snook has argued, 'access to education and wealth, along with the belief that women's bodies and minds were designed by God for a domestic life, informed how, why and what women read.'¹⁷ So how, therefore, should we develop a history of women's reading in the seventeenth century? This can be done either by analysing numbers of women readers, or by examining the nature of women's reading.¹⁸ This thesis explores the latter, but this requires building on the work that scholars have done

the Stationers' Company (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1952); H. S. Bennett, *English Books and Readers, 1558-1603: Being a Study in the History of the Book Trade in the Reign of Elizabeth I* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1965); H. S. Bennett, *English Books and Readers, 1603-1640: Being a Study in the History of the Book Trade in the Reigns of James I and Charles I* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970).

¹⁴ Maureen Bell, "Women Writing and Women Written," in *The Cambridge History of the Book in Britain. Volume 4: 1557-1695*, ed. John Barnard, D. F. McKenzie, and Maureen Bell (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 431-452; Isobel Grundy, "Women and Print: Readers, Writers and the Market," in *The Cambridge History of the Book in Britain. Volume 5: 1695-1830*, ed. Michael F. Suarez and Michael L. Turner (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 146-160.

¹⁵ Giles Mandelbrote and K. A. Manley, ed., *The Cambridge History of Libraries in Britain and Ireland. Volume 2: 1640-1850* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

¹⁶ Edith Snook, "Reading Women," in *The Cambridge Companion to Early Modern Women Writing*, ed. Laura Lunger Knoppers (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 40.

¹⁷ Snook, "Reading Women," 40.

¹⁸ Some key work on women's reading in the early modern period includes Suzanne Hull, *Chaste, Silent, and Obedient: English Books for Women, 1475-1640* (San Marino, CA.: Huntington Library, 1988); Heidi Brayman Hackel, *Reading Material in Early Modern England: Print, Gender, and Literacy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005); Heidi Brayman Hackel and Catherine E. Kelly, ed., *Reading Women: Literacy, Authorship, and Culture in the Atlantic World, 1500-1800* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008); Carol M. Meale and Julia Boffey, "Gentlewomen's Reading," in *The Cambridge History of the Book in Britain. Volume 3: 1400-1557*, ed. Lotte Hellinga and J. B. Trapp (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 526-540; Leah Knight, Micheline White and Elizabeth Sauer, ed., *Women's Bookscapes in Early Modern England: Reading, Ownership, Circulation* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2018); Jacqueline Pearson, "Women Reading, Reading Women," in *Women and Literature in Britain, 1500-1700*, ed. Helen Wilcox (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 80-99; Edith Snook, *Women, Reading and the Cultural Politics of Early Modern England* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005).

in order to illuminate the former, beginning with assessments of women's literacy rates in the period.

Following the invention of the printing press and the burgeoning availability of print, the seventeenth century saw a growth in literacy.¹⁹ There have been many studies aiming to determine the ability to read and write, although this is a contentious field, and methodologies are often flawed. It has become commonplace to criticise David Cressy's findings on literacy in the early modern period, which relied on signatures and marks to calculate early modern literacy rates.²⁰ Cressy argues that signatory evidence could indicate functional literacy with some accuracy, positing that the ability to write one's name could indicate other rudimentary writing ability and fluent reading.²¹ His quantitative analysis indicates very high levels of illiteracy among women. He suggests, for example, that in the diocese of Norwich between 1580 and 1700, roughly 89% of women were illiterate.²² However, Cressy makes no distinctions of social standing or wealth among women, unlike his analysis of male illiteracy, which is broken down by rank. Most studies of reading now point out the flaws of his conclusions, primarily due to the fact that reading and writing were not mutually dependent skills in the early modern period, but were taught separately. Moreover, the ability to sign one's name does not necessarily indicate ability to write, or even a familiarity with the alphabet. Keith Thomas has written perhaps the most succinct indictment of Cressy's findings, suggesting that the figures put forward are a 'spectacular underestimate' of literacy in the period.²³

¹⁹ For more on the development of print in the early modern period, see Elizabeth L. Eisenstein, *The Printing Revolution in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986).

²⁰ David Cressy, *Literacy and the Social Order: Reading and Writing in Tudor and Stuart England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980).

²¹ Cressy, *Literacy and the Social Order*, 55.

²² Cressy, *Literacy and the Social Order*, 119.

²³ Keith Thomas, "The Meaning of Literacy in Early Modern England," in *The Written Word: Literacy in Transition*, ed. Gerd Baumann (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986), 103. Thomas posits a more complex and nuanced view of literacy, arguing for different levels of literacy. In his model, literacy could be split into the ability to read simple print (in which he also makes a distinction between reading black-letter and

This structure of literate ability in the early modern period was intrinsically connected to gender, as it was to class.²⁴ Although Cressy's findings are open to critique, he did demonstrate the gap between male and female illiteracy rates. Eleanor Hubbard has refined Cressy's analysis, suggesting that initials can be used as evidence of women's reading ability, and exploring the function of reading within female social groups. She accepts that women as a group tended to be less literate, but offers caveats, arguing that literacy (as evidenced by initialling) seems to have increased as women aged, that it was more common in London than the rest of England, and more common in urban centres than rural communities.²⁵ However, Hubbard's argument that initialling can be evidence of reading ability could be in turn criticised as there is no clear reason as to why women who practised basic literacy (as defined by Thomas) would have necessarily learnt to write their initials. But literacy levels were certainly increasing across the board. Anne Laurence has suggested that by the 1720s 25% of women were fully literate, meaning that they could both read and write.²⁶ The proliferation of women writers, particularly from the mid-century onwards, were influenced by the use of print in the Civil War.²⁷ It could be assumed that this growth in writing must have accompanied a growth in reading, although R. A. Houston has cautioned against this, as has Gerald MacLean. The availability of print does not necessarily equate with reading.²⁸ Books could be

roman type); reading manuscript text and the ability to write; and being able to read and write in Latin and Greek, which tended to be the preserve of the intellectual elite.

²⁴ Adding a further gendered analysis, Frances Dolan has explored how literacy could be an instrument of disciplining women, by looking at how literacy was used to incriminate women for crimes such as witchcraft. See Frances Dolan, "Reading, Writing, and Other Crimes," in *Feminist Reading of Early Modern Culture: Emerging Subjects*, ed. Valerie Traub, Lindsay M. Kaplan and Dymphna Callaghan (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1996), 142-167.

²⁵ Eleanor Hubbard, "Reading, Writing, and Initialing: Female Literacy in Early Modern London," *Journal of British Studies* 54, no. 3 (2015): 564-576.

²⁶ Anne Laurence, *Women in England 1500-1760: A Social History* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1994), 166.

²⁷ Paul Salzman, ed., *Early Modern Women's Writing: An Anthology, 1560-1700* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), x.

²⁸ R. A. Houston, *Literacy in Early Modern Europe: Culture and Education, 1500-1800* (New York: Routledge, 2013), 126; Gerald MacLean, "Literacy, Class, and Gender in Restoration England," *Text* 7 (1994): 307-335.

bought and not read, or an individual could buy multiple copies of the same book. What is certain is that the availability of print was steadily growing.

Moreover, people were increasingly living in a world surrounded by reading and writing. Analysis of literacy rates does not encompass the entirety of the early modern experience of reading, which was often aural and communal.²⁹ Margaret Spufford has noted the surprising levels of engagement that ordinary people could have with printed materials, stating that ‘it is evident that the seventeenth-century parishioner, far from being almost immune from external pressures apart from oral ones, as I initially supposed, was [...] exposed to a steady hail of printed pamphlets of news, political and religious propaganda, astrological prediction and advice, songs, sensation, sex and fantasy.’³⁰

Women (and men) therefore moved through the early modern world surrounded by print and text, and while we are never going to have definitive literacy rates, we can look at other examples of women’s engagement with the written word. There are records of women owning books, stealing them or borrowing them, or indeed putting them to other uses beyond reading.³¹ They read and received household accounts and receipts.³² Moreover, they worked in the print industry, acting as booksellers and

²⁹ See, for example, Roger Chartier, “Leisure and Sociability: Reading Aloud in Early Modern Europe,” in *Urban Life in the Renaissance*, ed. Susan Zimmerman and Ronald F. E. Weissman (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1989), 103-120.

³⁰ Margaret Spufford, *Small Books and Pleasant Histories: Popular Fiction and its Readership in Seventeenth-Century England* (London: Methuen & Co. Ltd: 1981), xviii.

³¹ Peter Clark, “The Ownership of Books in England, 1560-1640: The Example of Some Kentish Townfolk,” in *Schooling and Society: Studies in the History of Education*, ed. Lawrence Stone (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976), 95-111; Maureen Bell, “Reading in Seventeenth-Century Derbyshire: The Wheatcrofts and Their Books,” in *The Moving Market: Continuity and Change in the Book Trade*, ed. Peter Isaac and Barry MacKay (New Castle, Del.: Oak Knoll Press, 2001), 161-168; Richard Coulton, Matthew Mauger, and Christopher Reid, *Stealing Books in Eighteenth-Century London* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016); Susan Staves, “‘Books without which I cannot write’: How Did Eighteenth-Century Women Writers Get the Books they Read?” in *Women and Material Culture, 1660-1830*, ed. Jennie Batchelor and Cora Kaplan (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 192-211; David Cressy, “Books as Totems in Seventeenth-Century England and New England,” *Journal of Library History* 21 (1986): 92-106.

³² Wendy Wall has coined the term ‘kitchen literacy’ to explore how women’s reading and writing literacies functioned within the home. See Wendy Wall, “Literacy and the Domestic Arts,” *Huntington Library Quarterly* 73, no. 3 (2010): 383-412. There have also been recent printed (or reprinted) editions

publishers.³³ They interacted with print at all levels of society, and the reading experience could be varied and complex.

Alongside the huge increase in the number of printed works from 1640 there were other significant changes taking place in the early modern period. The primacy of theological and devotional genres was declining, to be replaced in the eighteenth century by emerging forms of fiction, such as the novel. The Civil War and the coffeehouses of the later Stuart period, and the periodicals, pamphlets and newsbooks that thrived on political upheaval, fostered a culture of reading and discussing politics, now seen as integral to the developing public sphere.³⁴ The multiplicity of new genres and their wide availability among the general populace created a reading culture that was ‘extensive,’ relying on reading a lot not very deeply, rather than one text multiple times.

These developments have often been termed ‘reading revolutions’ by scholars, notably Rolf Engelsing, the German historian who coined the term when examining the move from intensive to extensive reading.³⁵ There is value in these narratives of change. However most, if not all of them, treat the male reader as normative. The Renaissance reader, seated at a desk with pen in hand; the consumer of political tracts, both modern and classical, trying to make sense of the mid-century conflict; the coffeehouse regular reading the news: these figures were by and large male, and usually of a wealthy and

of women’s household account books. See, for example, Norman Penny, ed., *The Household Account Book of Sarah Fell of Swarthmoor Hall* (S.I.: Bibliolife, 2011); Judith M. Spicksley, ed., *The Business and Household Accounts of Joyce Jeffreys, Spinster of Hereford, 1638-1648* (London: British Academy, 2015).

³³ Maureen Bell, “Women and the Production of Texts: The Impact of the History of the Book,” in *The Book Trade in Early Modern England: Practices, Perceptions, Connections*, ed. John Hinks and Victoria E. M. Gardner (London: British Library, 2013), 107-131; Maureen Bell, “Hannah Allen and the Development of a Puritan Publishing Business, 1646-51,” *Publishing History* 26 (1989): 5-66; Maureen Bell, “Women in the English Book Trade 1557-1700,” *Leipziger Jahrbuch zur Buchgeschichte* 6 (1996): 13-45; Helen Smith, “Print[ing] your royal father off: Early Modern Female Stationers and the Gendering of the British Book Trades,” *Text: An Interdisciplinary Annual of Textual Studies* 15 (2003): 163-186.

³⁴ Steve Pincus, “‘Coffee Does Politicians Create’: Coffeehouses and Restoration Political Culture,” *Journal of Modern History* 67, no. 4 (1995): 807-834.

³⁵ Engelsing’s work has not been translated into English, but has been influential on many studies of reading since. See, for example, Ian Jackson, “Approaches to the History of Readers and Reading in Eighteenth-Century Britain,” *The Historical Journal* 47, no. 4 (2004): 1041-1054.

educated background. This narrative leaves little room for women, who were often barred from these practices by education, circumstance, and physical barriers. Did women, therefore, experience a ‘reading revolution’ in the seventeenth century?³⁶

The political climate of the seventeenth century is central to many studies of early modern reading. The publications of Kevin Sharpe and Steven Zwicker in particular have connected the long-term changes in reading practices during the early modern period to political changes, seeing the Civil War as a turning point.³⁷ They have argued that ‘there can be no doubt that the consequence of civil war was a revolution in the practices and psychologies of reading.’³⁸ Reading, in this narrative, moved in the mid-seventeenth century from being about learning at the feet of great authors, copying down or underlining particularly useful passages, to being a site of contest between author and reader.³⁹ Zwicker suggested that ‘the civil wars loosed a tide of verbal and physical contest that found its way into every corner of social, political and intellectual life and translated habits of admiring, annotating and absorbing texts into acts of contest and combat.’⁴⁰ The increasing debate and discussion about the nature of society, often carried out in forms of print more readily available than ever before, revolutionised reading habits. The narrative then goes on to argue that reading become increasingly polite in the later seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The declining popularity of humanist active reading practices and the rise of reading for pleasure, in their view, reflected ‘the shift from a world of endless reformations and revolutions to the relative

³⁶ This of course draws on the question that Joan Kelly posed of renaissance historiography - ‘Did Women have a Renaissance?’ – in which she argued that a key task of women’s history is to challenge traditional periodisation. See Joan Kelly, *Women, History and Theory: The Essays of Joan Kelly* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984).

³⁷ Similarly, Sharon Achinstein has seen the civil war period as a period of revolution in reading. See Sharon Achinstein, *Milton and the Revolutionary Reader* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994).

³⁸ Kevin Sharpe and Steven N. Zwicker, “Introduction: Discovering the Renaissance Reader,” in *Reading, Society and Politics in Early Modern England*, ed. Kevin Sharpe and Steven N. Zwicker (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 21.

³⁹ Steven N. Zwicker, “The Constitution of Opinion and the Pacification of Reading,” in *Reading, Society and Politics in Early Modern England*, ed. Kevin Sharpe and Steven N. Zwicker (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 300.

⁴⁰ Zwicker, “The Constitution of Opinion,” 300.

peace of Hanoverian Britain.’⁴¹ The reading habits of the 1690s and eighteenth-century are figured as ‘passive’ or peaceful, a marked change from the combative, resistant reader of the mid-seventeenth century.

This narrative, and particularly the connections it draws between reading practices and politics, is compelling in many ways but seems fatally flawed when gender is considered more carefully. Sharpe and Zwicker present a single, male story which does not consider whether women readers and women’s reading had the same transformation, or consider the implications of this question. Subsequent chapters will look at women’s participation in reading and noting practices to see whether they mirrored Sharpe and Zwicker’s expectations of male behaviour and thereby re-examine some of their assumptions about active reading and contestatory annotation. Moreover, their whole narrative is overwhelmingly marked by masculine spaces, places and events. Zwicker argued that ‘the point of transit between politics and aesthetics, between argument and opinion, might be located in the very coffee house where fop and university wit fashioned their own aesthetics out of received opinion.’⁴² Coffee houses have long been seen as significant sites of new types of reading (particularly of the news) and political discussion in the late seventeenth century, but were generally dominated by men.⁴³ However, as I show in chapter four, women were able to access and engage with the news, challenging the narrative that situates reading, news and politics very clearly outside the home.

This devaluation or neglect of the domestic is common in Sharpe and Zwicker’s writings. According to Zwicker, commenting on the development of reading from the

⁴¹ Sharpe and Zwicker, “Introduction,” 23.

⁴² Zwicker, “The Constitution of Opinion,” 307.

⁴³ Brian Cowan, “What Was Masculine About the Public Sphere? Gender and the Coffeehouse Milieu in Post-Restoration England,” *History Workshop Journal* 5, no. 1 (2001): 127-157; Brian Cowan, “Mr. Spectator and the Coffeehouse Public Sphere,” *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 37, no. 3, Critical Networks (2004): 345-366.

sixteenth to the eighteenth century, ‘the site, the work, even the gender of reading [were] transformed from the strenuous, masculine world of the humanist schoolroom to the leisured boudoir of the novel reader intent less on the production of learning than on the generation of feeling and opinion.’⁴⁴ Their opposition between ‘passive’ or ‘pacified’ reading for pleasure and ‘active’ humanist reading is distinctly gendered. There is a mournful note when Zwicker comments that eighteenth-century readers ‘are now rather to be discovered in more casual sites and circumstances, within different domestic spaces, and, most emblematically, out of doors, alone and with a single book in hand, the reader intent not on the collation of texts but on the scripts of the book and nature as alternative and intermingled ways of narrating the self.’⁴⁵ This world of reading, he says, was characterised by opinion, but was not political. This represents a fundamental misunderstanding of spaces and actions often gendered feminine. There is an odd disconnect in the suggestion that opinion and passive reading were bedfellows. As I discuss throughout this thesis, particularly in the first section, active reading could take place in many places, both within and without the home. Moreover, reading for pleasure or reading widely does not necessarily have to be passive. The unacknowledged assumptions underlying their argument figures the feminine (the pleasurable, the passive and the domestic) as distinctly unintellectual. This not only devalues ‘feminine’ pastimes and places, but also misunderstands the very nature of the spaces, both mental and physical, in which women operated in the early modern world.⁴⁶

⁴⁴ Zwicker, “The Constitution of Opinion,” 311.

⁴⁵ Zwicker, “The Constitution of Opinion,” 311.

⁴⁶ For a discussion of how gender and women operated, particularly in the political sphere, see Elaine Chalus, *Elite Women in English Political Life, c.1754-1790* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005); Sarah Richardson, “‘Well-neighboured Houses’: The Political Networks of Elite Women, 1780-1860,” in *Women in British Politics, 1760-1860: The Power of the Petticoat*, ed. Kathryn Gleadle and Sarah Richardson (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2000), 56-73.

Many studies of readers have focused on particular individuals or families, in order to draw conclusions about broader reading practices and cultures. In this approach, figures such as John Dee, William Drake, Narcissus Luttrell and Gabriel Harvey are paramount.⁴⁷ Exceptional readers (usually men), are used to produce an outline of general reading habits, often overlooking the fact that those figures were probably not representative of anything but their specific social and religious milieu. Recently, Anthony Grafton and others have studied the reading habits of several generations of the Winthrop family, examining the connections between reading, early modern politics, and religious life.⁴⁸ The article is an impressively wide-ranging study of reading habits, looking at the ways in which different genres encouraged different styles of reading. However, there is only just over a page devoted to the women of the Winthrop family, despite the statement that ‘reading women were a vital component of the godly extended family.’⁴⁹ Even then, the women’s reading habits are largely only discussed in relation to the men of their family. Evidence is clearly available for the Winthrop women, but it is markedly underused. In these studies women are relegated to the sidelines, and gendered (or indeed class-based) reading habits are ignored.

Examinations of seventeenth-century women readers, in particular, have similarly focused on the heroic or exceptional individual. However, unlike the scholarship on male readers, which tends to take individual men as examples of wider phenomena and argues for their exemplarity, work on women readers often notes their exceptionality.

Case studies exploring the lives of the same few female readers have been mainstay of

⁴⁷ See, for example, William Sherman, *John Dee: The Politics of Reading and Writing in the English Renaissance* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1995); Kevin Sharpe, *Reading Revolutions: The Politics of Reading in Early Modern England* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000); Tim Somers, “The ‘Impartiality’ of Narcissus Luttrell’s Reading Practices and Historical Writing, 1679-1710,” *The Historical Journal* 61 (2018): 1-21; Lisa Jardine and Anthony Grafton, “‘Studied for Action’: How Gabriel Harvey Read his Livy,” *Past & Present* 129 (1990): 30-78.

⁴⁸ Richard Calis, Frederick Clark, Christian Flow, Anthony Grafton, Madeline McMahon, and Jennifer M Rampling, “Passing the Book: Cultures of Reading in the Winthrop Family, 1587-1730,” *Past & Present* 241 (2018): 60-141.

⁴⁹ Calis et al, “Passing the Book,” 121.

scholarship on women's reading habits, despite some recent attempts to broaden the field. The records left by prolific female readers such as Anne Clifford, Margaret Hoby, and Dorothy Osborne have been mined extensively, providing detailed accounts of how, when and what they liked to read. Extensive work has been done on Lady Anne Clifford as a reader, often connecting her reading habits to her aristocratic identity and examining the marginalia she left behind.⁵⁰ Margaret Hoby has been set within her religious culture, with her diary returned to again and again for information on devotional reading in early seventeenth-century Yorkshire.⁵¹ Dorothy Osborne has been a cornerstone of many studies of the reception of romance in the mid-seventeenth century.⁵² These women are all presented as readers who rose above their culture, unlike Winthrop, Harvey or Drake who are used as examples of wider reading methods and practices.

Some scholars have also done extensive work on women book owners and book collectors.⁵³ Frances Wolfreston is a prominent figure in the history of women's book collecting, and a great deal of ongoing work is dedicated to building up a picture of her library.⁵⁴ Similarly, Heidi Brayman Hackel has examined the substantial library of

⁵⁰ See, for example, Mary Ellen Lamb, "The Agency of the Split Subject: Lady Anne Clifford and the Uses of Reading," *English Literary Renaissance* 22 (1992): 347-368; Heidi Brayman Hackel, "Turning to her 'Best Companion[s]': Lady Anne Clifford as Reader, Annotator and Book Collector," in *Lady Anne Clifford: Culture, Patronage and Gender in 17th-Century Britain*, ed. Karen Hearn and Lynn Hulse (Leeds: Yorkshire Archaeological Society, 2009), 99-108; Stephen Orgel, "Marginal Maternity: Reading Lady Anne Clifford's A Mirror for Magistrates," in *Printing and Parenting in Early Modern England*, ed. Douglas A. Brooks (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003), 267-289.

⁵¹ See, for example, Mary Ellen Lamb, "The Sociality of Margaret Hoby's Reading Practices and the Representation of Reformation Interiority," *Critical Survey* 12, no. 2 (2000): 17-32; Julie Crawford, "Reconsidering Early Modern Women's Reading, or, how Margaret Hoby Read her de Mornay," *The Huntington Library Quarterly* 73, no. 2 (2010): 193-223.

⁵² See, for example, Julie A. Eckerle, *Romancing the Self in Early Modern Englishwomen's Life Writing* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2013); Carrie Hintz, *An Audience of One: Dorothy Osborne's Letters to Sir William Temple, 1652-1654* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005).

⁵³ See, for example, Caroline Bowden, "The Library of Mildred Cooke Cecil, Lady Burghley," *The Library* 6 (2005): 3-29; David McKitterick, "Women and their Books in Seventeenth-Century England: The Case of Elizabeth Puckering," *The Library* 1 (2000): 359-380. For work on the space of the library, see Lucy Gwynn, "The Design of the English Domestic Library in the Seventeenth Century: Readers and their Book Rooms," *Library Trends* 60 (2011): 43-53.

⁵⁴ See, for example, Paul Morgan, "Frances Wolfreston and 'Hor Bouks': A Seventeenth-Century Woman Book Collector," *The Library* 6th Series, 11, no. 3 (1989): 197-219; Sarah Lindenbaum, "Hiding in Plain Sight: How Electronic Records Can Lead Us to Early Modern Women Readers," in *Women's Bookscapes*

Frances Stanley Egerton, Countess of Bridgewater. She has outlined the library inventory left by the Countess, extrapolating information from the collection about her character and literary tastes. Overall, she concludes, it is Bridgewater's lack of exceptionalism, 'her very conventionality, I would argue, that makes her library collection so striking, for its existence does not seem to have been considered worthy of remark. And if a woman's library of 241 volumes did not warrant attention in 1633, then we must expand our notions of early modern women as consumers of books.'⁵⁵ Considering the dynamic relationship between books and their owners, and the cultural, social and political climate that formed these relationships, is important not only for our understanding of book history but also the experience of gender in the early modern period.

In order to situate women within broader narratives about the history of reading more work has to be done both on the relationship between gender and reading, alongside the place of women. This effort needs to consist both of a recovery project, and a feminist re-evaluation of historical assumptions. This approach follows Leslie Howsam's call to arms in the SHARP (Society for the History of Authorship, Reading and Publishing) newsletter in 1998, writing on women and book history.⁵⁶ She argued that is not enough to find women in the Robert Darnton's communications circuit, exploring the production, dissemination and reception of texts, but that we need to apply feminist analysis to theorise about gendered relationships with the book and the text, and its users, readers, producers, and distributors.⁵⁷

in Early Modern Britain, ed. Leah Knight, Micheline White, & Elizabeth Sauer (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2018), 193-213. For more on Wolfreton, see chapters one and two of this thesis.

⁵⁵ Heidi Brayman Hackel, "The Countess of Bridgewater's London Library," in *Books and Readers in Early Modern England: Material Studies*, ed. Jennifer Anderson and Elizabeth Sauer (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002), 147.

⁵⁶ Leslie Howsam, "In My View: Women and Book History," *SHARP News* 7, no. 4 (1998): 1-2.

⁵⁷ Howsam has suggested focusing on the gendering of the book itself – she, and many others, have drawn attention to the fact that the book as an object is often gendered female, with a male reader taking the role of consumer. This is not something I will be able to investigate here, but it is an interesting aspect of women's book history. See, for example, Wendy Wall, *The Imprint of Gender: Authorship and*

A methodology for this can be taken from the now substantial historiography of early modern women's writing. An effective recovery project has brought previously overlooked works by Renaissance women into the limelight, resulting in many anthologies dedicated to early modern women's writing.⁵⁸ Alongside recovery projects, many scholars of early modern women writers have done valuable work in challenging historiographical assumptions and refiguring the field. As Laura Lunger Knoppers points out, 'scholars of early modern women's writing now stress the materiality of gendered writing, the importance of including manuscript as well as printed texts, collaborative as well as single 'authored' texts, and women's writings on a diverse range of non-literary, domestic and religious subjects, including those not explicitly treating female or feminist concerns.'⁵⁹ Scholars have also looked at women's role in book production, highlighting their participation in literary endeavour even if they were not published authors themselves.⁶⁰

Publication in the English Renaissance (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1993). For Darnton's communications circuit, see: Robert Darnton, "What is the History of Books?" *Daedalus* 111, no. 3 Representations and Realities (1982): 65-83. There have been numerous studies finding women within different parts of the circuit, for example Paula McDowell, *The Women of Grub Street: Press, Politics, and Gender in the London Literary Marketplace 1678-1730* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998); Julie Crawford, *Mediatrix: Women, Politics, and Literary Production in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014).

⁵⁸ See, for example, Salzman, *Early Modern Women's Writing: An Anthology*; Stephanie Hodgson-Wright, ed., *Women's Writing of the Early Modern Period, 1588-1688: An Anthology* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2002); Sarah C. E. Ross and Elizabeth Scott-Baumann, ed., *Women Poets of the English Civil War* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2018); James Fitzmaurice, Josephine A. Roberts, Carol L. Barash, Eugene R. Cunnar, and Nancy A. Gutierrez, ed., *Major Women Writers of Seventeenth-Century England* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1997); Jane Stevenson and Peter Davidson, ed., *Early Modern Women Poets (1520-1700): An Anthology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001); Helen Ostovich and Elizabeth Sauer, ed., *Reading Early Modern Women: An Anthology of Texts in Manuscript and Print, 1550-1700* (London: Routledge, 2004).

⁵⁹ Laura Lunger Knoppers, "Introduction: Critical Framework and Issues," in *The Cambridge Companion to Early Modern Women's Writing*, ed. Laura Lunger Knoppers (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 6. For example of such work, see Patricia Pender and Rosalind Smith, ed., *Material Cultures of Early Modern Women's Writing* (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014); Erica Longfellow, *Women and Religious Writing in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004); Victoria E. Burke and Jonathan Gibson, ed., *Early Modern Women's Manuscript Writing: Selected Papers from the Trinity/Trent Colloquium* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004); Kate Chedgzoy, Melanie Hansen and Suzanne Trill, ed., *Voicing Women: Gender and Sexuality in Early Modern Writing* (Keele: Keele University Press, 1996).

⁶⁰ See, for example, Helen Smith, 'Grossly Material Things': *Women and Book Production in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012); McDowell, *The Women of Grub Street*.

In looking beyond the canon, therefore, and creating a wider framework from which to consider the topic of ‘women writers,’ the field has been transformed and enriched.⁶¹ The same can be done for women’s reading. Although, as mentioned before, there is a burgeoning scholarship on reading habits, challenging many historiographical assumptions could open up many new avenues for research. In looking at both manuscript and print reading materials, including the reading of documents usually used as evidence of writing, such as letters, notebooks, recipe books, and household accounts; and considering a wider range of methods and acts of reading, women come into much clearer view than in traditional scholarship.⁶² Not only are more women readers apparent, but the range of materials that they read and the various ways in which they responded to and used their reading can be uncovered.

This is important because there has been a tendency to stress women’s reading was curtailed and limited by the culture in which they lived.⁶³ Sharpe and Zwicker have argued that ‘for most literate women the experience of the book was confined to spiritual genres and to household manuals, to books of housewifery, herbals, and cookery books.’⁶⁴ However, not only does this drastically underestimate the wide literary tastes of women, and the ways in which reading in many forms was part of their daily lives, it also overlooks something that has been commonplace in studies of male reading habits in the early modern period. There has long been a recognition that reading was above all *useful*, that men undertook to read books that informed either

⁶¹ See Paul Salzman, ed., *Expanding the Canon of Early Modern Women’s Writing* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2010); Margaret J. M. Ezell, “The Myth of Judith Shakespeare: Creating the Canon of Women’s Literature,” *New Literary History* 21, no. 3, *New Historicisms, New Histories, and Others* (1990): 579-592.

⁶² See, for example, James Daybell, *Women Letter-Writers in Tudor England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006); Rebecca Laroche, *Medical Authority and Englishwomen’s Herbal Texts, 1550-1650* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2009).

⁶³ Mary Ellen Lamb, for example, has argued that portrayals or constructions of women readers in contemporary culture often restricted women’s access to certain genres. See Mary Ellen Lamb, “Constructions of Women Readers,” in *Teaching Tudor and Stuart Women Writers*, ed. Susanne Woods and Margaret P. Hannay (New York: The Modern Language Association of America, 2000), 23-34.

⁶⁴ Sharpe and Zwicker, “Introduction: Discovering the Renaissance Reader,” 13.

their intellect, general knowledge, or daily lives. As T. A. Birrell wrote, ‘the contents of the 17th-century gentleman’s library was of course predominantly utilitarian: he bought the books he needed. As a landowner and magistrate he needed books on law. As a patron of church livings he needed books on theology [...] even the acquisition of literature, belles lettres, was partly utilitarian. It was justified as a mixture of the *utile* and the *dulce*.’⁶⁵

Reading and books therefore facilitated and reflected a person’s role in life. This has rarely been discussed in relation to women’s reading habits; the preponderance of scripture, cookery books, and household manuals has long been seen as evidence of oppression, figuring the woman in question as a victim of her culture rather than a participant in it. While the fact that women did not enjoy the same status and freedom as men of a similar social standing cannot be overlooked, it seems reductive to see them simply as passive recipients of patriarchal ideology. Their book collections and reading choices were marked by their everyday lives and concerns. Their position in society meant that this largely centred on the household, at least for the gentlewomen who would have been the most likely to be literate in this period, and on whom this thesis focuses. As wives and mothers they needed books on devotion, to look after the spiritual lives of their families.⁶⁶ As heads of the household (at least, in their husbands’ absence) they needed books to help to keep the domestic sphere running smoothly. And

⁶⁵ T. A. Birrell, “Reading as a Pastime: the Place of Light Literature in some Gentlemen’s Libraries of the 17th Century,” in *Property of a Gentleman: The formation, Organisation and Dispersal of the Private Library 1620-1920*, ed. Robin Myers and Michael Harris (Winchester: St Paul’s Bibliographies, 1991), 114.

⁶⁶ This thesis focuses on protestant women, but there has been valuable work done on Catholic women’s reading, particularly within the space of the convent. See, for example, Heather Wolfe, “Reading Bells and Loose Paper: Reading and Writing practice of the English Benedictine Nuns of Cambrai and Paris,” in *Early Modern Women’s Manuscript Writing: Selected Papers from the Trinity/Trent Colloquium*, ed. Victoria E. Burke and Jonathan Gibson (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004), 135-156; Caroline Bowden, “Books and Reading at Syon Abbey, Lisbon, in the Seventeenth Century,” in *Syon Abbey and its Books: Reading, Writing, and Religion, c.1400-1700*, ed. E. A. Jones and Alexandra Walsham (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2010), 177-202.

as the people often responsible for medical care in their communities, they needed books on remedies and cures.

This did not, of course, represent the entirety of most women's reading habits. Sharpe and Zwicker have accepted a reality largely formed by conduct literature and men's words on women, instead of looking at the women themselves. As will be shown in chapter four, some women were avid news readers, holding a sustained and informed interest in contemporary political events. They read about history, mathematics, scientific discovery and travel.⁶⁷ For example, on the flyleaf of a copy of James Hodder's *Arithmetick*, one Elizabeth Bancroft wrote 'Miss Elizabeth Bantoft her booke 1668.'⁶⁸ Moreover, Anne Conway's letters attest to her intense scientific and philosophical curiosity and reading habits.⁶⁹ Women also enjoyed reading romances, as is explored in chapter seven. This is not to deny the presence of a gendered rhetoric surrounding reading; as is discussed in chapter five, writers of advice literature were deeply concerned with what and how women were reading. However, women could and did make their own choices about what to read.

Reading was also a way of performing and representing identity, particularly gender identity. Women were negotiating gender norms whether reading within or without the bounds of what was deemed acceptable for their sex. Many theorists suggest that we

⁶⁷ I have found numerous example of women inscribing their names or other annotations on a wide range of books, throughout my research in archives across the UK and the USA. For scholarship on reading some of these genres, see D. R. Woolf, *Reading History in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000); Margaret J. M. Ezell, "The Politics of the Past: Restoration Women Writers on Women Reading History," in *Pilgrimage for Love: Essays in Early Modern Literature in Honour of Josephine A. Roberts*, ed. Sigrid King (Tempe: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 1999), 19-40; Elizabeth Spiller, *Science, Reading, and Renaissance Literature: The Art of Making Knowledge, 1580-1670* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004); Peter Mancall, ed., *Bringing the World to Early Modern Europe: Travel Accounts and their Audiences* (Leiden: Brill, 2007).

⁶⁸ James Hodder, *Hodder's Arithmetick: Or, that necessary Art made most easie. Being explained in a way familiar to the capacity of any that desire to learn it in a little time* (London, Printed by J. Darby, for Tho. Rooks, at the Lamb and Ink-bottle at the East end of St. Paul's, near the School: [where is sold the best Ink for Records] 1667), Z90 14, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, New Haven.

⁶⁹ Original letters from various members of the Conway family; 1613-1679, Conway Family Papers, Add MS 23213, British Library, London.

should see gender as performative, something one enacts. Judith Butler, for example, has argued that ‘there is no gender identity behind the expressions of gender ... identity is performatively constituted by the very “expressions” that are said to be its results.’⁷⁰ If gender is something that is enacted, then the act of reading becomes a performance of gender. By reading certain books, in light of cultural conventions dictating their acceptability (or lack thereof) for women, individuals could signal their relationship to gender norms. This can be further refined: perhaps one reads as (or like) an aristocratic woman, with the reading experience being determined by both gender and socio-economic position.⁷¹

Kate Flint has cautioned against seeing the identity of the reader as formed before the act of reading, however. She argues that reading could play a part in ‘the continuing formation of the subject.’⁷² I would add to this that the identity formation could happen in the act of representing reading. When women wrote about their reading habits, they interacted with various gender norms and prescriptions, whether consciously or unconsciously. This reveals a great deal about how they constructed their individual feminine identity. For example, taking the passage quoted above, we can learn much more about Lucy Hutchinson and the history of women’s reading if we note the ways in which her description of her reading constructed a sense of herself within an (admittedly fragmentary) autobiography, revealing her ‘genius’ and her determined studiousness. This is rarely discussed by scholars of early modern reading. Letters, diaries and other personal writings from the seventeenth century frequently contained mentions of reading, some more detailed than others, but this facet of the early modern

⁷⁰ Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (London: Routledge, 1990), 34.

⁷¹ This will be discussed more in chapter seven, on reading romantic fiction.

⁷² Kate Flint, *The Woman Reader 1837-1914* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 40-41.

reading experience and its connection to an individual's sense of self has been largely overlooked.

Scholars of reading can learn a lot from the very valuable work that has been done on early modern women's autobiographies, diaries and memoirs.⁷³ Many early modern women's texts that survive today are autobiographical in nature. Helen Wilcox has suggested that this was partly due to 'the Protestant emphasis on devotional self-examination, [and] the association of feminine experience with the domestic or social sphere.'⁷⁴ Autobiography involves the creation of a textual self, one which often resembles, but cannot be taken as synonymous with, the self of the writer.⁷⁵ As Wilcox has argued, 'the act of inscribing a self involves the creation of a new self, a publicly accessible one, available in the shared language in spite of an absent or limited audience.'⁷⁶

This new, textual self was formed in interaction with contemporary social and gender norms. As Hero Chalmers has noted, 'recent studies of women's autobiographical writing have taken as one theoretical starting-point notions of subject-formation through entry into linguistic structures established by the dominant culture.'⁷⁷ Thus, women's presentation of the self in early modern autobiographies would be influenced by

⁷³ Some selected works include Sharon Cadman Seelig, *Autobiography and Gender in Early Modern Literature: Reading Women's Lives, 1600-1680* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006); Henk Dragstra, Sheila Otway and Helen Wilcox, ed., *Betraying Our Selves: Forms of Self-Representation in Early Modern English Texts* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2000); Elspeth Graham, Hilary Hinds, Elaine Hobby and Helen Wilcox, ed., *Her Own Life: Autobiographical Writings by Seventeenth-Century Englishwomen* (London: Routledge, 1989); Julie A. Eckerle and Michelle M. Dowd, ed., *Genre and Women's Life Writing in Early Modern England* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007).

⁷⁴ Helen Wilcox, "Her Own Life, Her Own Living? Text and Materiality in Seventeenth-Century Englishwomen's Autobiographical Writing," in *Betraying Our Selves: Forms of Self-Representation in Early Modern English Texts*, ed. Henk Dragstra, Sheila Otway and Helen Wilcox (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2000), 105.

⁷⁵ Georges Gusdorf calls autobiography 'a second reading of experience', and argues that 'the prerogative of autobiography consists in this: that it shows us not the objective stages of a career – to discern these is the task of the historian – but that it reveals instead the effort of a creator to give the meaning of his own mythic tale'. Georges Gusdorf, "Conditions and Limits of Autobiography," in *Autobiography: Essays Theoretical and Critical*, ed. James Olney (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), 38; 48.

⁷⁶ Helen Wilcox, "Private Writing and Public Function: Autobiographical Texts by Renaissance Englishwomen," in *Gloriana's Face: Women, Public and Private, in the English Renaissance*, ed. S. P. Cerasano and Marion Wynne-Davies (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1992), 90.

⁷⁷ Hero Chalmers, "'The Person I Am, Or What They Made Me To Be': The Construction of the Feminine Subject in the Autobiographies of Mary Carleton," in *Women, Texts and Histories 1575-1760*, ed. Clare Brant and Diane Purkiss (London: Routledge, 1992), 165.

prevailing discourses about gender and social status. However, Chalmers complicates this idea in her article on Mary Carleton, who wrote her autobiography in 1663, to answer accusations of bigamy and fraud. Chalmers argues that Carleton did use contemporary norms of femininity in constructing her autobiographical character, but that the process was more complex and layered than this, revealing Carleton's subversion of normative feminine identity. She suggests that 'the success of [Carleton's] imposture depends on maintaining the illusion that the models of identity she adopts voice an unmediated feminine subjectivity, she resists the determination of her identity within these models by highlighting the very process of its mediation or construction.'⁷⁸ This approach can be extended. While women may have drawn on ideals of femininity to construct an identity for themselves, this was not simply a case of conformity to dominant gender ideology. Instead, they used writing as a way of negotiating, or even rejecting, such norms, and the characters that emerged were hugely complex and individual.

This theory of autobiography and gender can be applied to other forms of writing, beyond the obvious examples of 'life-writing' that usually make up the autobiographical canon. Annotating the margins of books, writing dedicatory inscriptions on flyleaves, or notes in commonplace books or recipe books, can all also be seen as acts of identity construction and articulation. Scholars such as Natalie Zemon Davis, Juliet Fleming and Jason Scott-Warren have explored this in relation to early modern inscription practices and gift-giving, marking out the pages of books as a space for expressing one's sociable and relational identity.⁷⁹ Similarly, scholars such as Julie Eckerle have examined how women used their reading of certain genres to align themselves with various

⁷⁸ Chalmers, "'The Person I Am, Or What They Made Me To Be,'" 166.

⁷⁹ Natalie Zemon Davis, "Beyond the Market: Books as Gifts in Sixteenth-Century France: The Prothero Lecture," *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 33 (1983): 69-88; Juliet Fleming, *Graffiti and the Writing Arts of Early Modern England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001); Jason Scott-Warren, "Reading Graffiti in the Early Modern Book," *Huntington Library Quarterly* 73, no. 3 (2010): 363-381. For more on this, see chapter two.

characteristics and modes of behaviour.⁸⁰ However, there has not been a comprehensive study of the connections between reading habits, representations of reading, and gender in the seventeenth century, which is what this thesis aims to do.

The first chapter examines the task facing scholars researching women's reading habits in the early modern period. One of the reasons often given for the lack of attention paid to early modern women readers, or at least the largely episodic nature of most research, based on individual case studies of exceptional readers, is that there is a dearth of evidence. Reading does not always leave tangible traces, and historical records of women are often erased over time, or not created at all. This is true to an extent: there are certainly fewer detailed sources for female readers, men's libraries are better documented, and it is rare to find the female equivalent of the detailed reading notes kept by men such as William Drake, Gabriel Harvey and Narcissus Luttrell. However, this is not to say that there is no, or even little, evidence available. Over the course of my research, I have found a wealth of information about women's reading habits, from annotated books, notebooks filled with extracts from and reflections on texts, book inventories, to letters and diaries. In the first chapter, I explore this process of finding women readers from the seventeenth century, and what it says about gendered assumptions behind historical research.

Part one then explores aspects of women's reading habits and practices, examining historiographical assumptions that have often led to the exclusion of women. Chapters two and three consider the practices of annotation and note-taking, in order to explore where women fit into the paradigm of 'active reading' that has been so influential on studies of Renaissance and early modern reading. In chapter four, I examine the participation of women in seventeenth-century news culture. The seventeenth century is

⁸⁰ Eckerle, *Romancing the Self*.

key to the development of the genres of news, and many studies have been dedicated to exploring this phenomenon, but there have been few explorations of the place of women. I look at evidence from across the seventeenth century of women reading both printed and manuscript news, to demonstrate their keen interest in current events, and explore how they read their news.

Part two deals with representations of reading, and its connection to ideas of gender, identity and femininity. In order to explore this, chapter five sets the scene for the connection between gender and the act of reading, exploring reactions to and representations of women reading in contemporary advice literature. This literature presented a binary between religious reading, thought to demonstrate piety and exemplary femininity, and romance reading, connected to more transgressive and sexualised feminine traits. Chapters six and seven, therefore, are structured around this binary, and consider how women responded to these prescriptions for reading and behaviour. In looking at forms of seventeenth-century life-writing by women, including diaries, memoirs, meditations and letters, I examine how women represented their own reading habits in various forms, and argue that recording or discussing reading was a form of identity construction. Chapter six focuses on how women represented their religious reading habits, both devotional and theological; while chapter seven looks at women's discussions of their romance reading. Both chapters demonstrate the extent to which women were able to negotiate gender norms, and often adapted or subverted them for their own ends, creating a highly individual identity.

The accepted narrative of reading habits that suggests a shift from intensive, 'active' reading to extensive, more passive reading relies on access to the world of scholarly endeavour. It may well be true that upper-class, educated male readers experienced a shift in their reading experiences, with humanist note-taking practices becoming less common. However, women (and the lower classes) were not able to fully participate in

that world in the first place. Therefore the chronology of their reading followed a different path. This, again, cannot be taken as universal: the developments and reading experiences outlined here should not stand for all women, but rather a group of wealthy, educated women who were able to read and write. The reading habits of other sections of society, both men and women, were very different again, and there is not time to explore that here. However, this thesis will trace the reading habits and responses of some seventeenth-century women, examining the connection between femininity, identity and reading, and sketching a general overview of the ways in which this reading developed over the course of a century.

Ultimately, the category of the ‘woman reader’ itself will be assessed. While this figure is taken as a starting point for this thesis, it is important to remember the ways in which this category can be complicated, and move beyond a simple sex-based analysis. Gerald MacLean has argued that Frances Wolfeston’s reading indicates that she did not ‘see herself in any normative social roles prescribed for women [...] Wolfeston neither reads nor writes simply as a daughter, or a wife, or a mother, or an object of sexual fantasy’ but rather as a political and social agent.⁸¹ These should not be seen as contradictory positions: women readers read as individuals, and were women. This thesis will pay attention to the gendered aspects of women’s identity, but also argue that the ways in which they read, and their reading materials, were formed and influenced by their social situation, politics, and religion, as well as their gender.

⁸¹ MacLean, “Literacy, Class, and Gender,” 309.

Finding Women Readers

In 1647, when Lady Margaret Heath, wife of Sir Robert Heath, died, an inventory of the books kept in her closet was produced. The catalogue displays a range of genres and lists over eighty volumes, arranged by size.¹ As is the case with most seventeenth-century book lists, at least those belonging to literate women, it is largely populated by religious and theological works. In Heath's case, at least fifty-eight texts out of the eighty listed can be categorised as religious, including in that category scripture, devotional literature and theological treatises. Interestingly, the list includes works by Puritan, Protestant, Jesuit and Catholic authors. The mainstays of seventeenth-century godly polemic, such as Bishop Hall and William Gouge, are there, but there are also works by the Jesuit Jeremias Drexel and the Catholic saint, Francis de Sales.² The inclusion of these books in the collection shows a desire to develop knowledge of other denominational positions. Heath's husband, Sir Robert Heath, was a Royalist judge who is known to have been intolerant of other religions, and having supported the persecution of Catholics.³ Perhaps Heath was using these books to shore up her own, contradictory, religious beliefs; or perhaps she genuinely disagreed with her husband's positions. This demonstrates one of the difficulties with researching reading habits based on books lists: not only might the books be largely unrepresentative of reading tastes over a person's lifetime, but the reasons for owning certain books and the individual's responses to them were not recorded.

¹ "An Inventory of Bookes in the Lady Heaths closet," Heath and Verney Papers. Vol. VI (ff. 229). Miscellaneous inventories and accompts 1599-1799, Egerton MS 2983, f79r, British Library, London.

² The Protestant reception of de Sales' *Introduction to a Devout Life* has been discussed in Mary Hardy, "The seventeenth-century English and Scottish Reception of Francis de Sales' *An Introduction to a Devout Life*," *British Catholic History* 33, no. 2 (2016): 228-258.

³ Paul E. Kopperman, *Sir Robert Heath, 1575-1649: Window on an Age* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press for the Royal Historical Society, 1989).

However, we can get a partial sense of the range of genres Heath was exposed to, and what she (or the individual who compiled the inventory) would admit to owning. There was a range of other genres included amongst her books, besides the theological texts. Herbals, medical tracts, conduct literature, poetry and books on gardening, history and mathematics are represented, and there is also one ‘manuscript in folio.’ She owned such intellectual works as Francis Bacon’s *Natural History* (1627); Thomas Heywood’s *England’s Elizabeth* (1631); and the *Mesolabium Architectonicum* (1631), by mathematician and Arabic scholar William Bedwell. Her books, rather than showing narrow and typically ‘feminine’ interests (as defined by contemporary gender constructions), reveal a wide textual experience and an awareness of contemporary literary and intellectual trends.

Books lists, inventories and wills are important records of what books women owned (and, crucially, deemed important enough to record), how they valued them, and where they were kept. This evidence is not always given in detail; indeed the majority of wills and inventories only reveal minimal information about books. The most common books referred to among inventories of women’s goods are bibles or books of common prayer, with little other information given, such as in the case of Francis Pawley, whose 1681 inventory includes ‘one old bible.’⁴ The inventory of Elizabeth Gell’s possessions from her residence in Derbyshire, compiled in 1705, lists ‘twelve books;’ ‘one little box of sermon books unbound;’ and ‘five and twenty books bound.’⁵ However, there are also records of extensive book ownership. These often still show the predominance of religious or theological literature, such as in the case of Elizabeth Sleight’s book inventory, included at the back of a manuscript recipe book, in which forty-five of the

⁴ Francis Pawley, of Broomfield, county Kent: Inventory of her goods: 1681, Add Ch 44538, British Library.

⁵ Inventory of Elizabeth Gell’s goods, 1705, D258/38/1, Derbyshire Record Office, Matlock.

fifty books listed are religious texts, mostly Puritan and Protestant treatises.⁶ Sleigh's inventory does not indicate any deviance from the devotional and domestic literature that women were advised to read by contemporary conduct literature; the remaining books in her list are two medical texts, William Gouge's *Domesticall Duties*, and the vague 'two French-bookes.'

Some women evidently owned substantial book collections, and had broad literary tastes. The book list of another woman, Elizabeth Freke, well known to scholars of reading, displays an even greater range of genres than Heath. In her 1711 household inventory, recorded in her *Remembrances*, she documented roughly 103 books, amassed during the late seventeenth and early eighteenth century.⁷ Freke's books were largely published during the later seventeenth century, and demonstrate the build-up of a collection over that time. Freke's inventory is interesting not only because of the generic range, but also because it gives information on where the books were kept. They were stored in different places within the household: 81 were kept in a 'deep deale box by the fire side in my own closet;' the others (apart from a book of common prayer in 'the thin flatt deale box in my closet,' along with other devotional paraphernalia) in a 'great chest in my uper closet.'⁸ It is unclear whether there were any specific criteria for separating the books. The ones in the upper closet were mainly histories and political works, but these genres also appeared in the other collection. Overall, the list covers a huge range of genres, including religion or theology, history, politics, geography, romance, medicine and law, and are of various sizes and formats.

Freke's inclusion of a romance was relatively unusual for a woman of the time, although perhaps this is indicative of the increasing popularity of romantic fiction in the

⁶ Elizabeth Sleigh and Felicia Whitfeld, "An Inventory of the Lady Sleighs bookes May 12 1647," MS 751/54-55, Wellcome Library, London.

⁷ Elizabeth Freke, *The Remembrances of Elizabeth Freke, 1671-1714*, ed. Raymond A. Anselment (Camden Fifth Series, Volume 18, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 173-177.

⁸ Freke, *The Remembrances of Elizabeth Freke*, 173-176.

eighteenth century. She records, for example, ‘i book of Cassandria, a romance, folia,’ referring to the novel by Gautier de Costes, seigneur de la Calprenède.⁹ Freke’s inventory, unlike Heath’s, was composed by the book owner herself (Heath’s was posthumous), and so has implications for how she might have wanted to represent herself.¹⁰ As with Heath, apart from the predominance of theological or religious works, there is little to indicate that she was trying to conform to typically feminine reading habits. The inventory, instead, gives an impression of a reader of varied tastes and interests, owning books for a range of purposes including practical use, intellectual stimulation and reading for pleasure.

Book lists and inventories such as these may give a valuable insight into some women’s book ownership, but they are not necessarily representative of reading habits. For one, women may not have read their books. Living with, and using, a text has at best an unstable relationship to reading, as will be seen in this thesis. Moreover, these lists also give only a very partial insight into women’s interaction with books. For example, men’s libraries could be shared by women or be bequeathed to women, and indeed this may have even been expected, complicating categories of ownership.¹¹ The relational nature of women’s writing has long been recognised, and more sophisticated analyses of women authors have revealed a complex and unstable relationship between the author’s sex and the name on the title page.¹² A significant number of men edited, co-authored

⁹ Freke, *The Remembrances of Elizabeth Freke*, 173.

¹⁰ Freke identifies herself in the first person when recording the inventory, writing ‘[I] doe think fitt and proper to make an inventory of some of the best things I leave in my house att Bilney’. Freke, *The Remembrances of Elizabeth Freke*, 164.

¹¹ For example, Frances Matthew had access to the library of her husband, Tobie Matthew, the Archbishop of York. He also left the library, which comprised over three thousand volumes, to her on his death. Frances Matthew then bequeathed the books to York Minster Library. See Rosamund Oates, *Moderate Radical: Tobie Matthew and the English Reformation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018).

¹² Katharine Walsh has recently posited that Jane Sharp’s *The Midwives Book*, usually thought to be the first midwifery text authored by a midwife, was in fact authored by a man ‘writing in ‘drag’.’ See Katharine Phelps Welsh, “Marketing Midwives in Seventeenth-Century London: A Re-Examination of Jane Sharp’s *The Midwives Book*,” *Gender & History* 26, no. 2 (2014): 224.

and reworked print by women, for example, and vice versa.¹³ Reading was a social and relational practice, just as authorship was. In the following chapters we will see women and men reading to one another; men recording lists of women's libraries; and books passing between men and women. This social nature of reading often leaves little trace. Readers, then, are elusive. Leaving evidence of the act of reading generally requires a conscious effort on the part of the reader, a desire to make a mark. Due to the nature of reading itself and the close, though fluctuating, relationship between literacy and socio-political hierarchies, evidence for the reading activity of various social groupings has been often been obscured. This could be because they were less able to leave a trace, due to social conventions or a lack of literacy, or because such evidence has been erased or overlooked by subsequent generations. This is as true for the early modern period as any other, and can make the work of historians trying to uncover reading habits of women, non-elite men and non-white groups in England very difficult. The history of reading, as with so many historical fields of enquiry, therefore began by largely focusing on elite male reading experiences. In recent years there have been moves towards discovering the reading practices of the (largely uneducated) lower social ranks, and of women.¹⁴ These tend to be treated as discrete fields, although of course there is and should be overlap. As mentioned in the introduction, research on women's reading habits has focused on studies of elite or educated women, as they left more concrete evidence of reading. Even so, finding traces of them can still be difficult, and involve

¹³ Robert Iliffe has demonstrated the often authorial role the editor could have in the early modern period. See Robert Iliffe, "Author-Mongering: The 'Editor' Between Producer and Consumer," in *The Consumption of Culture 1600-1800: Image, Object, Text*, ed. Ann Bermingham and John Brewer (London: Routledge, 1995), 166-192. Also see Helen Smith, 'Grossly Material Things': *Women and Book Production in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).

¹⁴ See, for example, recent work on cheap print and popular literacy, such as Andrew Hadfield, Matthew Dimmock and Abigail Shinn, ed., *The Ashgate Research Companion to Popular Culture in Early Modern England* (Farnham: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2014); Tessa Watt, *Cheap Print and Popular Piety 1550-1640* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991); Joad Raymond, ed., *The Oxford History of Popular Print Culture, Volume 1: Cheap Print in Britain and Ireland to 1660* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).

the piecing together of many fragmentary sources. The organisation of historical sources and archives and library collections has worked to obscure and occlude the records of women readers. In this chapter, I will outline how I have found the women on whom I have focused in this study, and explore what we can say about women readers from various different forms of evidence.

The definition of a 'woman reader' itself is complex. Recent work on the seventeenth century has shown that people were surrounded by text. As discussed above, several scholars have demonstrated that people were exposed to print continually in this period, even if they were not able to read it themselves. Adam Fox has outlined the mutually reliant and reciprocal relationship between oral and literate society, suggesting that 'early modern England may not have been a wholly literate society, but it comprised a fundamentally literate environment.'¹⁵ Reading aloud was common, as was communal reading, and people accessed written material in a huge variety of ways, often at a remove from the printed page.¹⁶ Juliet Fleming, moreover, has shown that early modern people frequently moved through and lived in text-filled spaces.¹⁷ She has investigated writing practices such as writing on walls and objects, arguing that 'we tend to understate the social range of practices of literacy.'¹⁸ People of every class, she suggests, wrote on a wide range of surfaces, including walls and furniture, in materials such as chalk. This has wide-ranging implications not only for the idea of writing and early modern literacy (she points out that one may be able to write with chalk but not a pen, rendering signatory evidence partial at best), but also for how we understand reading.

¹⁵ Adam Fox, *Oral and Literate Culture in England, 1500-1700* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 37.

¹⁶ Fox, *Oral and Literate Culture*.

¹⁷ Juliet Fleming, *Graffiti and the Writing Arts of Early Modern England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001).

¹⁸ Fleming, *Graffiti and the Writing Arts*, 9.

The ‘woman reader,’ therefore, was diverse. There is not time here to explore all the multifaceted ways in which people, and specifically women in the early modern period experienced reading. I am focusing on a select group of women: those who tended to leave written traces of their reading, in the form of letters, diaries, note books, or annotations. These women were from the upper ranks of society, demonstrated by their literacy and education levels, and their purchasing power. There is a distinction to be made within this, however, between women readers and women book owners. Although this thesis is focused on women readers, there are some broader discussions of how women interacted with books as objects and possessions: in chapter two, for example, I have included a section on autograph inscriptions in books, which is a sign of ownership although not necessarily of readership. Both readers and owners can be difficult to trace in the archives, and the methodologies are similar. Moreover, much of my evidence comes from women writing about, and in connection with, reading, as the actual act of reading is so intangible. This covers a range of practices, including annotation, note-taking, and descriptions of reading in autobiographical writings.

It has long been recognised that archives are, in the words of Rodney Carter, ‘spaces of power.’¹⁹ Carter argues that this power is wielded through both inclusion and exclusion, by letting certain stories be told and others be omitted.²⁰ There has been a great deal of recent work on the ‘silence’ of the archives, a term used to signify the gaps in what is recorded and made available to archive users.²¹ Scholars have also theorised about the space and functions of the archive in exploring power structures. Work on colonial archives and the gender politics of archives have proliferated in recent years, all aimed

¹⁹ Rodney G. S. Carter, “Of Things Said and Unsaid: Power, Archival Silences, and Power in Silence,” *Archivaria* 61 (2006): 216.

²⁰ Carter, “Of Things Said and Unsaid,” 216.

²¹ See, for example, David Thomas, Simon Fowler and Valerie Johnson, *The Silence of the Archive* (London: Facet Publishing, 2017); Marlene Manoff, “Mapping Archival Silence: Technology and the Historical Record,” in *Engaging with Records and Archives: Histories and Theories*, ed. Fiorella Foscarini, Heather MacNeil, Bonnie Mac, and Gillian Oliver (London: Facet Publishing, 2016), 63-82.

at uncovering hidden voices and illuminating the power structures that hid them in the first place.²² These dual aims of recovery and deconstruction are central to a lot of feminist scholarship, and sit alongside calls to decolonise the archives.

Some of the ‘silences’ come from the functions of the archive to select and preserve materials.²³ As Randall Jimerson notes, ‘the very acts of selection and preservation set some records apart from others and give them heightened validity.’²⁴ Jimerson argues that ‘the archivist wields a power of interpretation over the records in her custody,’ emphasising the role (and responsibility) of the individual in constructing records.²⁵

Archives today are seen as a ‘creative cultural technology that shapes memory.’²⁶

Archivists, however, are faced with a difficult task, as processing and creating records for archival materials is often expensive, and labour-intensive. Carole Gerson, for example, has noted that the upsurge of interest in women’s history in Canada in the 1970s led to an increase in the number of published guides to archival collections of women’s papers, but that much work still remained largely hidden from view, often due to the cost involved in updating records.²⁷

The nature of reading itself is one barrier to finding traces of it in the archive, and this is compounded when looking at the reading of marginalised groups. The paucity of evidence for early modern women readers means that such a picture has to be built up

²² See, for example, Antoinette Burton, *Dwelling in the Archive: Women Writing House, Home, and History in Late Colonial India* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003); Marisa J. Fuentes, *Dispossessed Lives: Enslaved Women, Violence, and the Archive* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016); Kirsty Reid and Fiona Paisley, ed., *Sources and Methods in Histories of Colonialism: Approaching the Imperial Archive* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2017); Renée Romkins and Antia Wiersma, ed., *Gender and Archiving: Past, Present, Future* (Amsterdam: Verloren, 2017).

²³ Randall C. Jimerson, *Archives Power: Memory, Accountability, and Social Justice* (Chicago: Society of American Archivists, 2009), 2.

²⁴ Jimerson, *Archives Power*, 4.

²⁵ Jimerson, *Archives Power*, 7.

²⁶ Markus Friedrich, *The Birth of the Archive: A History of Knowledge*, trans. John Noel Dillon (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2018), 10.

²⁷ Carole Gerson, “Locating Female Subjects in the Archives,” in *Working in Women’s Archives: Researching Women’s Private Literature and Archival Documents*, ed. Helen M. Buss and Marlene Kadar (Waterloo, Ontario: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2001), 10.

from often fragmentary sources: a passing mention of reading or books in a letter or diary, as part of a list in an inventory, or a scribbled name or comment in the margins. Finding these references can be challenging, involving extensive archival work and use of online and printed resources. Some of this can prove fruitless, but there is more evidence than is often assumed, if you know how and where to look for it.

There is, first and foremost, a great deal of serendipity involved in this process.

Browsing through letters, online catalogues or printed contemporary texts can result in a day with no concrete findings, as is of course commonplace in historical research, but can also end with exciting results, or at least a mention here or there of reading.

Primarily, my evidence has come from four main source bases: annotated books (often books inscribed with women's names); commonplace books or other manuscript compilations; letter collections; and women's diaries, memoirs or similar autobiographical writings. All of these come with their own difficulties in terms of identification. Primarily, however, the organisation of the historical record and its focus on 'significant' figures and events has often resulted in women's records being subsumed and hidden. As Georgianna Ziegler has pointed out, 'even if you look in the places where you would expect to find traces of [women], they have often remained invisible through omission.'²⁸ At a time when new forms of recording and digitisation offer novel ways of presenting, sorting and analysing the historical record, it is important to reflect on the ways in which technologies enable and prevent research into early modern women.

²⁸ Georgianna Ziegler, "Lost in the Archives? Searching for Records of Early Modern Women," in *Teaching Tudor and Stuart Women Writers*, ed. Susanne Woods and Margaret P. Hannay (New York: The Modern Language Association, 2000), 316.

Annotations and Inscriptions

There are some online resources for finding annotated books, although by and large these have prioritised male authors and annotators. The Annotated Books Online project is a resource for those interested in early modern reading habits, and involves the collaboration of a number of British, European and American libraries to digitise various annotated books in their collections.²⁹ However, the majority of annotators have been early modern male intellectuals. The ‘highlights’ page lists annotators such as Martin Luther, Isaac Newton, Michel de Montaigne, Gabriel Harvey and Erasmus of Rotterdam. This is an extremely valuable resource, allowing remote access to the extensive annotations of figures like Harvey. However, it is partial at best, and searching for readers with names such as ‘Elizabeth,’ ‘Anne,’ ‘Mary’ or ‘Sarah’ produced no results.

Princeton University is one of the collaborators on this project, and they have produced their own collection of digitised annotated books as part of their digital library. They state on the website that they have produced fully scanned and rendered versions of ‘several of [the library’s] most important annotated books.’³⁰ Of all the ‘creator/contributor’ (this includes both annotators and authors) names listed, only two out of one hundred are women. The problem with online collections of this kind is that they are, in general, focused on figures who are the most well known, and who fit into grand historical narratives, and this usually results in a largely male source base. This is, of course, due to a desire to make the databases appeal to a wide audience, but it is reflective of a larger issue within the study of history and literature that prioritises work according to a standard of scholarly engagement, often implicitly male, that would have

²⁹ *Annotated Books Online: A Digital Archive of Early Modern Books*, accessed October 31, 2017 <http://www.annotatedbooksonline.com/>.

³⁰ “Annotated Books,” *Princeton University Digital Library*, accessed October 31, 2017 <http://pucl.princeton.edu/collections/pudl0058>.

been institutionally inaccessible to most of contemporary society. The very fact of using annotations as a way into exploring reading contributes to the narrow subject base, as this form of engagement with text generally, for the early modern period, privileges male readers.

Archival research generally offers a broader source base for researching women in history. This, however, comes with its own difficulties in identification. There are various techniques I have found to work when searching online library and archive catalogues. One relies on knowing the specific woman or women and then searching for their names. This, however, not only perpetuates the small group who were considered prominent readers, but also relies on previous cataloguers having included complete ownership information in the record. Paul Morgan has written about some of the difficulties of this in his article on Frances Wolfreton, one of the seventeenth-century female book collectors best known to modern scholars.³¹ Around one hundred books owned by Wolfreton have been identified, but Morgan cautions against assuming that this represents the full extent of her collection. There are many books that were identified as Wolfreton's in an 1856 Sotheby's sale catalogue, whose locations are not known today. According to Morgan, this includes 'plays written by Chapman, Dekker, Heywood, Marlowe, Massinger, Shirley, and no less than ten Shakespeare quartos. Verse included works by Donne, Drayton, Greene, Wither, Gascoigne, Shakespeare's Rape of Lucrece (1616) and Venus and Adonis (1636).'³² From the Sotheby's sale, which contained around 960 titles presumably all taken from Statfold Hall, Wolfreton's family residence, Morgan has suggested a rough make-up of her personal library. He approximates that 48% of her books could be classed as English literature,

³¹ Paul Morgan, "Frances Wolfreton and 'Hor Bouks': A Seventeenth-Century Woman Book Collector," *The Library* 6th Series, 11, no. 3 (1989): 197-219.

³² Morgan, "Frances Wolfreton and 'Hor Bouks'," 207.

and 24% as theology.³³ There are no doubt more of Wolfreton's books contained in libraries around the world, but finding them relies almost entirely on serendipity, if the ownership history is not included in the archival record.

Ownership inscriptions such as Wolfreton's (she commonly wrote some variation of 'Frances Wolfreton hor bouk' on each text) are good indicators of women's interaction with books, if not definitive evidence of reading. In order to find these inscriptions, searching rare book catalogues with the term 'her book' often proves fruitful. This can be combined with a common contemporary woman's name to narrow results, although this does of course result in a tendency to focus on readers named Elizabeth, Mary or Anne.³⁴ Using popular women's names in conjunction with the term 'commonplace book' also revealed sources. Most online catalogues do not offer gender-specific searching, so using gendered terms or names are usually the best way to navigate results.

The use of names, as an alternative to sex-specific searching, is no doubt valuable, but it does come with its own methodological implications. Searching by name serves to individuate provenance, prioritising the individual over the collective category. The 'woman reader' therefore becomes a collection of readers named Elizabeth, Mary or Anne. Sex-specific searching would provide an alternative to this, allowing one to utilise the category of 'woman' or 'man' effectively in archival research.

Using this method produces results, but there are still limitations. Searching the Folger Shakespeare Library's online catalogue for the phrase 'her book,' for the years 1600 to 1699, produces 180 results. However, the date range refers to the publication date of the book, not the signature, so within that there are many signatures that are either from

³³ Morgan, "Frances Wolfreton and 'Hor Bouks'," 204.

³⁴ I am very grateful to Georgianna Ziegler for suggesting this method of searching the Folger's archives, and her guidance on approaching finding women in their collections.

outside of the seventeenth century (the use of the phrase ‘her book’ in inscriptions continued in popularity during the eighteenth century), or are undated. Of all the results, thirty-four can be clearly identified as having been signed by women in the seventeenth century, as a date was included in the inscription as recorded in the catalogue record. Many others may have been signed in this period, but it is necessary to view the handwriting to determine this, and even then it can be difficult to definitively identify ownership marks as seventeenth-century script.

The Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library online catalogue returns twenty-nine results for the same search. This is compared to eighty-two results for the phrase ‘his book.’ Simply searching for the term ‘annotation’ within the copy notes gives a much larger 114 results. Within these, few give any indication as to the provenance of the annotations, instead referring to ‘ms. annotation(s),’ and on occasion giving a transcription of the marginalia. Identifying annotated books in libraries, particularly those annotated by women, relies on the notes that the cataloguer has chosen to include, and how much information they recorded. Libraries that value annotation practices are more likely to include this information, such as the Folger Library or the Henry E. Huntington Library in San Marino, both of which have collections built on the desirability of annotated, rather than ‘clean’ books. William Sherman, among others, has outlined how the value placed on ‘association copies’ (texts that somehow had a tangible association to important figures in history) by Anglo-American collectors in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was broadened to include anonymous annotations and readers’ marks.³⁵

Part of the issue of finding records in archival records comes from the ways in which those records have developed. Respecting provenance has always been a guiding

³⁵ William H. Sherman, *Used Books: Marking Readers in Renaissance England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008), 166.

principle in archives, and sources are usually identified by their creator or owner.³⁶ This often obscures women, as fewer are likely to have authored or created sources, no matter the roles they may have had behind the scenes. This is particularly true of collections of family papers, following the patrilineal, which frequently contain mines of information on women, but who are often left out of the record. The Evelyn papers, for example, held in the British Library, contain the writing of Mary Evelyn, the wife of diarist John Evelyn, and her daughter (also named Mary), as well as the papers of Jael Boscawen.³⁷ Beyond provenance, there are many different approaches to recording and describing archives, and various trends have developed over time. As different forms of history (such as women's, labour, or postcolonial history) become popular, archives have to adapt their practices, depending on the needs of the researcher.³⁸ This is a significant, ongoing task. Moreover, most archives' first priority is processing acquisitions and backlogged material, before turning to archival descriptions.³⁹

Larger institutions in particular are likely to simply not have had time to include such detail in the online catalogue, at least not for all their materials, or do not have the facility for users to search individual copy notes. The British Library main catalogue, for example, does not list either 'notes' or 'copy notes' as a search parameter. For their copy of the Geneva Bible owned and extensively annotated by one Susanna Beckwith, which I discuss in chapter two, the British Library's online catalogue details in the 'notes' section: '[a]nother edition of Tomson's Genevan Bible of 1587. Imperfect; wanting the titlepage of the Prayer Book and all before the last leaf of Litany, and the

³⁶ Laura A. Millar, *Archives: Principles and Practices* (London: Facet Publishing 2017), 46.

³⁷ "Evelyn Papers," Add MS 78168-78693, *British Library Archives and Manuscripts*, British Library, accessed Oct 26, 2017
[http://searcharchives.bl.uk/primo_library/libweb/action/dlDisplay.do?docId=IAMS032-002036874&vid=IAMS_VU2&indx=1&dym=false&dsent=1&onCampus=false&group=ALL&institution=BL&ct=search&vl\(freeText0\)=032-002036874](http://searcharchives.bl.uk/primo_library/libweb/action/dlDisplay.do?docId=IAMS032-002036874&vid=IAMS_VU2&indx=1&dym=false&dsent=1&onCampus=false&group=ALL&institution=BL&ct=search&vl(freeText0)=032-002036874).

³⁸ Laura Millar outlines the conflicting approaches to and priorities of archives succinctly, considering the influence of postmodernism and how the institution of the archive has changed over time. See Millar, *Archives: Principles and Practices*.

³⁹ Millar, *Archives: Principles and Practices*, 232.

folding plan at the end of Ezekiel. Ff. 206, 216 of Old Testament are mutilated.’⁴⁰ There is no reference to Beckwith, or to her annotations, and thus searching for either of these would not produce the book in question. The only way, therefore, to find many of these books is to rely on previous scholars’ work, where they have identified annotated books: in this case, Femke Molekamp’s work on the British Library’s Geneva Bible collection.⁴¹

The lack of copy information can be traced back to the use of card catalogues. As Sarah Lindenbaum has argued, the ‘physical limitations’ of the card catalogue system are key to this.⁴² Lindenbaum notes that a ‘standard card measured around 9.5 x 12.5 cm in size and supported only a finite amount of information, so books were accessible foremost according to author, title, and publisher.’⁴³ When institutions made the move to online public access catalogues (OPACs), not all made the effort to re-catalogue books, a process which would have cost considerable time and money, but instead based their records on the original card catalogues.⁴⁴

Some scholars and librarians have done extensive studies of entire collections, creating lists of annotated books, although due to the amount of labour involved these are usually partial records. Sherman, discussing how he amassed evidence for his monograph *Used Books*, notes: ‘I carried out a reasonably comprehensive survey of one

⁴⁰ “The Bible. That is, the Holy Scriptures, etc. [With the Book of Common Prayer],” 464.c.5.(1.), *British Library Main Catalogue*, British Library, accessed October 25, 2017. [http://explore.bl.uk/prim_o_library/libweb/action/display.do?frbrVersion=1918&tabs=moreTab&ct=display&fn=search&doc=BLL01000313407&indx=2&recIds=BLL01000313407&recIdxs=1&elementId=1&renderMode=poppedOut&displayMode=full&frbrVersion=1918&frbg=&&v\(488279563UI0\)=any&dsent=0&scp.scps=scope%3A%28BLCCONTENT%29&tb=t&vid=BLVU1&mode=Basic&srt=rank&tab=local_tab&dum=true&v\(488279563UI0\)=any&dsent=0&scp.scps=scope%3A%28BLCCONTENT%29&tb=t&vid=BLVU1&mode=Basic&srt=rank&tab=local_tab&dum=true&v\(freeText0\)=464.c.5.%281.%29&dstmp=1509451966623](http://explore.bl.uk/prim_o_library/libweb/action/display.do?frbrVersion=1918&tabs=moreTab&ct=display&fn=search&doc=BLL01000313407&indx=2&recIds=BLL01000313407&recIdxs=1&elementId=1&renderMode=poppedOut&displayMode=full&frbrVersion=1918&frbg=&&v(488279563UI0)=any&dsent=0&scp.scps=scope%3A%28BLCCONTENT%29&tb=t&vid=BLVU1&mode=Basic&srt=rank&tab=local_tab&dum=true&v(488279563UI0)=any&dsent=0&scp.scps=scope%3A%28BLCCONTENT%29&tb=t&vid=BLVU1&mode=Basic&srt=rank&tab=local_tab&dum=true&v(freeText0)=464.c.5.%281.%29&dstmp=1509451966623).

⁴¹ Femke Molekamp, “Using a Collection to Discover Reading Practices: The British Library Geneva Bibles and a History of their Early Modern Readers,” *Electronic British Library Journal* (2006): 1-13.

⁴² Sarah Lindenbaum, “Hiding in Plain Sight: How Electronic Records Can Lead Us to Early Modern Women Readers,” in *Women’s Bookscapes in Early Modern Britain*, ed. Leah Knight, Micheline White, & Elizabeth Sauer (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2018), 204.

⁴³ Lindenbaum, “Hiding in Plain Sight,” 204.

⁴⁴ Lindenbaum, “Hiding in Plain Sight,” 205. Nicholson Baker has written about the move from card catalogue to OPACs, focusing on the ‘Great Discard’ when some libraries destroyed their card catalogues, losing a valuable piece of history in the process. See Nicholson Baker, *The Size of Thoughts: Essays and Other Lumber* (London: Vintage, 1997).

of the world's major repositories of English Renaissance Books – the more than 7,500 volumes printed between 1475 and 1640 that make up the so-called STC collection at the Huntington Library in San Marino, California.⁴⁵ Of this, he says that 'more than one in five of the Huntington's early printed books preserve the notes of early readers.'⁴⁶ This is a huge resource, and such a volume of annotations is probably not uncommon in rare book libraries, but the difficulty lies in identifying them, without the labour intensive process of surveying a whole collection as Sherman has done. Collaboration with librarians has therefore been invaluable for me to identify resources. Philip Palmer at the William Andrews Clark Memorial Library and Sarah Griffin of the University of York Library both kindly shared databases of books with notes on annotations and ownership, which provided valuable ways of surveying a collection. Philip Palmer had compiled a spreadsheet surveying the annotated books held in the Clark Library. While the Clark does hold many books with women's ownership inscriptions, there were few books that bore other instances of women's marginalia. As Palmer was primarily focusing on extensive annotations, books that solely contain ownership inscriptions do not appear in the spreadsheet. However, again, it was a useful starting point, and a way of mapping the extent of the annotated books held in the library.

Manuscript books such as commonplaces created and/or owned by women suffer from a similar identification problem, although there are many useful sources in the Clark and the Beinecke Libraries, in particular. As suggested above, one way to discover these items was to search for the term 'commonplace book' in conjunction with a woman's name. However, not only are a great many of these manuscripts anonymous, there is also the issue of categorisation. As Adam Smyth points out, the term 'commonplace

⁴⁵ Sherman, *Used Books*, xii.

⁴⁶ Sherman, *Used Books*, xii.

book' does not have an easy definition: 'not only was the commonplace book of theory an idea(l) that was in a continual state of modification; the gap between neat prescription and messy practice was also often cavernously wide: where commonplace books end and where other textual forms begin (the note-book, pocket-book, miscellany, table-book, diary, thesaurus ('treasure chest'), *sylvae* ('forest'), florilegia) is often difficult to discern.'⁴⁷ Therefore a great deal depends again on the individual cataloguer. I have found that the term 'miscellany' has often been used for books that could be considered commonplaces, and vice versa. Moreover, the line between religious meditations and commonplaces could be quite blurred, as will be discussed in chapter three.

Despite all of this there are a great many women readers who will remain unidentified and unidentifiable. Annotations in books often have no clear author, but there is a tendency to assume that they were written by men, when in reality it is impossible to know. Books may have been owned by men, but there is no evidence to say whether or not their wives, sisters or daughters read them as well. Even when there is an identifiably female autograph, this does not always lead to a supposition of ownership. As Smyth has pointed out (in relation specifically to commonplace books, but the point still stands), there has often been a tendency to assume a male signature is a clear mark of authorship or ownership, whereas a woman's signature is treated with more suspicion.⁴⁸ Studies of reading have historically been skewed to overlook the wealth of information about women readers that does exist, even if it is often difficult to find.

⁴⁷ Adam Smyth, "Commonplace Book Culture: A List of Sixteen Traits," in *Women and Writing c.1340 – c.1650: The Domestication of Print Culture*, ed. Anne Lawrence-Mathers and Phillipa Hardman (York: York Medieval Press, 2010), 93.

⁴⁸ Smyth, "Commonplace Book Culture," 100.

Letters and Life-writing

Letter collections are a useful source base for mentions of reading, although a similar problem exists in terms of searching content. Letters addressed to women do of course give extremely useful evidence of what women read, if we are looking at how women read letters, but using them to find information such as their opinions on books or their wider, non-epistolary reading habits can prove more difficult. Again, scholars have often focused on figures such as Dorothy Osborne, whose letters to William Temple give ample information about her literary tastes and habits. Her letters are still in print in various scholarly editions, and therefore are easily accessible. However, Osborne is somewhat unusual in her candidness and the frequency with which she mentions books. In my experience most letter collections do contain at least passing references to reading, provided the correspondents are family or friends, and of a certain social standing that would have allowed them ready access to books.

The main way I accessed these sources was in archives, although there are useful online resources. The Early Modern Letters Online (EMLO) database allows sex-specific searching, following feedback from workshops run by Women's Early Modern Letters Online (WEMLO).⁴⁹ In the catalogue guide, there are twenty-one collections listed under 'Women's Correspondence,' which represents only a small percentage of the letters on the database.⁵⁰ Fourteen results appear when you search for the word 'book' in a letter with a female sender, and only five with a female addressee. This is of course reliant on what is included in the abstract, not the full transcript of the letter, so one cannot discount other letters on this basis. Moreover, there are problems with key-word searching. Using the term 'book' would not give results for letters that refer solely to

⁴⁹ *Early Modern Letters Online*, University of Oxford, accessed October 30, 2017.

<http://emlo.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/>; *Women's Early Modern Letters Online*, University of Oxford, accessed October 30 2017. http://emlo-portal.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/collections/?page_id=2595.

⁵⁰ "Women's Correspondence," *Early Modern Letters Online*, University of Oxford, accessed October 30, 2017. http://emlo-portal.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/collections/?page_id=1989#women.

authors or titles, for example. In general, while resources such as the EMLO are useful, they are limited in their scope, at least for historians of women letter writers, although over time this should change as more sources are added.

When using archives, I began searching library catalogues for family letter collections which involved one or more women correspondents, such as the Evelyn papers at the British Library.⁵¹ It is very rare that archives or libraries provide notes on the content of letter collections, and if they do it tends to be more centred on how the letter feeds into grand historical narratives or mentions significant figures. This tends to be largely focused on a male view of history. For example, there is a letter within the Evelyn papers, from Elizabeth Packer to Mary Evelyn, in which Packer discusses at length her opinion of Mary Astell.⁵² This is clearly of interest to many scholars, particularly those studying literature or gender in the later seventeenth century. However, the catalogue notes do not refer to this or give any real summary of the letters' contents. Instead, this information is given:

Letters to Mary Evelyn from Elizabeth (Packer) Geddes, daughter of Philip Packer of Groombridge, and wife (1696) of Michael Geddes, LL.D., including a few letters from her father and her sister Temperance, whose life-style is frequently referred to in the letters as a matter of concern (see also *Diary*, IV, p. 404); 1682-1704. Packer was John Evelyn's contemporary and friend at Oxford and the Middle Temple (for his letters to Evelyn, see Add. MS 78311 above). After his death in 1686 and before her marriage, Elizabeth Packer lived for a time in the household of her cousin Elizabeth, wife of Robert Berkeley of

⁵¹ For a discussion of the preservation of early modern women's letters, and contemporary and modern archival practices, see James Daybell, "Gendered Archival Practices and the Future Lives of Letters," in *Cultures of Correspondence in Early Modern Britain*, ed. James Daybell and Andrew Gordon (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016), 210-236.

⁵² Elizabeth Packer to Mary Evelyn, 22nd February 1694/5, Evelyn Papers Vol. CCLXIX, Add MS 78436, f89-f90, British Library.

Spetchley, afterwards 3rd wife of Gilbert Burnet, Bishop of Salisbury, who is referred to in the letters.⁵³

This barely gives any biographical details about Packer herself, apart from through the lens of her relationship to various men in her life. Moreover, the content of her letters is only passingly noted, and there is no indication that they contain mention of such a prominent historical figure as Astell.

Again, this does depend on the catalogue. The Folger gives extensive notes for some of its letter collections, for example, that of Mary Hatton Helsby. The catalogue notes are extensive, despite the small size of the collection (there are only ten letters), detailing their content and the people mentioned. They include descriptive notes such as ‘In all her letters she shows she has an eye for the scenes around her.’⁵⁴ This level of information, though extremely useful, is rare for most letter collections. Thus when looking for discussions of reading or book lending I narrowed the field by social and relationship categories, as mentioned above (finding letters sent between friends and family, rather than business associates or other acquaintances), and then relied on chance. This did, usually, produce at least some results, although often not extensive, but when used in conjunction with other sources can help to build up a bigger overall picture.

This lack of concrete evidence has often been said to demonstrate that women’s reading in the early modern period was limited by gender conventions; confined to those genres

⁵³ “Evelyn Papers Vol. CCLXIX,” Add MS 78436, *British Library Archives and Manuscripts*, British Library, accessed October 26, 2017. [http://searcharchives.bl.uk/primo_library/libweb/action/display.do?tabs=detailsTab&ct=display&fn=search&doc=IAMS040-002037254&indx=1&recIds=IAMS040-002037254&recIds=0&elementId=0&renderMode=poppedOut&displayMode=full&frbrVersion=&dscnt=0&frbg=&scp.scps=scope%3A%28BL%29&tab=local&dstmp=1561539341685&srt=rank&mode=Basic&&dum=true&vl\(freeText0\)=evelyn%20papers%20cclxix&vid=IAMS_VU2](http://searcharchives.bl.uk/primo_library/libweb/action/display.do?tabs=detailsTab&ct=display&fn=search&doc=IAMS040-002037254&indx=1&recIds=IAMS040-002037254&recIds=0&elementId=0&renderMode=poppedOut&displayMode=full&frbrVersion=&dscnt=0&frbg=&scp.scps=scope%3A%28BL%29&tab=local&dstmp=1561539341685&srt=rank&mode=Basic&&dum=true&vl(freeText0)=evelyn%20papers%20cclxix&vid=IAMS_VU2).

⁵⁴ “Helsby, Mary, active 17th century, correspondent,” *Hamnet: Folger Library Catalog*, Folger Shakespeare Library, accessed October 26, 2017. http://hamnet.folger.edu/cgi-bin/Pwebrecon.cgi?v1=1&ti=1,1&Search_Arg=mary%20hatton%20helsby&Search_Code=GKEY%5E%2A&CNT=50&PID=o1WXrjDIPg-ToUAVLda8fwxxz3Dw&SEQ=20171031123513&SID=1.

deemed acceptable for women. However, while there were conventions and recommendations for women readers, as will be discussed in chapter five, these may have influenced women's representation of their reading rather than the act of reading itself. Women's representation of reading is most clear in their autobiographical writings, such as diaries, memoirs and some religious meditations. These often contain quite extensive discussions of reading, with women noting where, when, how and with whom they read certain books, and recording their responses to texts. The extent of the discussion of reading habits of course depends upon the proclivities of the writer, but many autobiographical texts provide some insight into reading habits. Fortunately, many seventeenth-century women's diaries and memoirs have been printed in modern editions, making the research for this section of my thesis infinitely easier. However, when used in conjunction with a range of other sources, a slightly different picture of women's reading emerges, illuminating the careful way in which these women actively used representations of reading to construct their textual character.

Conclusion

The habits I will discuss here, therefore, have been discovered from a range of sources, often fragmentary and made up of passing references to reading, but which when used together build up a picture of reading habits, practices and tastes that were varied, individual, and in complex conversation with contemporary social and cultural prescriptions about women and literacy. It is worth noting, however, that for all the women represented here, and all the experiences, there are many more that are yet to be discovered in archives and libraries.

However, developments have been made in recent years, highlighting previously overlooked material and drawing attention to women readers and book owners. Marsh's Library, in Dublin, is currently conducting a survey of its holdings to identify ownership

marks, particularly those of women, and are updating their online catalogue accordingly.⁵⁵ Re-cataloguing is not an option open to all institutions; it would be too large an undertaking for the British Library, for example. Marsh's library is less focused on acquisition than many repositories, so has more resources to dedicate to such projects. Moreover, questions of sex-specific search functions that would allow the user to narrow results by gender, while potentially very useful, also come with their own issues. For one, they invite questions of essentialism, and how appropriate it would be to define all subjects as either men or women. Furthermore, women's roles in the creation and production of records are often difficult to define. Luckily, digital humanities projects and social media sites such as Twitter are offering new ways for scholars to source, share and document their work, and have been used effectively by scholars of early modern women and the book.

There is now a great deal of interest developing around female book ownership. Scholars on Twitter frequently share images of female ownership inscriptions in early modern books, using the hashtag #herbook.⁵⁶ This can be a useful tool for sourcing and sharing instances of female autograph inscriptions which are, as discussed above, often left out of catalogue copy notes. Moreover, there are now several websites dedicated to highlighting female book ownership. A new website, 'Early Modern Female Book Ownership' provides an extremely useful repository of blog posts highlighting books signed by women, searchable by genre and century.⁵⁷ Similarly, the Clark Library has

⁵⁵ Jason McElligott has written about the preliminary findings of this survey here: Jason McElligott, "Ownership Inscriptions and Life Writing in the Books of Early Modern Women," in *Women's Life Writing and Early Modern Ireland*, ed. Julie A. Eckerle and Naomi McAreavey (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2019), 229-252. I am grateful to Dr McElligott for sharing this article with me pre-publication.

⁵⁶ "#HerBook," Twitter, accessed Jun 25 2019 <https://twitter.com/hashtag/herbook?src=hash> For more examples of scholars' use of Twitter, see Sjoerd Levelt, "Early Modern Marginalia and #earlymoderntwitter," in *Early Modern English Marginalia*, ed. Katherine Acheson (Abingdon: Routledge, 2019), 234-256.

⁵⁷ *Early Modern Female Book Ownership: #HerBook*, accessed Mar 15, 2019 <https://earlymodernfemalebookownership.wordpress.com/>

digitised over 250 of its rare books bearing manuscript annotations, creating a database that can be refined by genre, subject, and decade, although this does not necessarily illuminate women's inscription practices.⁵⁸

Some projects focus on specific individuals, such as Sarah Lindenbaum's work on Frances Wolfreton. Lindenbaum has been working on recovering more of Wolfreton's book, adding to those identified by Paul Morgan (see above), and Arnold Hunt, who added twenty-nine books to Morgan's tally.⁵⁹ Over 200 of Wolfreton's books have been identified, a marked increase from the 103 Morgan had found in 1989.

Lindenbaum has a blog dedicated to Wolfreton and the reconstruction of her library, and she uses this to crowd-source books bearing Wolfreton's distinctive mark.⁶⁰ This method of gathering evidence could be particularly useful, given the often fragmentary nature of sources for women's reading, and the financial and geographical challenges one might face in visiting multiple archives on an international scale.⁶¹

The effort to find traces of women in libraries and archives, then, still faces many difficulties, but the role of new technologies offers promising new avenues for researchers. Certainly, in conducting my research, the use of blogs and twitter has been very helpful, if only in pointing me towards institutions where my sources might be found. They can also help in creating communities of scholars, fostering collaboration. In combining these resources with extensive archive work, using the methods outlined above, I uncovered a large source base, which forms the basis of this thesis.⁶² There are

⁵⁸ "Early Modern Annotated Books from UCLA's Clark Library," *Calisphere: University of California*, accessed Mar 16, 2019 <https://calisphere.org/collections/26771/>

⁵⁹ Arnold Hunt, "Libraries in the Archives: Researching Provenance in the British Library," in *Libraries within the Library: The Origins of the British Library's Printed Collections*, ed. Giles Mandelbrote and Barry Taylor. (London: The British Library. 2009), 363-384.

⁶⁰ Sarah Lindenbaum, "About," *Frances Wolfreton Hor Bouks*, Dec 2, 2018, accessed May 4, 2019 <https://franceswolfretonhorbouks.com/>

⁶¹ Lindenbaum has detailed her findings in her recent book chapter, "Hiding in Plain Sight."

⁶² See appendices I and II for tables of the annotated books and manuscript compilations consulted during my research.

certainly, however, many more women readers to be found in the archives, whose presence will become clearer and digital tools develop.

Part One: Reading Habits, Practices and Cultures

'Her Book': Active Reading and Women's Annotations

Studies of early modern reading in England have often focused on how readers engaged with the text.¹ It has long been recognised that early modern readers were encouraged to write on their books: William Sherman has stated that 'Renaissance readers were not only *allowed* to write notes in and on their books, they were *taught* to do so.'² A narrative has developed in which the rise of humanism ushered in a new form of reading, one which was, in the words of perhaps the best-known discussion of this concept, 'goal-oriented.'³ Lisa Jardine and Anthony Grafton outlined this idea in their study of Gabriel Harvey, the Elizabethan scholar. They built on the theory of reader response, stating that 'all historians of early modern culture now acknowledge that early modern readers did not passively receive but rather actively reinterpreted their texts, and so do we.'⁴ This concept of reading for use, common to studies of sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century reading, shifted to another model of annotation in the context of the Civil War period. Active reading in the mid-century has been framed as combative, seeing the relationship between reader and text as essentially one of argument and debate.⁵ Both of these models represent a largely masculine norm, focusing on male

¹ For the non-English context, there are a variety of studies on reading and book history throughout early modern Europe. For recent work see, for example, Brendan Dooley, *Angelica's Book and the World of Reading in Late Renaissance Italy* (London: Bloomsbury, 2016); Elizabethanne Boran and Mordechai Feingold, ed., *Reading Newton in Early Modern Europe* (Leiden: Brill, 2017); Daniel Bellingradt, Paul Nelles, and Jeroen Salman, ed., *Books in Motion in Early Modern Europe: Beyond Production, Circulation and Consumption* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017).

² William H. Sherman, *Used Books: Marking Readers in Renaissance England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008), 3.

³ Lisa Jardine and Anthony Grafton, "'Studied for Action': How Gabriel Harvey Read his Livy," *Past & Present* 129 (1990): 30.

⁴ Jardine and Grafton, "'Studied for Action'," 30.

⁵ Steven Zwicker and Kevin Sharpe are the foremost proponents of this model. See, for example, Steven N. Zwicker, "The Constitution of Opinion and the Pacification of Reading," in *Reading, Society and Politics in Early Modern England*, ed. Kevin Sharpe and Steven N. Zwicker (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 295-316; Kevin Sharpe and Steven N. Zwicker, "Introduction: Discovering the Renaissance Reader," in *Reading, Society and Politics in Early Modern England*, ed. Kevin Sharpe and Steven N. Zwicker (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 1-38.

readers in the early modern period, with little room for women who may have annotated their books in different ways.

In Jardine and Grafton's theory of reading for use, they argued that 'we intend to take that notion of *activity* in a strong sense: not just the energy which must be acknowledged as accompanying the intervention of the scholar/reader with his [sic] text, nor the cerebral effort involved in making the text the reader's own, but reading as intended to *give rise to something else*.'⁶ Scholarly reading was meant to produce an almost tangible effect on the reader; it was 'goal-oriented.' This outcome was not necessarily the simple accumulation of knowledge: in Jardine and Grafton's model it was more specific than that, but one text could be subjected to multiple goal-oriented readings. The goal in question would influence the way in which a reader read and digested the text.

Jardine and Grafton do not pretend that this form of reading was practised throughout early modern society. They make it clear that they are focusing on 'directed reading conducted in the circle (and under the auspices) of prominent Elizabethan political figures.'⁷ Harvey's reading and intellectual efforts were part of his attempt to earn a place as an Elizabethan 'scholar-secretary,' employed to be a professional reader in an aristocratic household.⁸ His reading, therefore, was a skill that he had to develop and deploy as part of his profession. He read methodically and widely, excerpting and annotating for his own use. In examining Harvey's reading and writing, Jardine and Grafton found that 'critical reading, skilful annotation and active appropriation emerge as the central skills, not just of the student of history, but of the intellectual *tout court*.'⁹

⁶ Jardine and Grafton, "'Studied for Action,'" 30.

⁷ Jardine and Grafton, "'Studied for Action,'" 32.

⁸ Jardine and Grafton, "'Studied for Action,'" 35.

⁹ Jardine and Grafton, "'Studied for Action,'" 76.

These reading and writing practices, specifically the use of marginalia and commonplace books, became part of the identity of scholarly Elizabethans.¹⁰

Many studies of early modern marginalia have since taken this concept of active reading as the norm. It has become a standard by which to measure the habits of all readers.

This is not to lay the blame at the feet of Jardine and Grafton, who, as noted above, made the social boundaries of their work very clear. However, subsequent scholars have applied the model of active or goal-oriented reading much more widely than originally intended.¹¹ Sherman, for example, argued that reading ‘must be studied as an activity in particular contexts; as a process not only of reception but of appropriation, and an act of mediation between textual information and readers with specific skills, interests and needs.’¹² He goes on to explore the ‘activity’ of reading done by John Dee, the Elizabethan philosopher, mathematician and astrologer, arguing that Dee ‘did not read texts just to learn from them in a disinterested process of self-edification: he read them to use them,’ framing reading as a ‘means to an end.’¹³ Sherman does acknowledge that he is looking at a very particular type of scholarly reading, and suggests in another book that we should broaden our view of marginalia to allow the study of women readers, in the form of what he terms a ‘matriarchive,’ but does not go on to actually do so in much depth.¹⁴ Stephen Dobranski, similarly, created an image of discerning, participatory Renaissance reading practices, in which readers were able to analyse the text not only

¹⁰ The relevance of marginalia to both reading and writing studies has been explored in a recent edited collection, which considers annotations in the context of materiality (specifically the history of the book), identity, and reading. See Katherine Acheson, ed., *Early Modern English Marginalia* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2019).

¹¹ Jennifer Richards and Fred Schurink have questioned the ubiquity of this model of reading, writing that ‘it is not clear why this [Jardine and Grafton’s thesis] has become the dominant model of humanist reading practice in critical studies’. See Jennifer Richards and Fred Schurink, “Introduction: The Textuality and Materiality of Reading in Early Modern England,” *Huntington Library Quarterly* 73, no. 3 (2010): 351.

¹² William H. Sherman, *John Dee: The Politics of Reading and Writing in the English Renaissance* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1995), 59.

¹³ Sherman, *John Dee*, 60.

¹⁴ Sherman, *John Dee*; Sherman, *Used Books*. For Sherman’s suggestions about ‘the matriarchive’, as he calls it, see below.

for what it included, but what it omitted.¹⁵ He argued that ‘Renaissance writing conditions suggest a cooperative relationship between writers and readers.’¹⁶ This, however, relies on readers having an extensive knowledge of genre and form, in order to assess each text in its literary and intellectual context.

Grafton, following on from his work with Jardine, has done several studies of reading following scholarly men in the early modern period. His book on Isaac Casaubon, the classical scholar and theologian, includes a chapter on how Casaubon read Hebrew texts.¹⁷ Grafton and Joanna Weinburg have studied Casaubon’s notebooks, letters and annotations to build up a picture of his reading habits, showing his scholarly influences and the ways in which he approached his texts. Some of his books are described as being ‘virtually alive with Casaubon’s annotations,’ giving the image of a dedicated annotator, reading and writing for scholarly purposes.¹⁸ Similarly, Grafton et al’s work on the Winthrop family reading, mentioned in the introduction, demonstrates the ways in which the Winthrops read ‘for use,’ arguing that their ‘readerly habits supported everything from their religious convictions to their judicial deliberations to their political decision-making.’¹⁹ Active reading in this model was done by scholarly men, who annotated their books extensively and often kept notebooks, and above all used their reading to support and facilitate their public lives.

The model of marginalia and active reading shifts when looking at the mid-seventeenth century. Instead of an educational practice signalling a ‘cooperative’ relationship between texts and reader, marginalia comes to be portrayed as a conflict between the

¹⁵ Stephen B. Dobranski, *Readers and Authorship in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

¹⁶ Dobranski, *Readers and Authorship*, 11.

¹⁷ Anthony Grafton and Joanna Weinburg, *“I have always loved the Holy Tongue”: Isaac Casaubon, the Jews, and a Forgotten Chapter in Renaissance Scholarship* (Cambridge, MA.: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2011). See chapter two.

¹⁸ Grafton and Weinburg, *“I have always loved the Holy Tongue”*, 75.

¹⁹ Richard Calis, Frederick Clark, Christian Flow, Anthony Grafton, Madeline McMahon, and Jennifer M Rampling, “Passing the Book: Cultures of Reading in the Winthrop Family, 1587-1730,” *Past & Present* 241, no. 1 (2018): 72.

reader and the text or author. This has relied on an assumption of intellectual authority held by the reader, giving them the power to challenge the printed word. The context of the Civil War is key to this model. Steven Zwicker has argued that ‘what we witness through the decades of civil war, republicanism and Restoration is a wholesale transformation of intellectual practices, of reading as suspicion and combat applied to a wide range of texts and textual practices.’²⁰ Reading, according to Zwicker, became a site of intense debate. As discussed in my introduction, he and Sharpe both attribute this development to the Civil War period, when print proliferated and was an arena for theological and political disputes.²¹

Elizabeth Scott-Baumann has argued that the ‘model of reading as resistance developed by Sharpe and Zwicker among others, has been more fruitful for scholars of women than the pragmatic humanist model’ (referring to the goal-oriented reading theory of Jardine and Grafton).²² She goes on to say that ‘women emerge as resistant readers, not least because the very act of reading could be rebellious.’²³ However, this only considers certain women: those willing to rebel. Her study is based on Margaret Cavendish, Katherine Philips and Lucy Hutchinson, all of whom could be considered exceptional for their time. Where does it leave the majority of women readers, who cannot necessarily be considered exceptional or rebellious, but instead were largely accepting of the status quo? There is often a tendency to find women in history who could be considered ‘ahead of their time’ or provide proto-feminist models, but this does not represent the experience of most women, who should not be overlooked

²⁰ Steven N. Zwicker, “The Constitution of Opinion and the Pacification of Reading,” in *Reading, Society and Politics in Early Modern England*, ed. Kevin Sharpe and Steven N. Zwicker (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 301.

²¹ Kevin Sharpe and Steven N. Zwicker, “Introduction: Discovering the Renaissance Reader,” in *Reading, Society and Politics in Early Modern England*, ed. Kevin Sharpe and Steven N. Zwicker (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 21.

²² Elizabeth Scott-Baumann, *Forms of Engagement: Women, Poetry and Culture 1640-1680* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 5.

²³ Scott-Baumann, *Forms of Engagement*, 5.

because they did not actively rebel against their culture. Moreover, this model of resistant reading relies on a martial, masculine framework of reading as contest and combat. It does not allow for reading that accepts what is presented in the text, or perhaps uses it as part of everyday, often domestic, life.

Heidi Brayman Hackel has attempted to explain the supposed lack of female-authored marginalia, citing both practical difficulties surrounding annotation in situations of aural reading, or reading in an armchair rather than at a desk, as well as contemporary prescriptions for women's behaviour.²⁴ She argued that the contestatory and interpretative nature of marginalia meant that it was often seen as unacceptable for women, in a society that valued women's silence. Silence here is not necessarily literal, but rather the expectation that women should remain modest, refraining from argument or overt opinions in areas beyond their sphere. Edith Snook made a similar argument when she stated that 'the moral value accorded female silence created an especially feminine reluctance to annotate books.'²⁵ Snook maintains that margins were not necessarily private spaces, and suggests that creating marginalia signified a readerly authority not usually accorded to women, who were portrayed in early modern culture as passive, non-critical readers.²⁶ This, however, also overlooks the many examples of female annotations which may not have fit the annotation methods outlined above.

The focus on the intellectual culture surrounding Harvey and other well-documented early modern readers has led to a common assumption that this type of active reading was at odds with reading for pleasure. William Slights argued that the decline in print marginalia in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries was partly due to the

²⁴ Heidi Brayman Hackel, "'Boasting of Silence': Women Readers in a Patriarchal State," in *Reading, Society and Politics in Early Modern England*, ed. Kevin Sharpe and Steven N. Zwicker (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 101-121.

²⁵ Edith Snook, "Reading Women," in *The Cambridge Companion to Early Modern Women's Writing*, ed. Laura Lunger Knoppers (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 40.

²⁶ Snook, "Reading Women," 40-41.

fact that ‘people increasingly wanted to read books for pleasure, uninterrupted.’²⁷ This argument assumes that leisure reading was not ‘active’; therefore that there was no need for explanatory notes or summaries provided by the printer. However, that does not mean that this was how readers necessarily responded to the texts. There are examples of annotations in works of romantic fiction from across the seventeenth century, as will be discussed below, suggesting a more complex act of reading than simply passive enjoyment. Moreover, passivity and leisure reading have been overwhelmingly gendered female in both early modern and modern rhetoric. While this has been challenged in terms of the readership of romantic fiction (see chapter seven), the connection between passivity and non-intellectualism is rarely disputed.

Both these works implicitly buy into the male-orientated combative model of annotation outlined above. However, this is not a broad enough model of annotation practices.

Women may not have annotated their texts in this way, partly because they were not usually trained in humanist intellectual practices. But that does not mean that they never read pen in hand. They made notes about the use of the book, agreed with the content, added signatures or gift inscriptions. All of these practices, while not necessarily part of an intellectual debate or contest, represent an active engagement with and use of the book, both as an object and as a text.

This requires rethinking the idea of active reading. Helen Smith has pointed out, in reference to godly women, that the differences in annotation practices were at least in part due to their practical use – women used annotation as part of a pious reading of the Bible, rather like men collecting ideas and aphorisms as part of a humanist intellectual endeavour. They did so because this was an important part of their daily life. Smith has suggested that there was a ‘divide in the purposes of male and female ‘noting’:

²⁷ William W. E. Slights, *Managing Readers: Printed Marginalia in English Renaissance Books* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2001), 16.

humanist men collected topics and *sententiae* to be deployed at a later date, while godly women marked materials for further, guided, interpretation and meditation.²⁸ Women's annotation practices, therefore, were formed by the worlds in which they lived, which were often (although not always) what we might call domestic, but this does not detract from their power and authority. In annotating their books, women were claiming a voice and a place for themselves, and reading *actively*, even though the nature of their annotations has meant that they are often overlooked.

Moreover, women could use marginalia as a signifier of their identity. By annotating in a certain way, or inscribing their names on certain books, they could signal some aspect of their identity to future readers of the text. I want to explore how these methods of reading, so associated with a particular class, gender and intellectual type of reader, were used by the women on whom I am focusing here. This includes well-known readers such as Anne Clifford, Frances Wolfreston and Margaret Hoby; and lesser-known figures such as Susanna Beckwith and a host of women whose main trace left to history is their name inscribed in a book. These women tended to be educated but not scholarly; wealthy but not always aristocratic. Their worlds have been seen by subsequent generations of historians as largely domestic, concerned with household management, piety and certain forms of sociability. In this chapter, I want to look at how their reading and annotation practices helped them to both understand their world and engage with debates outside the private sphere.

This chapter draws on sources from archives across the UK and the USA and involved a process of identifying annotations that I discussed at length in chapter one.²⁹ I visited the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, the Henry E. Huntington Library, the

²⁸ Helen Smith, *'Grossly Material Things': Women and Book Production in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 186-187.

²⁹ For a list of the sources consulted in the research for this chapter, see appendix I.

William Andrews Clark Memorial Library, and the Folger Shakespeare Library in the USA, and made use of four local archives across England, along with the British Library and the Bodleian Library. Some of the books I have looked at contain extensive marginal annotations; the majority, however, only bore signatures or inscriptions. The books referenced here are only those where I have been able to determine that the annotator in question was a woman. Many of these annotators are otherwise lost from the historical record; determining their identity, other than their name, is often difficult. Where possible I have given brief biographies, but for many of the women there is little or no information about them, other than their signature.

Annotation and Political Identity: Margaret Hoby and Anne Clifford

Writing notes in the margins of books, recording thoughts on the text or family memoranda, give us a valuable insight into how early modern readers read and used their books. It can be hard to find evidence of extensive marginal annotations written by women. This is not to say that they did not annotate their books, but rather that identification of these sources can be difficult, for several reasons. For one, there are a great many annotated books which have no clear author to whom we can attribute the marginalia, as there is no autograph inscription. It is impossible to say how many of these anonymous annotators may have been women, but there must surely have been some. Moreover, the inclination of subsequent generations to wash marginal inscriptions from books has meant that a great deal of evidence has been lost.³⁰ But there are some women who left extensive annotations in their books, whether written themselves or on their behalf, and who are not unlike some of the men described in ‘active reading’ scholarship. Some of these figures have been studied individually by

³⁰ See Sherman, *Used Books*, 151-178. I have discussed issues of identification and gendered assumptions about authorship more in chapter one.

many scholars, but they fit into a wider narrative about how women used and interacted with their books in the early modern period.

Some books display a mode of annotation that quite clearly aligns with the active reading model described above, demonstrating intellectual engagement with the text.

Margaret Hoby, a devout protestant and member of the Elizabethan gentry, left behind evidence of her reading habits in both her diary and various books owned by her.³¹

Three theological polemics belonging to Hoby are now kept in York Minster Library, and various levels of marginalia can be found in the texts. These annotations have been attributed to Hoby, notably by Andrew Cambers and Julie Crawford.³² However, the annotations are in a neat secretary hand, which looks very different to the italic hand in which Hoby's diary is written. It is not necessarily possible to prove that Hoby did not write the annotations, but it seems unlikely. More probable is that they were written under her instruction by a male servant or secretary, possibly even the family's chaplain, Richard Rhodes.³³ Hoby did annotate some books herself: there are numerous entries in her diary which allude to this practice, such as when she recorded 'I wrett in my testament some notes.'³⁴ However, it seems that this does not include the books now often identified as bearing her marginalia.³⁵

³¹ Claire Cross has noted the impressive scope of Hoby's theological study, arguing that it 'must have outpaced all but the most dedicated of Protestant ministers'. See Claire Cross, "The Religious Life of Women in Sixteenth-Century Yorkshire," *Studies in Church History* 27, *Women in the Church* (1990): 323. For more on Hoby's reading habits, see chapter six of this thesis.

³² See Andrew Cambers, "Readers' Marks and Religious Practice: Margaret Hoby's Marginalia," in *Tudor Books and Readers: Materiality and the Construction of Meaning*, ed. John N. King (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 211-231.

³³ The relationship between seventeenth-century godly women and the clergy has been discussed at greater length in chapter six of this thesis.

³⁴ Margaret Hoby, *The Diary of Lady Margaret Hoby*, ed. Dorothy M. Meads (London: George Routledge & Sons, Ltd, 1930), 107.

³⁵ Helen Smith, noting that the annotations were not in Hoby's hand, has nonetheless identified other markings in the books that could be attributed to Hoby herself. These include various dots and trefoils, which marked passages that could have been of particular interest to Hoby. See Smith, 'Grossly Material Things', 186.

This introduces an interesting perspective on the interplay between gender and intellectual authority in annotations. If Hoby was directing the marginalia but not writing them herself, or if the scribe was interpreting her responses to the text, then her analysis of the text is mediated through a male hand. Moreover, it raises questions about the assumptions surrounding marginalia, namely that it was largely a male activity. Even if the writer was male, this does not mean that it was a solely masculine intellectual act of interpretation; instead the gendered dimensions could have been complicated and multifaceted. If we assume that Hoby's record of writing notes in her 'testament' refers to her directly inscribing them, then perhaps the genre of the book was relevant to the practice of annotation.

Hoby's copy of John Donne's *Pseudo-Martyr* bears her name on the title page.³⁶ There is only one marginal note in this book: at the end of the epistle, under the name of John Donne, the scribe has written 'Hangman.'³⁷ There is no clear explanation for this, whether it indicates Hoby's personal opinion of Donne (in which case it begs the question of why she purchased the book and caused it to be signed) or something else. The lack of annotation in this book has led Cambers to claim that it is hard to know if she actually read it.³⁸ However, as we have little evidence that she or the scribe habitually wrote extensive notes on all her books, apart from the Bible that is mentioned in the diary, this is perhaps unfounded. Hoby may well have read the book and left it unannotated; or she may have decided against reading it because of its subject matter (which begs the question of why she owned it in the first place). Donne's work contributed to the religious pamphlet wars, arguing that Roman Catholics should take

³⁶ John Donne, *Pseudo-Martyr. Wherein Out of Certain Propositions and Gradations, This Conclusion is Evicted. That Those Which Are of the Romane Religion in This Kingdome, May and Ought to Take the Oath of Allegiance* (London: Printed by W. Stansby for Walter Burre, 1610), Hackness 57, York Minster Library, York.

³⁷ Donne, *Pseudo-Martyr*.

³⁸ Cambers, "Readers' Marks and Religious Practice," 220.

the Oath of Allegiance to King James.³⁹ Hoby, as a staunch protestant and known proselytiser, may have objected to Donne's belief that Catholics could take the Oath without converting, accounting for the note in the epistle. Her annotation, therefore, serves to indicate her religio-political identity. Despite her owning a book that could be considered controversial, the one-word notation emphasises her own position, in relation to that of Donne.

There are also two books by Philippe du Plessis-Mornay, a French Huguenot writer and politician⁴⁰: *A Treatise of the Church, Wherein are Handled the Principall Questions Mooued in our Time Concerning that Matter*⁴¹ and *Fowre Bookes, of the Institution, Use and Doctrine of the Holy Sacrament of the Eucharist in the Old Church*.⁴² Of these, the former only bears her signature on the title page, but the latter is extensively annotated. This difference could be connected to the physicality of the books. Sherman, in his survey of marginalia habits, has demonstrated that larger books were much more likely to be annotated in the early modern period, possibly due to the larger margin size.⁴³ The copy of *Fowre Bookes* is a folio, whereas *A Treatise of the Church* is a quarto, thus following the pattern identified by Sherman.

Fowre Books is heavily annotated. Hoby's name and the year 1600 is inscribed on the title page, possibly recording the year she acquired the book, or began reading it. Then,

³⁹ Olga Valbuena, "Casuistry, Martyrdom, and the Allegiance Controversy in Donne's 'Pseudo-Martyr,'" *Religion and Literature* 32, no. 2, Faith and Faction: Religious Heterodoxy in the English Renaissance (2000): 49-80. For more on the Oath of Allegiance, see Marcy L. North, "Anonymity's Subject: James I and the Debate over the Oath of Allegiance," *New Literary History* 33, no. 2, Anonymity (2002): 215-232; Conal Condren, *Argument and Authority in Early Modern England: The Presupposition of Oaths and Offices* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

⁴⁰ For more on Mornay, see Arthur L. Herman, "Protestant Churches in a Catholic Kingdom: Political Assemblies in the Thought of Philippe Duplessis-Mornay," *The Sixteenth-Century Journal* 21, no. 4 (1990): 543-557.

⁴¹ Philip of Mornai, *A Treatise of the Church, Wherein are Handled the Principall Questions Mooued in our Time Concerning that Matter* (Imprinted at London by L.S. for George Potter, dwelling in Paules Church-yard at the signe of the Bible, 1606). Hackness 66, York Minster Library.

⁴² Philip of Mornai, *Fowre Bookes, of the Institution, Use and Doctrine of the Holy Sacrament of the Eucharist in the Old Church. As Likewise, How, When, And by what Degrees the Masse is Brought in, in place thereof* (London: Printed by Iohn Windet, for I. B. T. M. and W. P., 1600). Hackness 47, York Minster Library.

⁴³ Sherman, *Used Books*, 19-20.

throughout the main body of the text (but excluding the prefatory materials), there are written notes in the same hand. These annotations cover topics such as communion, image worship and the history of the Church, and are most copious in the first two books. Around forty percent of the pages in books one and two are annotated, compared to eleven percent in the third book and six percent in the fourth book.⁴⁴ The annotations were often used in combination with underlining certain parts of the text; Cambers has suggested that Hoby may have read the book and underlined passages of interest first, then later added (or instructed the scribe to add) the marginal notes.⁴⁵ He suggests that these notes may have been used in compiling a commonplace book.⁴⁶ Although Hoby's commonplace book has not survived, we do know that she wrote one, as she records it in her diary, therefore this usage is likely.⁴⁷ This gives clear evidence of her use of the methods and practices of active reading. However, it could also be as Smith suggests, that the different forms of marginalia reveal different types of engagement with the book.⁴⁸

The marginalia in Hoby's books function in a variety of ways. The annotations expand on or summarise points of interest in the text or in the printed notes; they act as a textual guide allowing the reader to parse the text more quickly and effectively. One marginal note reads 'Allegations agaynste images and the Adoringe of them,' neatly summarising the lengthy discourse within the main text.⁴⁹ Another function of the marginalia appears to be to make note of passages for a specific extra-textual use. For example, one note reads 'a good place to prove, that the sayntes know nothing done upon earth.'⁵⁰ This implies use of the book in non-textual encounters. Julie Crawford has argued this based

⁴⁴ Exact figures: Book One is annotated on 39.4% of its pages; Book Two 40.7%; Book Three 11.1%; and Book Four 6.4%.

⁴⁵ Cambers, "Readers' Marks and Religious Practice," 228.

⁴⁶ Cambers, "Readers' Marks and Religious Practice," 228.

⁴⁷ Hoby, *The Diary of Lady Margaret Hoby*, 67.

⁴⁸ Smith, '*Grossly Material Things*'.

⁴⁹ Mornai, *Fowre Bookes*, 129.

⁵⁰ Mornai, *Fowre Bookes*, 305.

on Hoby's diary; she suggests that Hoby's reading has a goal, and that it was 'deeply imbricated with her religio-political activism in Yorkshire.'⁵¹ Hoby was active in trying to combat recusancy in the region, and Crawford suggests that she often read in order to debate with her Catholic neighbours.⁵² Hoby lived in the remote parish of Hackness, a largely Catholic area of the North Riding. Both she and her husband, Sir Thomas Posthumous Hoby, were known for their zealous Protestantism and disputes with their neighbours.⁵³ *Fowre Bookes*, a Huguenot religious polemic, therefore may have been used in order to find arguments and evidence for her Protestant beliefs. Moreover, she mentioned similar attempts in her diary: in one section, she wrote that she 'reed and talked with a yonge papest maide,' implying that she was trying to convert her.⁵⁴

Hoby's reading, therefore, was goal-oriented, matching the model of active reading discussed earlier. She used these theological polemics to form, challenge and back up her protestant beliefs, and to help her discuss these beliefs in real world encounters with others. However, the fact that there was likely a scribe through whom Hoby mediated her ideas adds another dimension to this model. She did not make the notes herself, but likely directed them, and may have read over them later. The annotations on books inscribed with her name, however, served to create an identity for herself that was

⁵¹ Julie Crawford, "Reconsidering Early Modern Women's Reading, or, how Margaret Hoby Read her de Mornay," *The Huntington Library Quarterly* 73, no. 2 (2010): 194.

⁵² For more on neighbourly relationship, parish politics and religion, see Naomi Tadmor, *The Social Universe of the English Bible: Scripture, Society, and Culture in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010); Keith Wrightson, "The Politics of the Parish in Early Modern England," in *The Experience of Authority in Early Modern England*, ed. Paul Griffiths, Adam Fox and Steve Hindle (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1996), 10-46.

⁵³ Felicity Heal, "Reputation and Honour in Court and Country: Lady Elizabeth Russell and Sir Thomas Hoby," *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 6 (1996): 163. For more Thomas Hoby, see G. C. F. Forster, "Faction and County Government in Early Stuart Yorkshire," *Northern History* 11, no. 1 (1976): 70-86.

⁵⁴ Hoby, *The Diary of Lady Margaret Hoby*, 105. For work on the Bible as a conversion tool overseas in the early modern period, see Helen Smith, "'Wilt thou not read me, Atheist?' The Bible and Conversion," in *The Oxford Handbook of the Bible in Early Modern England, c. 1530-1700*, ed. Kevin Killeen, Helen Smith and Rachel Willie (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 351-366.

visible to any who picked up the texts. She situated herself within a specific religious and political sphere, demonstrating her religious position clearly.

Anne Clifford, the seventeenth-century northern noblewoman well known to scholars of reading, also employed this complex practice of annotation.⁵⁵ She added yet another dimension to the standard used by Hoby; her books were annotated both by a scribe and by her own hand, and the perspective of the scribe's hand occasionally changes. The interplay between the two hands reveals a complex picture of readerly authority, affected by both gender and social situation. Moreover, Clifford's reading and annotating habits attest to her political beliefs and identity. Two of the texts discussed below, *A Mirour for Magistrates* and *The Court and Character of King James* were clearly rooted in the political climate of the early modern period. However, two more of Clifford's annotated books are romances: Sir Philip Sidney's *Arcadia* and John Barclay's *Argenis*.⁵⁶ These texts would not normally be seen as obvious contenders for active reading habits, but Clifford's annotations reveal the careful and attentive ways in which she read and re-read them. Both *Argenis* and *Arcadia* have been portrayed by Paul Salzman as comments on contemporary politics.⁵⁷ Salzman argues that *Arcadia*, which was very popular in the seventeenth century, was read during the reign of King James I as 'a dark commentary on monarchical power and its abuse.'⁵⁸ This was largely allegorical, but *Argenis* represented a more direct comment on recent history and contemporary politics: in Salzman's words, it 'offers an elaborate and detailed depiction

⁵⁵ There have been several articles dedicated to Clifford's reading and annotating of specific books, including, most recently, Georgianna Ziegler, "Lady Anne Clifford Reads John Selden," in *Early Modern English Marginalia*, ed. Katherine Acheson (Abingdon: Routledge, 2019), 134-154.

⁵⁶ For more on views towards the romance genre, and women's interaction with romances, see chapters five and seven of this thesis.

⁵⁷ Paul Salzman, "Royalist Epic and Romance," in *The Cambridge Companion to Writing of the English Revolution*, ed. N. H. Keeble (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 215-232. The exact nature of the political commentary in *Arcadia* has been debated, but Fred Schurink used various readers marks in a copy of *Arcadia* housed at the Folger Shakespeare Library to examine its politics. See Fred Schurink, "'Like a Hand in the Margine of a Booke': William Blount's Marginalia and the Politics of Sidney's *Arcadia*," *Review of English Studies* 59, no. 238 (2008): 1-24.

⁵⁸ Salzman, "Royalist Epic and Romance," 221.

of specific historical circumstances, [...] but also a sophisticated series of meditations on current political issues.’⁵⁹ All four books, as we shall see, were connected to Clifford’s political beliefs, and reading them no doubt allowed her to explore the world in which she was living.

Mary Ellen Lamb has explored Clifford’s representations of reading in both her diary and her portraits, namely *The Great Picture*, a triptych, commissioned by Clifford and showing her and her family at different stages of her life, always surrounded by books. Lamb has pointed out that the books represented were all written by men, and most aimed at a male audience, arguing that these representations of Clifford’s reading ‘reveal her use of reading as a means of interpellating herself into a dominant, rather than a subordinate, subject position in her culture.’⁶⁰ Similarly, Edith Snook has suggested, specifically regarding the books represented in *The Great Picture*, that in ‘[a]rticulating her cultural literacy, the library situates Anne Clifford within aristocratic society as one of its learned members.’⁶¹ I will build on this idea, arguing that Clifford’s annotations act in a similar way, constructing a specific social and political identity, marking her out as a member of the aristocracy and emphasising her political position, and revealing how her reading practices supported this identity construction.

After her father, George Clifford, the third Earl of Cumberland, died in 1605, Anne entered a protracted legal battle to regain her inheritance, which had passed to a male relative. She did not succeed until 1643, after her cousin Henry Clifford died suddenly with no male heir.⁶² In Barbara Lewalski’s words, this set Clifford and her mother,

⁵⁹ Salzman, “Royalist Epic and Romance,” 222.

⁶⁰ Mary Ellen Lamb “The Agency of the Split Subject: Lady Anne Clifford and the Uses of Reading,” *English Literary Renaissance* 22 (1992): 349.

⁶¹ Edith Snook, *Women, Reading, and the Cultural Politics of Early Modern England* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005), 3.

⁶² Alice T. Friedman, “Constructing an Identity in Prose, Plaster and Print: Lady Anne Clifford as Writer and Patron of the Arts,” in *Ashgate Critical Essays on Women Writers, 1550-1700, Volume Five: Anne Clifford and Lucy Hutchinson*, ed. Mihoko Suzuki (Farnham: Ashgate, 2009), 103-120.

Margaret, ‘against the entire Jacobean patriarchy: male relatives, their husbands, court society, the Archbishop of Canterbury, and King James himself.’⁶³ Clifford’s writings, compilations and artistic commissions were marked by her desire to justify her inheritance claim. Her Great Books of Record, a manuscript genealogical record, underlined her place within her family and her long aristocratic lineage.⁶⁴ The title page of the first volume declares that the manuscript was compiled

By the care & industrie of the Lady Ann Clifford, Countes of Dorsett, Pembroke, & Montgomery, daughter and sole heire of Georg Clifford Late Earle of Cvumberland, which Lady by birthright from her father and his ancestors, is Barones Clifford, Westmerland, and Vescy, and High Shreives of that County and Lady of the Honor of Skipton in Craven being lineally descended from both those noble families.⁶⁵

Her assertion that she was George Clifford’s ‘sole heir’ and had claims her titles ‘by birthright’ were clear statements of her position. Paul Salzman has argued that Clifford ‘constantly positioned her struggles to acquire and then maintain her inheritance within a political context.’⁶⁶ As will be seen below, her reading habits also reflected this socio-political concept of her identity.⁶⁷

Clifford’s copy of Barclay’s *Argenis* is now held at the Huntington Library, and reveals a great deal about how Clifford read, and her opinions on her reading.⁶⁸ On the blank page facing the title page, there is a manuscript note reading ‘I began to reade this

⁶³ Barbara K. Lewalski, “Re-Writing Patriarchy and Patronage: Margaret Clifford, Anne Clifford, and Aemilia Lanyer,” *The Yearbook of English Studies* 21 (1991): 87-106.

⁶⁴ Anne Clifford, *Great Books of Record*, WD/HOTH/1/10, Cumbria Record Office, Kendal.

⁶⁵ Clifford, *Great Books of Record* (Vol. 1), WD/HOTH/1/10.

⁶⁶ Paul Salzman, *Reading Early Modern Women’s Writing* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 97.

⁶⁷ It is worth noting that some of Clifford’s reading took place during the Restoration, in contrast to many of the early seventeenth-century case studies here, giving a broader overview of annotations throughout the century.

⁶⁸ For more on Barclay’s novel, see Helen Moore, “Romance: *Amadis de Gaule* and John Barclay’s *Argenis*,” in *The Oxford Handbook of English Prose, 1500-1640*, ed. Andrew Hadfield (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 59-76.

booke to yo^r Ladiship the xvith day of January: 1625: and ended it the xxvth of the same moneth.’⁶⁹ As Hackel points out, the dates recorded means that Clifford and the scribe, most likely a member of her household, read the book ‘at the fairly voracious pace of forty folio pages a day.’⁷⁰ According to Hackel, it would take a modern reader two and half hours to read forty pages aloud, without interruption, giving a useful insight into the amount of time Clifford spent on aural reading, and the ‘seriousness with which some, albeit quirky, book owners treated their reading of prose fiction.’⁷¹ The volume is heavily annotated, both by Clifford and the unnamed scribe, probably indicating multiple readings on Clifford’s part. Clifford’s own annotations tend to be shorter, and either summarise sections of the text – for example writing ‘The strange discovery of the Poysoned Braselet’ beside the relevant text – or make personal comment on the writing – she wrote ‘An exelent Chap:’ several times in the margins.⁷² The scribe’s hand sometimes followed this pattern, but also copied out certain underlined passages and wrote ‘note’ in the margins next to select sections.

This method of annotation appears to have been common in most of Clifford’s books, which all bear multiple marginal hands and evidence of re-reading. Stephen Orgel, in studying Clifford’s copy of *A Mirour for Magistrates*, notes the presence of three scribal hands, as well as numerous underlinings. *A Mirour* was a collection of poems, first published in 1559, from the perspective of various statesmen warning about the abuse of power.⁷³ He identifies the main hand as that of William Watkinson, Clifford’s

⁶⁹ John Barclay, *Barclay his Argenis: Or, The Loves of Poliarchus and Argenis: Faithfully translated out of Latine into English, By Kingesmill Long, Gent.* (London: Printed by G. P. for Henry Seile, and are to be sold at his Shop at the Tygers head in Saint Pauls Church-yard, 1625), RB 97024, Henry E. Huntington Library, San Marino.

⁷⁰ Heidi Brayman Hackel, “Lady Anne Clifford as Reader, Annotator and Book Collector,” in *Lady Anne Clifford: Culture, Patronage and Gender in 17th-Century Britain*, ed. Karen Hearn and Lyn Hulse (Leeds: Yorkshire Archaeological Society, 2009), 106.

⁷¹ Hackel, “Lady Anne Clifford as Reader,” 106.

⁷² E.g. Barclay, *Argenis*, 97, 246.

⁷³ Harriet Archer and Andrew Hadfield, ed., *A Mirror for Magistrates in Context: Literature, History and Politics in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016).

secretary throughout the 1660s and 1670s.⁷⁴ Watkinson's annotations provided most of the information about when and where reading took place, and adopted a variety of personas.⁷⁵ Clifford's annotations on the other hand, as with her copy of *Argenis*, were often more personal comments, particularly at points concerning her own family. *England's Eliza*, a poem included in Clifford's edition of *A Mirour for Magistrates*, touched at points on Clifford's own family history, and her annotations indicate careful and possibly repeated reading.⁷⁶ Orgel argues, therefore, that this book was personally important to Clifford, that 'under her hand it celebrated her heroic ancestry, chronicled her days, and served as the receptacle of her memory.'⁷⁷

Paul Salzman has studied Clifford's copy of *Arcadia*, currently held in the Bodleian Library, and also suggested that she re-read this book, which there is evidence of her owning and having read to her in her youth, when she was an older woman, indicating its continued importance in her life.⁷⁸ Although the volume has few annotations, Salzman has suggested convincingly that the numerous pencil and ink underlinings must have been done by Clifford, as they match those present in both her copy of *Argenis* and Anthony Weldon's *The Court and Character of King James*, which is held in the Cumbria Record Office. He also claimed that this latter book has few annotations, which is an underestimation; for a small book, it is actually quite frequently annotated, both by Clifford herself and by another hand, with Clifford's annotations in particular clustered around a chapter describing James I. This latter hand is the one that wrote the inscription in the front of the volume, opposite the title page, which reads 'about the beginninge of June in 1669 I began to read this Booke my selfe in Appleby Castle and I

⁷⁴ Stephen Orgel, "Reading Lady Anne Clifford's *A Mirovr for Magistrates*," in *Lady Anne Clifford: Culture, Patronage and Gender in 17th-Century Britain*, ed. Karen Hearn and Lyn Hulse (Leeds: Yorkshire Archaeological Society, 2009), 112.

⁷⁵ Orgel, "Reading Lady Anne Clifford's *A Mirovr for Magistrates*," 112.

⁷⁶ Orgel, "Reading Lady Anne Clifford's *A Mirovr for Magistrates*," 110.

⁷⁷ Orgel, "Reading Lady Anne Clifford's *A Mirovr for Magistrates*," 115.

⁷⁸ Paul Salzman, "Anne Clifford's Annotated Copy of Sidney's *Arcadia*," *Notes and Queries* 56, no. 4 (2009): 554-555.

& diverse of my men servants made an end of readinge of itt the 21st of y^e same in 1669.⁷⁹ Presumably the ‘I’ in this inscription was Clifford herself, but it was likely been written by one of the ‘men servants’ mentioned, probably Watkinson, the secretary identified by Orgel. This seems even more likely given that we know of Clifford’s habit of both reading a book herself, and having it read to her and annotated on her behalf, from her copy of *Argenis*. However, while in that book, the inscription was written in the voice of the scribe, the servant reading the book to Clifford, here they have taken on her authorial voice themselves, as Orgel shows Watkinson doing.

As in both *Argenis* and *A Mirour for Magistrates*, Weldon’s book displays a mixture of annotations in a neat, scribal hand, and Clifford’s spiky italic. As mentioned above, Orgel has suggested that Clifford’s annotations in *A Mirror* were more personal than Watkinson’s, who primarily gave information on what was read and where.⁸⁰ However, in *The Court and Character of King James*, it is slightly more complicated. Some of Watkinson’s annotations were quite prosaic, largely just noting the names of figures mentioned in the text. However, there is also a more subjective, political perspective shown. Next to a passage describing King James I, which reads ‘His Beard was very thin: His Tongue too large for his mouth, which ever made him speak full in the mouth, and made him drink very uncomely, as if eating his drink, which came out into the cup of each side of his mouth,’ the scribe wrote ‘a righte description of Kinge James’ (*see appendix III, figure 1*).⁸¹ Salzman has implied that both this passage and the inscription were written by Clifford herself; this is not the case, as the script style is so different to

⁷⁹ Anthony Weldon, *The Court and Character of King James. Whereunto is now added the Court of King Charles: Continued Unto the beginning of these unhappy Times. With some Observations upon Him instead of a Character. Collected and perfected by Sir A. W.* (Printed at London by R. I. and are to be sold by J. Collins in Little Brittain, 1651), WD/Hoth/A988/22, Cumbria Record Office.

⁸⁰ Stephen Orgel, “Marginal Maternity: Reading Lady Anne Clifford’s *A Mirror for Magistrates*,” in *Printing and Parenting in Early Modern England*, ed. Douglas A. Brooks (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003), 147.

⁸¹ Weldon, *The Court and Character of King James*, 165.

her recognisable hand.⁸² However, we can assume that Clifford may have dictated this to the scribe. It certainly is consistent with her own annotations, which agreed with Weldon's unfavourable impression of King James.⁸³ Next to a few lines claiming 'His sending Embassadors, were no lesse chargeable then dishonourable and unprofitable to him and his whole Kingdome; for he was ever abused in all Negotiations,' Clifford wrote 'True' in the margins (*see appendix III, figure 2*).⁸⁴ Moreover, she wrote 'note' next to an underlined description of James as 'the wisest foole in Christendome.'⁸⁵

James did not support Clifford's early attempts to regain her family estates, inherited by her uncle due to an entail, and was complicit in her disinheritance when he signed an order against her following her mother's death, allowing her husband to sign away his claim to her estates.⁸⁶ She recorded in her diary how 'sometimes he used fair means & persuasions, & sometimes foul means, but I was resolved before so as nothing would move me.'⁸⁷ Clifford's annotations hint towards their contentious relationship and a possible dislike on her part that continued years after his death. For Clifford, therefore, the personal and the political combined when reading Weldon's volume. Hackel has argued that, despite the topical nature of Barclay's *Argenis*, Clifford's reading of the text, attested to by the annotations, was 'ultimately personal and idiosyncratic' and more interested in the 'narrative and philosophical elements of the romance' than its political implications.⁸⁸ However, I would argue that, as with her interests in the family history referenced in *A Mirour* and her social-political relationships evident in *The*

⁸² Salzman, "Anne Clifford's Annotated Copy of Sidney's *Arcadia*," 554-555.

⁸³ Weldon had a minor position in James' household, but was dismissed by the King for writing a satire about the people of Scotland, and wrote *The Court and Character* as revenge (although this was not published until the 1650s). The venomous nature of the text has often been attributed to Weldon's anti-scots views, and has been influential on subsequent portrayals of James I. See Jenny Wormald, "James VI and I: Two Kings or One?" *History* 68, no. 223 (1983): 187-209; Pauline Croft, *King James* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003).

⁸⁴ Weldon, *The Court and Character of King James*, 171.

⁸⁵ Weldon, *The Court and Character of King James*, 173.

⁸⁶ Clifford, Anne. *The Diaries of Lady Anne Clifford*, ed. D. J. H. Clifford (Stroud: Sutton Publishing Ltd, 1990), 18.

⁸⁷ Clifford, *The Diaries of Lady Anne Clifford*, 45.

⁸⁸ Hackel, "Lady Anne Clifford as Reader," 108.

Court and Character, Clifford's personal and political interests and opinions were often intertwined, and cannot be so easily delineated. Her marginalia gives us an insight into those opinions, and into the complex gender negotiation occurring with the presence of multiple scribal hands. She read in order to find support and justification for her political views, and her annotations demonstrate her active engagement with that reading material, be it romances or political polemics.

There are several things to note about the reading habits of both Margaret Hoby and Anne Clifford, which have implications for the concept of the woman reader and the model of active reading. Both were very collaborative readers. They read and annotated with both men and women. Reading was a part of their interactions with others, either in a hierarchical relationship with their employees, or as part of a conversation between friends and neighbours. Moreover, both women also had a strong sense of their own social standing. Hoby's reading was key to her identity within the context of her largely Catholic neighbourhood, underlining her Protestant identity and supporting her theological disputes. Clifford's reading and annotations, meanwhile, clearly reflected her aristocratic status and political position, particularly her critique of James I's rule.

Both Hoby and Clifford are commonly found in studies of reading and marginalia, and provide very useful examples of women's annotation practices. However, they largely support the models of annotation promoted by Zwicker, Jardine and Grafton, both of which have emphasised the active/passive divide, and framed the former as an essentially intellectual and political practice. This was not representative of the experience of most women readers in the seventeenth century. To fully comprehend their reading habits and how they used their annotations, we need to look at other forms of marginalia and inscriptions, ones which were more clearly situated in the domestic realm and underlined women's familial identity. These reading marks can still be considered as evidence of 'active' reading practice, but move the model beyond the

scholarly and the political. Records of family births and deaths, of relationships, and even of shopping lists were commonly written in women's books, and deserve more attention to complicate our ideas of active reading.

Marks of Life: Seventeenth-Century 'Domestic' Annotations

Bibles were often repositories of annotations by both men and women.⁸⁹ The sixteenth-century introduction of the Geneva Bible, with its reading aids, contributed to the developing practice of writing on scripture.⁹⁰ The printed marginalia and glosses that were included in the Geneva Bible encouraged private reading practices and, as Femke Molekamp has argued, 'was a book which owners regularly styled to conform to their tastes and needs.'⁹¹ One particularly good example is the Bible of Susanna Beckwith, now held in the British Library.⁹² I have not been able to find any other record of Beckwith, so there is little biographical information with which to work. What we know of her comes from her annotations on her family Bible. Molekamp has identified her as an 'Elizabethan noblewoman,' presumably partially based on her levels of literacy.⁹³ This seems unlikely, however, particularly given the lack of extant evidence about Beckwith and her family. She was more likely a member of the gentry, rather than a noblewoman. Moreover, Molekamp's identification of her as 'Elizabethan' is not borne out by her annotations, many of which came from the 1610s and 1620s. Beckwith wrote

⁸⁹ William Sherman has surveyed annotations on Bibles at the Huntington Library, noting that about one in five Bibles and prayer books in the collection contained significant marginalia. He listed eight different types of annotation commonly found in Bibles, although none of these included family notes of the kind explored here. See Sherman, *Used Books*, 73, 80, 83.

⁹⁰ Femke Molekamp, "The Making of the Geneva Bible: Histories of Translation and Reading," *AHRC Translating Cultures*, accessed Jun 24, 2019 <http://translatingcultures.org.uk/awards/fellowship-awards/the-making-of-the-geneva-bible-histories-of-translation-and-reading/>.

⁹¹ Femke Molekamp, "'Of the Incomparable treasure of the Holy Scriptures': The Geneva Bible in the Early Modern Household," in *Literature and Popular Culture in Early Modern England*, ed. Matthew Dimmock and Andrew Hadfield (Farnham: Ashgate, 2009), 135.

⁹² I have not found other women's Bibles bearing the same level of annotations as Beckwith's, although this is not to say that they do not exist. This is probably more a case of women's annotations rarely being recorded in archive catalogues, which I discussed at length in chapter one.

⁹³ Femke Molekamp, *Women and the Bible in Early Modern England: Religious Reading and Writing* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 36.

extensively in her Bible, not only inscribing her name and dedicating it to her daughter, but adding family memoranda and some notes on the text.⁹⁴ Her annotations give an insight into the place of the book within the family, its use for devotional and theological matters, the practical lessons Beckwith gained from reading, and the relationship between reading and the passage of time within a religious household.

Beckwith established her ownership of the book by inscribing her name and initials at several points throughout the text. These appear to bear no relation to the adjacent passages, and it is not clear why Beckwith chose to inscribe her name within the body of the text, rather than on or near the title page or end pages, as was more common for such inscriptions. Moreover, she wrote a dedication in the book, addressed to her daughter, which was again, unusually, placed within the main body of the text. At the end of the Apocrypha, Beckwith wrote:

Susanna Beckwith my deare childe I leaue the this booke as the best Jewell I haue, Reade it with a zealous harte to understand truly, and apply all thou readeest either to confirme thy faith, or to increase thy Repentance: Bee not ouercombd with evill: out ouer come evell with goodnese: Bee not wearie of well doing for in due season, thou shalt reape iff thou fainte not. Bee not high minded, but make thy selfe equale unto them of the lower sorte. Now our Lord Jesus Christ himselfe, and god euen our father, which hath loued us, and hath giuen us euerlasting consolation and good hope through grace: comfort thy harte, and stablish therein euerie good word, and worke: to the praise of god, and

⁹⁴ *The Bible. That is, the Holy Scriptures Contained in the Olde and New Testament. Translated according to the Ebrew and Greeke, and conferred with the best transla-ons in diuers languages. With most profitable annotations vpon all the hard places, and other things of great importance, as may appeare in the Epistle to the Reader* (Imprinted at London by the Deputies of Christopher Barker, Printer to the Queenes most excellent Maiestie. Anno Domini 1597), 464.c.5.(1.), British Library, London.

patient waiting for our Sauioir Christ his coming: come, Lord Jesus, come
quickly, for thy servant cometh I ame willing, help my unwillinges 5:23⁹⁵

This dedication is revealing in the advice given about reading, and the relationship with religion that is suggested. Beckwith referred to the Bible as ‘the best Jewell I haue.’ The spiritual value of the scripture has also been given material value, in the object of the book, and this reference gives an indication of the way in which such books might have been treated within households such as Beckwith’s.⁹⁶

This note also indicates the fact that the Bible was actively read and relates some of the annotations to the contents of the text, even if some appear to be disconnected.

Beckwith was advising her daughter how to read the book to get the most spiritual benefit from it, creating a conversation between mother, daughter, and the text. She was using the book to give advice for her daughter’s conduct in life, with the reading of the scripture as a way into this.

The question of how to read the book was obviously an important one to Beckwith. On the page facing the translator’s address to Queen Elizabeth, she entered a poem beginning with the lines

Heere is the well where waters flow,
To quench our heat of sinne,
Heere is the tree, wheer truth doth grow,
To lead our lines therein.⁹⁷

⁹⁵ 2 Macc. 464.c.5.(1.), British Library.

⁹⁶ The centrality of the Bible and reading to the godly community has been demonstrated by many scholars, including Andrew Cambers and Michelle Wolfe. See, for example Andrew Cambers and Michelle Wolfe, “Reading, Family Religion, and Evangelical Identity in Late Stuart England,” *The Historical Journal* 47, no. 4 (2004): 875-896. The Bible would hold a special position both spiritually and materially in the godly household, due to the importance of reading.

⁹⁷ 464.c.5.(1.), British Library.

This verse, comprising seven stanzas in Beckwith's version, was commonly printed in editions of the Geneva Bible after 1578.⁹⁸ It was usually placed immediately after the title page; in a similar position to where Beckwith has chosen to write it out. There are some small differences in her version: for example, where she used the word 'well' in the first line, this was traditionally 'spring' in the printed versions. She also swapped two lines from the sixth stanza. The original version read:

Pray still in faith, with this respect,
To fructify therein,
That knowledge may bring this effect,
To mortify thy sin.⁹⁹

Whereas Beckwith's version became:

Pray still in faith, with this respect
to mortifie thy sinne
that knowledge may bringe god effort
to frutifie therein.¹⁰⁰

It is interesting that Beckwith would choose to add this verse to her Bible. It shows her awareness of theological paratexts, specifically other printed versions of the scripture.

Having checked various copies of the Geneva Bible on Early English Books Online, it appears that this was not printed in the edition Beckwith owned (STC (2nd ed.), 2168),

⁹⁸ The Geneva Bible was the preferred Bible of English Puritans. It included extensive marginal notes to aid comprehension and the reading experience. See, for example, Christopher Durston and Jacqueline Eales, ed., *The Culture of English Puritanism, 1560-1700* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1996). It was never officially sanctioned by the state in England, but was popular across the country. See Dan G. Danner, "The Contribution of the Geneva Bible of 1560 to the English Protestant Tradition," *The Sixteenth Century Journal* 12, no. 3 (1981): 5-18.

⁹⁹ *The Bible translated according to the Ebrew and Greeke, and conferred with the best translations in diuers languages ; with most profitable annotationsvpon all the hard places, and other things of great importance, as may appeare in the epistle to the reader ; and also a most profitable concordance for the readie finding out of any thing in the same conteined* (Imprinted at London by the Deputies of Christopher Barker, Printer to the Queenes most excellent Maiestie, 1599). The verse is normally entitled 'Of the Incomparable Treasure of the Holy Scripture.'

¹⁰⁰ 464.c.5.(1.), British Library.

although it was included in other editions from the same year, although it is unclear why this was.¹⁰¹ Whatever the reason for its exclusion, Beckwith's use of this verse demonstrates an awareness of other versions of the Bible beyond her own copy. The mistakes in the manuscript verse, moreover, imply either that she was writing it from memory, or that she was at least not copying it line for line from an original, or possibly not reading said original very carefully.

Furthermore, this addition indicates an ability and willingness to adapt a text to give an improved reading experience – evidently she felt a need to include this verse for future readers, either herself or others in her family. The poem includes the lines

Reade not this booke in any case
but with a single eye
Reade not, but first desire Gods grace
to understande thereby.¹⁰²

The fact that the verse specifically deals with reading advice shows the way in which she was shaping and controlling the reading experience; presumably the advice contained therein was meant to be followed when dealing with the text. This is backed up by its similarity to the dedication to her daughter; Beckwith emphasised the need to read scripture in a certain way, both to herself and any potential readers, and very specifically to her daughter.

There is more evidence of the ability to extract and adapt devotional material in Beckwith's marginal annotations. Beneath I Samuel 25:29, Beckwith wrote

Wisdome openeth the mouth
of the dumbe, and maketh the

¹⁰¹ For more the editions of the Geneva Bible, see Maurice S. Betteridge, "The Bitter Notes: The Geneva Bible and its Annotators," *The Sixteenth Century Journal* 14, no. 1 (1983): 41-62.

¹⁰² 464.c.5.(1.), British Library.

tongues of babes eloquent¹⁰³

This is a line from the Apocrypha: the Wisdom of Solomon 10:21. The chapter of Samuel, beside which Beckwith wrote this extract, tells the story of the relationships between David, Abigail and Nabal. It is unclear exactly why Beckwith felt this verse was relevant to the chapter, if that was why she wrote it there. It may be that she had heard a sermon or read commentary connecting the two, or that she personally felt that the sentiment was appropriate. Whatever the reason, it demonstrates her capacity to assess scripture and make connections, and to shape the reading experience through the margins of her Bible.¹⁰⁴

There is one other occasion where she added verse to a chapter of the Bible, although in this case the provenance of the verse is unclear. Underneath Isaiah 66 (*see appendix III, figure 3*), she wrote

Doe nothinge but see first thou craue,
Aide from the Lord good end to haue;
Soe shalt thou haue success alwayes,
As thou shalt wish and happie dayes¹⁰⁵

Molekamp has claimed that this is a ‘stanza from the Geneva Bible prefatory poem, ‘Of the incomparable treasures of the holy scriptures’,’ the same poem that Beckwith copied out in full opposite the translator’s address, arguing that it demonstrates her knowledge of biblical paratexts.¹⁰⁶ However, having gone through the Beckwith Bible, and other contemporary editions of the Geneva Bible online, this verse does not appear in that poem, or in any other section of the text. It may well have been an original composition

¹⁰³ 1 Sam. 25:29, 464.c.5.(1.), British Library.

¹⁰⁴ For more on readers of the Geneva Bible, see Michael Jensen, “‘Simply’ Reading the Geneva Bible: The Geneva Bible and its Readers,” *Literature and Theology* 9, no. 1 (1995): 30-45.

¹⁰⁵ Isa. 66, 464.c.5.(1.), British Library.

¹⁰⁶ Molekamp, *Women and the Bible*, 37.

by Beckwith.¹⁰⁷ This does not necessarily devalue Molekamp's arguments about paratextual material (the discussion of the prefatory poem earlier attests to her knowledge of different editions of the Geneva Bible), but it does add another layer to Beckwith's reading practices. If this verse is an original composition, or at least not part of the biblical text Beckwith was reading, it demonstrates further, more independent efforts to shape and understand what she was reading. She not only reached out to other biblical materials to form her reading experience, but added to the text herself, making a very individual mark that would affect all future readings of the book.

The chapter tells of God's gifts to his followers and punishment for those who disavow him. The verse, therefore, could be read as a lesson that Beckwith has extrapolated and noted down, for both herself and for other readers. She was clearly actively reading and making efforts to understand the text, and her annotations helped her to do this, providing context for or interpreting the scripture. These three verse annotations are all written in the same style, likely with the same pen. The two latter stanzas also have decorative detail surrounding them. They are all neater and perhaps more carefully written than the rest of Beckwith's notes, which have slightly thicker pen strokes, darker ink, and with less care taken over the form of the letters and the placing on the page. This may be due to the difference in content. Beckwith's other notes were more personal in tone, either relating to her family or making short notes indicating the usefulness of certain passages. This more practical, familiar and quotidian use of the Bible appears to have not warranted such careful annotation as the paratextual devotional additions.

¹⁰⁷ For more on early modern women's biblical verse paraphrases, see Sarah C. E. Ross, "Epic, Meditation, or Sacred History? Women and Biblical Verse Paraphrase in Seventeenth-Century England," in *The Oxford Handbook of the Bible in Early Modern England, c. 1530-1700*, ed. Kevin Killeen, Helen Smith and Rachel Willie (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 484-498.

Beckwith also gave clues to how her devotional reading related to the passage of time in her household. Throughout the Psalms, she wrote notations marking when different entries should be read, heard, or used in worship. Next to around sixty psalms, Beckwith has written either ‘Mor’ (or ‘Morn’), or ‘Even,’ signifying whether they were to be used in the morning or the evening. This demonstrates the practical use of the Bible within the household, and the temporal dimension of devotion, and indicates a level of repeated readings of the text.¹⁰⁸ The psalms would be returned to frequently, and the reading of them both shaped, and was shaped by, the practice and timetable of devotion in the Beckwith household.

There is another temporal aspect to her annotations, one less connected to devotion. Beckwith recorded the birth dates of her children in the margins of her Bible (specifically the books of Genesis, Exodus and Isaiah), revealing its use as a family memorandum as well as a book of devotion. The entries are in roughly chronological order, except for two instances where the children are recorded in books of the Bible from which they got their names (Matthew and Ester, her third son and third daughter). However, there is a missing entry. Beckwith made note of how many sons or daughters she had in each annotation; for example, the entry ‘William Beckwith the fifth sone of Susanna Beckwith was born the 7 February Anno Dm 1623’ in the margins of Isaiah 66 (*see appendix III, figure 3*).¹⁰⁹ However, the birth of her second daughter was not noted, indicating that perhaps she died in infancy or before birth. Interestingly, the other notable absence is that of Beckwith’s husband; he was never mentioned, not even to note their marriage. Instead, maternal relationships took precedence in this book, from the dedication to her daughter to the records of her children’s births. Annotations show the Bible being passed between generations of women. One hand, not the main

¹⁰⁸ Re-reading was not uncommon in the period – see Clifford’s annotations above, and chapter seven, on religious reading habits.

¹⁰⁹ Isa. 66, 464.c.5.(1.), British Library.

annotator, noted above the printer's address that the book was 'Given to me by my deare Grandemother M^{rs} Susanna Beckwith,' indicating another instance of gift-giving beyond that of the inscription addressing Beckwith's eldest daughter.¹¹⁰

Beckwith also used her Bible to understand the world around her. There is evidence of Beckwith using the text in her own daily life, for example when she wrote beside the first few lines of Isaiah 44 'are a comfort to your servants.'¹¹¹ The chapter is speaking to Jacob, referring to him repeatedly as 'my servant' and outlining God's blessings to him. She was taking passages from scripture and making them applicable to her daily life, and the annotation makes it clear that she wanted a reminder of the lesson, either for her future self or for other readers. This is a very practical use of marginalia, one which she repeated to varying degrees throughout the text. She did not always make her interpretation of verses clear, but her desire to note and return to passages is evident. By the side of several verses and printed annotations Beckwith wrote 'nota,' indicating her intention to remember particular sections. On one page, she wrote this three times, beside printed marginal annotations that instruct the reader on how to view misfortune and welcome it as a test from God.

One annotation reveals a more political reading of the Bible.¹¹² Beckwith wrote 'nota' beside an annotation to I Kings 6, which reads 'There is nothing harder for them, that are in authoritie, then to bridle their affections, & folow good counsel.'¹¹³ There are many possible reasons for this note, but, as we know that Beckwith wrote at least some of her annotations in the 1620s, she could have been thinking about George Villiers,

¹¹⁰ 464.c.5.(1.), British Library.

¹¹¹ Isa. 44, 464.c.5.(1.), British Library.

¹¹² For reflections and debates on the political nature of the Geneva Bible, see Tom Furniss, "Reading the Geneva Bible: Notes Towards an English Revolution?" *Prose Studies* 31, no. 1 (2009): 1-21; Richard L. Greaves, "The Nature and Intellectual Milieu of the Political Principles in the Geneva Bible Marginalia," *Journal of Church and State* 22, no. 2 (1980): 233-249.

¹¹³ 1 Kings 6, 464.c.5.(1.), British Library.

first Duke of Buckingham, the controversial favourite of both James I and Charles I.¹¹⁴ It is difficult to know when Beckwith wrote most of her annotations, but her notes regarding the birth of children give at least approximate dates, placing some of her readings in the 1610s and 1620s (her eldest child was born in 1613; her youngest in 1623). Buckingham was embroiled in scandal in the early 1620s, with his brothers and his mentor, Sir Francis Bacon, being accused of abuse of monopolies and accepting bribes, respectively. He was also involved in negotiations for Prince Charles' marriage, played a key role in the escalating conflict with Spain, and was blamed for various failed expeditions to Cadiz and the Palatinate. In 1626 Parliament began impeachment proceedings against Buckingham, accusing him of nepotism and holding too many offices, amongst other things, but Charles I dissolved Parliament before the motion could pass through the House of Lords. Buckingham's influence over both James and Charles was deeply suspect in the eyes of the populace, and it is not hard to see how the passage warning authority figures to be careful with their affections and 'follow good counsel' could apply to the situation. If this was Beckwith's thinking, this annotation is clear evidence of her engagement with contemporary politics, and active use of her reading in order to understand the wider world around her.¹¹⁵ The passage in the Bible related to crises she observed in the political world, and she was able to make links and apply her reading to broad real-world concerns, just as Anne Clifford and Margaret Hoby did. This complicates the domestic image of the family Bible, demonstrating multiple readings and uses of the text, depending on the reader's focus at the time of reading.

¹¹⁴ For Buckingham's life, see Roger Lockyer, *Buckingham: The Life and Political Career of George Villiers, First Duke of Buckingham, 1592-1628* (London: Routledge, 1981).

¹¹⁵ This is similar to Kevin Sharpe's hypothesis regarding William Drake's reading habits: see Kevin Sharpe, *Reading Revolutions: The Politics of Reading in Early Modern England* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000).

Beckwith's Bible, therefore, reveals the various ways in which she read and used the book. It functioned as a memorandum, noting the important household events such as the births of her children; as a spiritual comfort and guide; as a treasured material object; and as a dispenser of more practical advice for daily life, such as interactions with servants. This in turn suggests different levels and types of reading. The activity described in Beckwith's note to her daughter, where she instructed her to 'Reade it with a zealous harte to understand truly,' indicates a different engagement with the text than might occur in the reading of the marginalia about Beckwith's family. The Bible moreover situated women, particularly Beckwith, within her family. The heartfelt address to her daughter and the references to her other children portray Beckwith as an exemplary pious mother, according to contemporary ideals of femininity, which suggested that a woman's primary duties were to take care of her children and watch over household devotion. If we follow the idea that annotations provide a space to mark out identity, as was discussed earlier, then we can see Beckwith's positioning of herself more clearly. Through these marginal notes, Beckwith portrayed herself as embodying commendable feminine traits, underlining her piety, and constructing an identity both for herself and for any other potential readers of the text.

Beckwith's book holds an unusual amount of annotations of different kinds but she was by no means the only woman to have used her book as a repository for domestic or familial notes. The writing of memoranda, whether in combination with other notes or not, was common.¹¹⁶ It was common for this to be done in Bibles, as Beckwith did, but this was not the only genre used for such marginalia.¹¹⁷ William Sherman in *Used*

¹¹⁶ This has often been attributed to the limited availability of paper in the early modern world, but Helen Smith has recently argued, convincingly, that '[f]ar from being paper-short, early modern England was a society in which diverse kinds of paper circulated, and were used for a wealth of purposes'. See Helen Smith, "'A unique instance of art': The Proliferating Surfaces of Early Modern Paper," *Journal of the Northern Renaissance* 8 (2017): 18.

¹¹⁷ We can speculate that the use of the Bible for family memoranda could be due to the physicality of the book. As a large book, it not only had extensive space for notes, but also would have occupied a definite

Books argued for the study of what he called the ‘matriarchive,’ suggesting that we need to broaden our study of annotations to include women.¹¹⁸ As he points out, ‘there is some evidence (even if the surviving traces are now few and far between) that women used the printed books in their households not simply as guides to proper devotion or conduct but to store and circulate individual and collective records – in other words, in just the same way that they used manuscript compilations ... readers used these blank but bounded spaces not only to register their reactions to the book but to turn the book itself into an *archive* – of culinary, spiritual, familial, financial, intellectual, medical, and even meteorological information.’¹¹⁹

Domestic annotations often reflected and were influenced by the genre of the book, as in the case of Frances Wolfreton’s collection of almanacs.¹²⁰ Wolfreton included many familial notes, generally written alongside entries for the months in which the events took place.¹²¹ For example, beside the entry for November 1666, Wolfreton wrote ‘my hosbond did the 5 day of this month was buried the 7 day.’¹²² In each almanac, up until 1677, the year she died, Wolfreton included marginal annotations about the lives of family members and friends, noting births, marriages and deaths.

Thus the almanac, already a way of organising the year, became a more personal tool

physical space within the household. It, moreover, would have been a book that would have been treasured, very unlikely to be discarded, so there would be no danger of losing the notes.

¹¹⁸ Sherman, *Used Books*.

¹¹⁹ Sherman, *Used Books*, 59.

¹²⁰ Bound collection of Poor Robin and Dade almanacks annotated by Frances Wolfreton, 1666-1679, 1690, 1693, 1702-1705, MS. Don. e. 246, Bodleian Library, Oxford. The annotations continued after Wolfreton’s last entry in 1677, and are in various hands, including that of her son, Stanford Wolfreton.

¹²¹ Many early modern owners of almanacs annotated their texts, notably John Evelyn. Adam Smyth has argued that Evelyn’s notes served as the ‘preparatory stage for his later diary writing’, seeing almanac annotations as a form of life-writing. See Adam Smyth, “Almanacs, Annotators and Life-Writing in Early Modern England,” *English Literary Renaissance* 38, no. 2 (2008): 224. Smyth has also examined Isabella Twysden’s 1647 almanac, which contained family notes as well as information about the progress of the Civil War. See Adam Smyth, *Autobiography in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010). Almanacs were popular books in the early modern household, and records of their purchase can be seen in many household account books. See, for example, Joyce Jeffreys recorded buying almanacs in her account book, as did Mary Gofton. See Judith M. Spicksley, ed., *The Business and Household Accounts of Joyce Jeffreys, Spinster of Hereford, 1638-1648* (London: British Academy, 2015); Mary Gofton, Account book of Mary Gofton (née Hanbury, afterwards Lady Sandys, afterwards Richardson), 1645-1649, MS. Eng. e. 3651, Bodleian Library.

¹²² MS. Don. e. 246, f15v, Bodleian Library.

with the addition of individual notes.¹²³ Wolfreston also added a list of ‘Thes plais boucks i lend to cosen robart comarford in iun’ at the end of the 1670 almanac.¹²⁴

Wolfreston did not tend to blend types of marginalia in the same way as Beckwith; her almanacs are the only ones that bear such practical, domestic notes, while her other books, if annotated at all, tend to include comments on the text itself. For example, in her copy of Shakerley Marmion’s play *A Fine Companion*, held in the Huntington Library, she wrote at the end of the dramatis personae ‘a resnabell prity bouk of a usurer and his 2 daters and ther loves with other prity pasiges.’¹²⁵ Wolfreston’s annotations were related to the text, but rarely appear to act as reading aids in the same way that Renaissance scholars may have used their marginalia. Her short comments on texts appear to act as personalised notes to enhance the reading experience, or record a personal response, but not necessarily as a way of aiding intellectual engagement or the accumulation of knowledge.

Not all such annotations bore such a clear relation to the genre of the book, however. For example, some household notes can be found in William Martyn’s *The Historie, and Lives, of the Kings of England*, owned by the Egerton family and currently held in the Huntington Library.¹²⁶ The Egertons were a noble family, and John Egerton (1579-1649) was made Earl of Bridgewater by James I. Alongside various signatures in both

¹²³ For more on almanacs and time, see Laura Williamson Ambrose, “Travel in Time: Local Travel Writing and Seventeenth-Century English Almanacs,” *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 43, no. 2 (2013): 419-443. Almanacs are often used as ways of exploring popular culture. See Bernard Capp, *Astrology and the Popular Press: English Almanacs, 1500-1800* (London: Faber, 1979); Louise Hill Curth, *English Almanacs, Astrology, and Popular Medicine, 1550-1700* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007).

¹²⁴ MS. Don. e. 246, f122v, Bodleian Library.

¹²⁵ Shakerley Marmion, *A Fine Companion. Acted before the King and Queene at White-Hall, and sundrie times with great applause at the private House in Salisbury Court, By the Prince his Servants* (London: Printed by Aug. Mathewes for Richard Meighen, next to the Middle Temple gate in Fleetstreet, 1633), RB 62472 Huntington Library. For more on reading plays, see Marta Straznicky, ed., *The Book of the Play: Playwrights, Stationers, and Readers in Early Modern England* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2006).

¹²⁶ Stephen Tabor, curator of early printed books at the Huntington, explains the process of identifying the book as part of the Bridgewater library here. See Stephen Tabor, “Better than Bacon,” *Verso: The Blog of the Huntington Library, Art Collections, and Botanical Gardens*, Jul 6, 2016, accessed Aug 10, 2018 <https://www.huntington.org/verso/2018/08/better-bacon>

the front and the back of the book, particularly the names Elizabeth and Frances, on the inside of the back cover someone (probably Frances Stanley Egerton, Countess of Bridgewater, and John's wife¹²⁷) wrote 'The yeare of our Lorde .1623. I did make at ashridge .3. of fine pelobeaes .3. pare of a courcer sorte, and seuen pare of a corsser sort, all made at a time.'¹²⁸ Ashridge estate, in Hertfordshire, was owned by the Egerton family. 'Pelobeaes' probably means pillowcases: Egerton was noting her making of different types of pillowcases for the family estate.¹²⁹ The book was not simply used as a literary text; it also functioned as a place for noting domestic activities and making lists, the content of such notes far removed from the content of the book itself. It is unclear why Egerton chose to write this list in this particular book: perhaps it was simply closest to hand. She may have been reading it at the time, and made use of the available paper. The act of making such notes, however, changed the book's place within the household, making a historical and political work part of the more immediate world of domestic management.

The various ways in which women annotated their books reflected their individual needs and identities. Some women did follow a more traditionally intellectual model of annotation (as in the active reading model described above), using it as a reading aid and to absorb the ideas and lessons contained in the text, although even this form of marginalia could be complex and gendered. Margaret Hoby, Anne Clifford and Susanna Beckwith all did this to an extent, adding notes that would affect future reading

¹²⁷ France Egerton was a literary patron and keen book collector, and her 'Catalogue of my ladies books at London' has been studied by Heidi Brayman Hackel, among others. See Heidi Brayman Hackel, *Reading in Early Modern England: Print, Gender and Literacy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

¹²⁸ William Martyn, *The Historie, and Lives, of the Kings of England; from William the Conqueror, unto the end of the Reigne of King Henrie the Eight* (London: Printed for John Bill, William Barret, and Henrie Fetherstone, 1615), RB 645687, Huntington Library.

¹²⁹ Adam Smyth has examined records of finances and accounts as a form of autobiography, arguing that 'the financial record [...] was one of the most common forms of personal documentation, or self-accounting, in early modern England'. See Adam Smyth, "Money, Accounting, and Life-Writing, 1600-1700: Balancing a Life," in *A History of English Autobiography*, ed. Adam Smyth (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 86. For a published edition of an early modern woman's account book, see Spicksley, ed., *The Business and Household Accounts of Joyce Jeffreys*.

experiences, and demonstrate their own concerns and identity. Beckwith situated herself within her family and emphasised her devotion and piety, conforming in many ways to the idealised image of early modern femininity. Hoby created an image of piety, but undercut with a strong religious position, with references to contemporary theological disputes. Clifford, however, presented more of an intellectual, aristocratic and political identity. The nod towards re-reading, the presence of her secretary and men servants, and the unflinching criticism of King James all placed her within a very particular social and political space. If we take early modern books to be at least semi-public then this identity formation becomes significant. In annotating their books, women were communicating various aspects of their selves to other potential readers.

However, Beckwith also annotated her book in a way largely unconnected to the content of the text. She recorded family notes, specifically birth dates, using her Bible as a record book for the household. Similarly, Frances Wolfreston and Frances Egerton also wrote notes about their lives and households in their books. These annotations still demonstrate an active use of the book as an object, even if they do not show how the book was read. These annotations still affected future reading experiences, however, representing an intervention on the genre and use of the book by the woman annotator. Moreover, familial notes situated a woman within the domestic space, attesting to their identity as a mother and household manager.

'Her Book': Autograph inscriptions

Not all women wrote such extensive notes on their books, however. One of the more prominent forms of writing on books for women, or at least a form that is easily identifiable as having been done by women, was the practice of writing one's name on a book. This tended to follow the same formula quite consistently, with inscribers writing their name and then the words 'her book.' Most of the signatures were dated only a few

years after the publication date of the text, indicating that these women either tended to buy books very soon after publication, or that newer books were more likely to be inscribed (possibly due to the financial and cultural capital attached to new books).¹³⁰ Some valuable work has been done using ownership inscriptions to build up a picture of individual women's libraries and is a rapidly expanding field.¹³¹

Two case studies on seventeenth-century women book collectors have given an insight into reading and book ownership. Both Paul Morgan's study of Frances Wolfreston, and David McKitterick on Elizabeth Puckering reconstruct these women's libraries from their signatures and inscriptions.¹³² Both these women wrote their names on a substantial collection of books. Wolfreston usually wrote 'Frances Wolfreston hor bouk' (or some variation on that spelling), whereas McKitterick has stated that Puckering's practice was 'to place her bold and clearly written signature (her Christian name often abbreviated to 'Eliz') on the flyleaf. More often, and more consistently, she placed her initials 'EP' just above or to the side of the beginning of the first line of the text – either the main text or sometimes the preface.'¹³³ McKitterick has noted that Puckering, unusually, appears to have signed books at least as often as her husband did.¹³⁴ He has managed to piece together her literary interests from her collection, demonstrating that she enjoyed poetry and drama, and was interested in Royalist writings both during the Civil War and Interregnum, and the Restoration. Similarly, Morgan has analysed Wolfreston's books, suggesting that 48% could be classed as English literature; 24% theological works; 10% historical texts; and 7% current

¹³⁰ See appendix I.

¹³¹ I have not considered book plates here, but this would be another fruitful area of research when considering claims of book ownership.

¹³² Paul Morgan, "Frances Wolfreston and 'Hor Bouks': A Seventeenth-Century Woman Book Collector," *The Library* 6th Series, 11, no. 3 (1989): 197-219; David McKitterick, "Women and their Books in Seventeenth-Century England: The Case of Elizabeth Puckering," *The Library* 1, Seventh Series (2000): 359-380.

¹³³ McKitterick, "Women and their Books," 374.

¹³⁴ McKitterick, "Women and their Books," 361.

affairs.¹³⁵ This does not necessarily represent the full extent of Wolfreton's library, but rather what Morgan has been able to identify through her inscriptions.¹³⁶ While both these women were unusual in the sheer size of what we assume were their personal libraries, they followed a relatively common practice of inscribing their name on books, often with few, if any, other annotations.

There are many reasons why these signatures may have been inscribed. They cannot be taken as definite evidence of readership. Sometimes the names written on the flyleaves of books are obviously pen trials, and there is no evidence that the woman then went on to read the book she had just signed. Instead, it may have simply been the use of a blank page that was immediately at hand. In this case, women tend to practise writing their name several times over, at different points on the page, without any clear acknowledgement of the book itself. However, the common occurrence of the phrase 'her book' indicates a different intention behind the inscription.¹³⁷ These appear to be signs of book ownership, possibly distinguishing the text from others in the household, or providing a record if it was lent to someone.

The practice may also have signified a more complex ownership claim. Rebecca Laroche has examined women's signatures in printed medical texts, arguing that a woman's signature 'claimed her ownership of an expensive volume and the knowledge that it held.'¹³⁸ Laroche focused specifically on medical knowledge, and the way

¹³⁵ Morgan, "Frances Wolfreton and 'Hor Bouks'," 204.

¹³⁶ As mentioned in chapter one, Sarah Lindenbaum has been adding to Wolfreton's library, identifying other books bearing her autograph inscription. See Sarah Lindenbaum, "About," *Frances Wolfreton Hor Bouks*, Dec 2, 2018, accessed May 4, 2019 <https://franceswolfretonhorbouks.com/>.

¹³⁷ The phrase 'her book' has garnered increasing attention in recent years, as studies of women's book ownership and reading grow. The Rare Book Working Group at Princeton University Library ran a workshop on the topic of 'her book' in October 2018, examining ownership inscriptions in the library's holdings. See Eric White, "Rare Book Working Group Examines 'Her Book'," *Notabilia* Oct 29, 2018, accessed Feb 8, 2019 <https://blogs.princeton.edu/notabilia/2018/10/29/rare-book-working-group-examines-her-book/>.

¹³⁸ Rebecca Laroche, "'To take in hand the practice of phisick': Early Modern Women's Signatures in Print Medical Texts," in *New Ways of Looking at Old Texts, IV*, ed. Michael Denbo (Tempe, Arizona: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2008), 271.

women's signatures acted as a claim to this knowledge, allowing them to mark out an area of intellectual authority. She has argued that this was in some ways a subversion of patriarchal authority, as these printed volumes tended to speak broadly to male medical practitioners, with select entries aimed at gentlewomen readers – but by inscribing their name at the beginning of the volume, women were staking a claim to all the knowledge contained therein, not simply that which was deemed acceptable for them.¹³⁹

I will extend Laroche's arguments, looking beyond the printed medical texts to other genres, and examining how women used their signatures across the literary landscape. As suggested above, ownership inscriptions may have many reasons, not all of which necessarily indicate readership. However, they do at least point to an interaction with books and manuscripts, and the importance of them as material objects. The act of writing a name in a book, whether to indicate ownership, to stake a knowledge claim, or simply as a form of writing practice, reveals various relationships with a book, either as an object or as a source of information and ideas (or both). These inscriptions do not only tell us about this relationship, but also about interpersonal relationships in which books become an actor; for example in the case of gift inscriptions, or in competing ownership claims.

Jason Scott-Warren has suggested that 'graffiti' might be a good term for these autograph inscriptions, arguing that 'many early modern books are "tagged" and "pieced" as the average wall in a European capital city.'¹⁴⁰ In this way books can be seen as an at least semi-public space; Scott-Warren suggests that all annotations are to an extent 'outward-facing' and that books were therefore 'adjuncts to everyday sociability.'¹⁴¹ He is developing Juliet Fleming's work on early modern graffiti, which

¹³⁹ Laroche, "'To take in hand the practice of phisick'," 274.

¹⁴⁰ Jason Scott-Warren, "Reading Graffiti in the Early Modern Book," *Huntington Library Quarterly* 73, no. 3 (2010): 368.

¹⁴¹ Scott-Warren, "Reading Graffiti in the Early Modern Book," 377-379.

argues that the act of writing on walls ‘appears against the grid of what we understand to be the difference between public and private.’¹⁴² Signatures, particularly those which are accompanied by longer inscriptions, or where more than one person has left their mark, are indicators of social relationships, intended for an audience of some kind, and the margins of a book become a space in which a person can present themselves to that audience. Therefore, in Scott-Warren’s words, ‘the sociable space of the book is a place for marking yourself out,’ and as books were passed between family, friends and acquaintances, ‘aspects of communal life – the negotiation of relationships, the debating of reputations – rubbed off on them.’¹⁴³

Dedications, therefore, were both performative and performed.¹⁴⁴ The act of giving a book, usually attested to in either dedicatory inscriptions or in familiar letters, was part of a process of self-fashioning. Scott-Warren posits that ‘gift-books and epistles both furnish occasions for self-accounting which, because they are produced between seeming intimates, make special claims to authenticity and evidentiality.’¹⁴⁵ Therefore inscriptions and their function within a sociable nexus are markers of individual and relational identity. This is similar to the way in which Gabriel Harvey’s identity as a member of Elizabethan professional scholarly community was demonstrated through his reading and annotating practices. Women making these marks were not only staking a claim to knowledge, but to various social relationships, both within and without the family, and were creating a textual identity for themselves in the process. In revealing

¹⁴² Juliet Fleming, *Graffiti and the Writing Arts of Early Modern England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001), 33. Katherine Acheson has also recently drawn on Fleming’s work in her study of marginal notes and space, arguing that marginalia ‘allowed women to enter forbidden spaces and extend their selves within those worlds’. See Katherine Acheson, “The Occupations of the Margins: Writing, Space, and Early Modern Women,” in *Early Modern English Marginalia*, ed. Katherine Acheson (Abingdon: Routledge, 2019), 87.

¹⁴³ Scott-Warren, “Reading Graffiti in the Early Modern Book,” 381, 379.

¹⁴⁴ Jason Scott-Warren, *Sir John Harington and the Book as Gift* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 2.

¹⁴⁵ Scott-Warren, *Sir John Harington and the Book as Gift*, 17.

women's negotiation of sociability and of knowledge, they can give us an insight into how reading habits informed, and were informed by, gender in the early modern period.

There appears to be no specific link between genre and the practice of signing one's name. Religious books were signed, largely theological texts that dealt with biblical or spiritual exegesis. However, so were books of romantic fiction, domestic advice books, histories, geographies and medical texts. Plays were signed, although not very frequently; for example 'Rachell Paule' inscribed her name opposite the epistle dedicatory in one of the First Folios held at the Folger Shakespeare Library, and the signature of 'Ann Lestrangle' appears on a copy of Ben Jonson's first folio in the Brotherton Library in Leeds.¹⁴⁶ Both books would have been relatively expensive at the time of publication, representing luxury items, and signifying the spending power and social status of their owners.¹⁴⁷ Lestrangle (1612-1663) was likely a member of the Norfolk gentry Lestrangle family, resident at Hunstanton; Paule (1617-1691) was married to the bishop of Oxford, and daughter of a wealthy merchant and politician.¹⁴⁸ Their signatures indicate a desire to assert their financial and social position, laying claim to objects of value.¹⁴⁹

This is where Laroche's idea that signatures were claims to knowledge needs to be complicated. Paule and Lestrangle's signatures appear to treat the book more as an object than a repository of knowledge. This objectification of books was not

¹⁴⁶ William Shakespeare, *Mr. William Shakespeares comedies, histories, & tragedies: published according to the true originall copies* (London: Imprinted by Isaac Iaggard, and Ed. Blount, 1623), STC 22273 Fo.1 no.72, Folger Shakespeare Library, Washington D. C.; Benjamin Jonson, *The Workes of Beniamin Jonson* (Imprinted at London by Will Stansby, 1616), BC Safe/JON, Brotherton Library, Leeds.

¹⁴⁷ Jean-Christophe Mayer has suggested that in the early seventeenth century 'A bound [Shakespeare] folio would be about forty times the price of a single play and represented almost two months' wages for an ordinary skilled worker'. Unbound folios cost less, but then the owner would have to pay to bind them themselves. See Jean-Christophe Mayer, *Shakespeare's Early Readers: A Cultural History from 1590 to 1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018).

¹⁴⁸ "Folger First Folio 72," *Folger Shakespeare Library*, accessed Mar 15, 2018 <https://www.folger.edu/first-folio-number-72>.

¹⁴⁹ We do not know exactly when Lestrangle and Paule signed their books, but it was likely to be several years, if not decades, after the folios were published. This could then also indicate a claim to cultural capital, as well as financial, by owning significant literary works.

uncommon. Some women added information on the cost of their possessions, such as in the case of Sarah Pinchbeck's copy of Lupton's *A Thousand Notable Things*, which she inscribed on the front flyleaf 'Sarah Pinchbeck Her Booke Bought November y^e 15th 1693 Cost two shillings.'¹⁵⁰ This form of inscription is clearly not an attempt to enter into a conversation with the book, or demonstrate their intellectual identity, but more a record of their economic and social position.

Some women gave more obvious evidence of readership. For example the inscription 'Elisa: Gregor her Book 1696' rests on the inside front cover of a copy of Charles Patin's *Travels Thro' Germany*, with 'read over August 1697' written just underneath.¹⁵¹ This is the clearest example of the act of reading being noted, but is quite a rare occurrence. Gregor's inscription reveals an effort to preserve the act of reading and gives an insight into her use of the book. It would seem that she either bought the book in 1696 and waited a year to read it; or that she read it upon purchase and re-read it the next year. Either way, the fact that she saw fit to record that fact, whether for herself or future readers, is interesting. Her signature does not necessarily lay claim to knowledge, or to the value of the physical object, but rather seems to note the temporality of reading, and its place within a person's life.

The books surveyed so far attest to the range of genres to which women attached their names. Even the genre of romance, so heavily criticised by contemporary cultural commentators (see chapter five), bears evidence of women's signatures. An English translation of Vital d'Audiguier's *Histoire Trage-Comique de Nostre Temps*, for

¹⁵⁰ Thomas Lupton, *A Thousand Notable Things of Sundry sorts, enlarged. Whereof some are Wonderful, some Strange, some Pleasant, divers Necessary, a great sort Profitable, and many very Precious. Whereunto is now added, many Excellent New Conceits never before Printed, very Witty, Useful and Delightful* (London: Printed for M. Wotton and G. Conyers, at the Three Pigeons over against the Inner-Temple-Gate in Fleetstreet; and at the Golden Ring on Ludgate-Hill, over against the Old Bayly, 1686). AG104 .L96 1686 *, William Andrews Clark Memorial Library, Los Angeles.

¹⁵¹ Charles Patin, *Travels Thro' Germany, Swisserland, Bohemia, Holland; and other Parts of Europe: Describing the most Considerable Citys, and the Palaces of Princes: Together, with Historical Relations, and Critical Observations upon Ancient Medals and Inscriptions* (London: Printed for A. Swall and T. Child at the Unicorn in St. Pauls Church-yard, 1697), D915 .P29E 1697 *, Clark Library.

example, was signed by several women, including Margaret Corbyn, who used the blank page of the flyleaf to experiment with various different spellings of her name (*see appendix III, figure 4*).¹⁵² She also added to one signature the words ‘hir booke,’ and further down the page, in a neater hand, wrote ‘Margrit Corbyn Eius Liber.’ This Latin formulation, meaning ‘her book’ was unusual for women autographers, being much more common amongst scholarly men, who signed their book in this way, or with the words ‘ex libris’ and then their name. Moreover, the use of Latin for a romance is notable. D’Audiguier (1565-1624) the French writer, whose chivalric romance, later called *Histoire des Amours de Lysandre et de Caliste*, became popular throughout Europe. As discussed in chapters five and seven, romances were generally seen as being read for pleasure, and having little or no educational value. Latin inscriptions, however, were more often found on scholarly works, and so Corbyn’s use of the phrase, indicating her education, potentially subverted these ideas about the romance genre.

The range of genres represented here indicates that these women inscribers did not feel an aversion to advertising their reading habits, or at least their book ownership, to other readers and users of the book in question. While romantic fiction is rarely represented in book lists or inventories, there appears to have been a willingness among at least some women to stake a claim to their novels. This again complicates Laroche’s suggestion that signing a book was a way of claiming the knowledge held within that book; it is unlikely that this was the case with romantic fiction. Instead, the signatures seem to indicate the importance or value placed on the books, both for the individual reader and within relationships.

¹⁵² Vital d’Audiguier, *A Tragi-Comicall History of Our Times, Under the Borrowed Names of Lisander and Calista* (London, Printed by R. Y. for G. Lathum, at the Bishops head in Paules Church-yard, 1635), STC 907 (copy 1), Folger Library.

These relationships were visible in autograph inscriptions. As Scott-Warren and Fleming have suggested the flyleaves and endpapers of book became a place where owners and readers could demonstrate their sociable and relational identity. These relationships were often, although not always, homosocial, revealing a book as a nexus in circles of female family and friends.¹⁵³ This was important for a woman's identity: by advertising her place within such networks, she could lay claim to social standing, and advertise her political, social or intellectual allegiances.

Inscriptions attest to the fact that books were often given as gifts, as part of these relationships between family and friends. On a copy of Francisco de Quintana's *The History of Don Fenise*, the front flyleaf is inscribed 'Penelope Compton her Book g[e]uene hir by the Countes of Northapton May the 2: 1652.'¹⁵⁴ Below that is written 'An Compton,' in a late seventeenth- or early eighteenth-century hand. The former inscription implies a level of ceremony with the gift-giving; this was not simply the lending of a book between two friends or acquaintances, but instead was a gesture significant enough for the recipient to mark it in ink. In this case, the book was originally given by Isabella Compton (née Sackville), the Countess of Northampton, to her sister-in-law, Penelope Compton, about five years after Isabella's marriage. The latter signature suggests that the book remained within the family, passed down to a daughter, sister or niece, or other female relative, who then felt the need to mark her own ownership. 'An' could have been Lady Anne Compton, who died in 1705.

¹⁵³ Victoria Burke has examined women's participation in heterosocial literary networks, examining both annotations and commonplace books. She argues, in relation to the Shakespeare first folio inscribed by Anne Denton, that 'Denton's positioning of herself as part of a circle is not something commonly seen on title pages of women's manuscripts; inscriptions declaring ownership are more typical.' This is certainly true for heterosocial interactions, but relationship between women were often inscribed on the pages of books, as will be demonstrated here. See Victoria E. Burke, "Reading Friends: Women's Participation in 'Masculine' Literary Culture," in *Early Modern Women's Manuscript Writing: Selected Papers from the Trinity/Trent Colloquium*, ed. Victoria E. Burke and Jonathan Gibson (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004), 75.

¹⁵⁴ Francisco de Quintana, *The History of Don Fenise. A New Romance, Written in Spanish by Francisco de las-Coveras. And now Englished by a Person of Honour* (London, Printed for Humphrey Moseley, and are to be sold at his shop at the Prince's Armes in St Paul's Church-yard, 1651), He67 82, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, New Haven.

However, she married Hugh Cholmley in 1665/6, so if the hand is later then she was either not using her married name or it was another Anne in the family.

A similar transaction is evidenced in Frances Wolfreston's copy of Cervantes' *The Travels of Persiles and Sigismunda*.¹⁵⁵ Wolfreston has written 'Frances Wolfreston hor bouk given hor by hor sister ursly medellmore' on the flyleaf. The fact of noting this down again gives some significance to the passing of the book between sisters; Wolfreston obviously wanted some record of the transaction. She often recorded the provenance of her books. In her copy of Chaucer held at the Folger Library, she noted that her mother-in-law, Mary Wolfreston, gave her the book.¹⁵⁶ This is revealing about familial relationships, and the ways in which book lending and giving formed part of a sociable transaction. Natalie Zemon Davis has discussed the role of the book as a gift in sixteenth-century France, arguing that books were 'part of systems of gift and obligation.'¹⁵⁷ Passing books between friends and family, then, was a marker of the relationship, a way of demonstrating closeness and possibly creating a shared experience through the act of reading.

Relationships between women are not the only ones revealed in inscriptions on books. There are several examples of men and women both signing books, for example in the case of the Kemp family. Their copy of Jean-Pierre Camus' *Admirable Events* is signed on the flyleaf 'Robt Kemp: November 16: 1651,' and then on the next page, undated but

¹⁵⁵ Miguel de Cervantes, *The Travels of Persiles and Sigismunda. A Northern History. Wherein, amongst the variable Fortunes of the Prince of Thule, and this Princesse of Frisland, are interlaced many Witty Discourses, Morall, Politicall, and Delightfull. The first Copie, beeing written in Spanish; translated afterward into French; and now, last, into English* (London: Printed by H. L. for M. L. and are to be sold at the signe of the Bishops head, in Pauls Church-yard, 1619), PQ 6329 .T77 1619, Clark Library.

¹⁵⁶ Geoffrey Chaucer, *The Workes of Geffray Chaucer: newly printed with dyuers workes whiche were neuer in print before, as in the table more playnly dothe appere* (Imprynted at London, by Robart Toye, dwellynge in Paules Church Yard at the sygne of the Bell [1550?]), STC 5074 (copy 2), Folger Library. For more on this acquisition, see Allison Wiggins, "Frances Wolfreston's Chaucer," in *Women and Writing c.1340 – c.1650: The Domestication of Print Culture*, ed. Anne Lawrence-Mathers and Phillipa Hardman (York: York Medieval Press, 2010), 77-89.

¹⁵⁷ Natalie Zemon Davis, "Beyond the Market: Books as Gifts in Sixteenth-Century France: The Prothero Lecture," *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 33 (1983): 69. For more work on the book as a gift, see Scott-Warren, *Sir John Harington and the Book as Gift*.

in a seventeenth-century hand, ‘Mary Kemp her Book.’¹⁵⁸ It is unclear what relationship Robert and Mary Kemp bore to each other; whether husband and wife, brother and sister, or father and daughter, but the dual ownership claims are notable. They may have signed it at different times, or possibly it was indicative of disputed book ownership.

A clearer example of this joint or contested ownership comes from the Folger Library’s copy of Evelyn’s *Publick Employment*. On the inside of the front cover is written ‘Elizabeth Herbert her Booke 1679,’ and on the opposite page ‘Nathanel Herbert his Booke 1679’ (see appendix III, figure 5).¹⁵⁹ Again, we cannot be certain of the exact relationship between these two, but the placement of their inscriptions, on pages facing each other, conjures an image of either a (quite passive aggressive) contest over the book or a deliberate statement of joint ownership. Elizabeth reiterated her claim by writing her name again, several times, on the back endpaper. These hints at familial relationships were rarely elaborated on, but such inscriptions give a partial insight into early modern intra- and inter-household connections. Books were used as part of the interaction between spouses, or other family members, in the early modern household, hinting at friendships or disagreements. They facilitated exchange in relationships, and these gifts were deemed noteworthy, either to the receiver or the giver. As evidenced by contemporary letters, lending books was very common, so it is hard to know whether these inscriptions were evidence of lending or donating the books. Either way the exchange hints at various familial and sociable relationships.

¹⁵⁸ Jean-Pierre Camus, *Admirable Events: Selected out of Foure Bookes, Written in French by the Right Reverend, John Peter Camus, Bishop of Belley. Together with morall Relations, written by the same Author, and translated into English by S. Du Verger* (London: Printed by Thomas Harper for William Brooks, and are to be sold at his shop in Holborn in Turnstile Lane, 1639), PQ1735 C3 E9E *, Clark Library.

¹⁵⁹ John Evelyn, *Publick Employment and an Active Life with all it Appanages, Such as Fame, Command, Riches, Conversation, &c. Prefer'd to Solitude. In Reply to a late Ingenious Essay of a contrary Title* (London, Printed by J. M. for H. Herringman at the Sign of the Blew Anchor in the Lower Walk of the New-Exchange, 1667), E3511a, Folger Library.

Inscriptions revealing relationships were not always as familiar as the ones outlined above. Books also functioned as important objects in relationships beyond close family circles. Giving or receiving books could serve to make political alliances or intellectual connections, securing a person's place in a more formalised network of acquaintances. Anne Sadleir (née Coke), literary patron and daughter of the jurist Sir Edward Coke, wrote on the flyleaf of her thirteenth-century Apocalypse manuscript, when trusting it to the care of a Bishop, and thereafter Cambridge University.¹⁶⁰ She made reference to the political and religious upheavals of the time:

I commit this booke to the custodie of the Right Reverend Father in god, Raffe lo: Bishop of Exon; when times are better settled (which god hasten) it is with my other booke and my coines, given to Trinitie Colledge Librarie in Cambridge, god in his good time, restore her with her sister Oxford to there pristine happines, the vulgar People to there former obedience, and god bless, and restore Charles the second, and make him like his most glorious Father Amen¹⁶¹

This inscription is dated below 'August the 20th 1649.' Sadleir's political position and view on the Civil War conflict is made clear, and the fact that she chose to write this so explicitly indicates a desire on her part to advertise her views to future readers. This is different from inscriptions on books that were so often aimed at family members or friends; Sadleir knew that this manuscript was going to Cambridge University, and therefore to an unknown audience. Her declaration of ownership, patronage, and

¹⁶⁰ For more on Sadleir's reading and book collection, see Arnold Hunt, "The Books, Manuscripts and Literary Patronage of Mrs Anne Sadleir (1585-1670)," in *Early Modern Women's Manuscript Writing: Selected Papers from the Trinity/Trent Colloquium*, ed. Victoria E. Burke and Jonathan Gibson (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004), 205-236.

¹⁶¹ The Trinity Apocalypse, R.16.2, Trinity College, Cambridge.

political opinion therefore gave her a position of authority, and suggests a desire to make her ownership and beliefs known to posterity.

Zemon Davis has argued that the book as a patronage gift had an advantage over many other items, as the original owner's message could not be so easily lost or divorced from the object.¹⁶² She writes that, '[i]n the book, everything could be made explicit and the dedications themselves could draw heavily on the language of gifts and responsibilities.'¹⁶³ Sadleir's inscription, then, made her political and social identity very public, difficult to hide from view or detach from the book itself.

Print books were not the only texts that women chose to inscribe with their names. The same conventions tended to be followed in manuscript books, such as recipe collections. Many recipe books were inscribed with the formula of a woman's name, followed by some variation on the phrase 'her book.' In the Wellcome Library's collection of recipe books, many bear one or more women's signatures. Searching for the term 'her book' for the years 1600-1699 in the Wellcome's digitised collection of recipe books returned eighty-two results (although some were from the same manuscript). This signature is often accompanied by a date, for example in the case of Hannah Bisaker, who signed the manuscript 'Hannah Bisaker Her Booke The 12th September Anno: 1692.'¹⁶⁴ It is unclear if this referred to the date the manuscript was started, finished, or even bought, but in general such inscriptions were clearly by the author of the book, being in the same hand. Such ownership claims were sometimes repeated, such as in Sarah Hudson's receipt book.¹⁶⁵ On the first preliminary page she wrote 'Sarah Hudson hir Booke in y^e year of our Lord and Sa[v]ior Jesus Christ 1687/8,' then on the second preliminary page 'Sarah Hudson her book February y^e 15th day in y^e year of our Lord

¹⁶² Zemon Davis, "Beyond the Market," 79.

¹⁶³ Zemon Davis, "Beyond the Market," 79.

¹⁶⁴ Bisaker, Hannah, 1692, MS.1176, Wellcome Library, London.

¹⁶⁵ Hudson, Sarah, 1678, MS.2954, Wellcome Library.

and Saviour Jesus Christ 1678.’ It is unclear why she signed the first page so long after she had signed the second. Underneath the second signature she wrote ‘Sarah hudson god preserue her in all her voiges wheathersoeuer she goetth god preserue & keep her in all parts of y^e world whear so euer she goeth & whith whosoeuer she goetth.’ Her inscriptions amounted to more than simple pen trials; they repeatedly staked her claim to the manuscript.

Gift inscriptions were also features of manuscript recipe books, again underlining the part books played in sociable and familial networks.¹⁶⁶ In Lady Frances Catchmay’s (d. 1629) recipe book there is an inscription on the verso of the second preliminary page, reading:

This Booke with the others of Medicins, preserues and Cookerye, My lady Catchmay lefte with me to be delivered to her Sonne Sir William Catchmay Earnestly desiringe and Chardginge him to lett every one of his Brothers and Sisters to haue true Coppyes of the sayd Bookes, or such parte thereof as any of them doth desire. In witness that this was her request, I haue herevnto sett my hand at the delivery of the sayd Bookes. Ed. Bett.¹⁶⁷

Copies of the book were being passed to both her sons and daughters, despite recipe books being traditionally seen as largely owned and created by women.¹⁶⁸ The intermediary between Catchmay and her son wanted his role in the delivery known, and William was enjoined to make ‘true Coppyes’ of the books for his siblings, if they so

¹⁶⁶ Sara Pennell has argued for the centrality of relationships to the creation of manuscript recipe books, suggesting that these manuscripts made possible by, and thrived upon, the circulation of recipes between mothers, sisters and daughters, friends and neighbours of all ranks’. See Sara Pennell, “Perfecting Practice? Women, Manuscript Recipes and Knowledge in Early Modern England,” in *Early Modern Women’s Manuscript Writing: Selected Papers from the Trinity/Trent Colloquium*, ed. Victoria E. Burke and Jonathan Gibson (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004), 242.

¹⁶⁷ Catchmay, Lady Frances, 1625, MS.184a, Wellcome Library

¹⁶⁸ There is not time here to discuss the implications of manuscript recipe books or other compilations being left in wills, but this would provide an interesting insight into the make-up of the recipients of such inheritances.

desired. This effort to preserve and disseminate Catchmay's manuscript within the family indicates the importance it held, at least for her, and possibly for her children.

The similarity in the inscriptions of print and manuscript texts indicates lack of any real dividing line between the two media in early modern inscription culture. They were inscribed with the same formula, making the same ownership claim. Manuscript recipe books were passed between friends and family, possibly carrying emotional or relational significance within that network, just as printed works were. However, if we follow Laroche's argument that signatures were a way of claiming the knowledge contained within a book, this functioned in a slightly different way in manuscript recipe books. The person who signed the book was usually the compiler, thus the knowledge within the book was already theirs; the signature merely reinforces this. Elaine Leong has discussed women's critical reading of print herbals and medicinal texts, and the ways in which they drew on their own knowledge both to read printed texts and compile manuscript books, arguing that they 'fully utilised the offerings coming off the printing presses to extend, confirm and challenge their own medical knowledge.'¹⁶⁹ However, there was more care within manuscript recipe books to provide alternative attribution, ensuring that the signer did not lay claim to all the recipes contained therein.

Conclusion

Women's marginalia and inscriptions reveal many aspects of their lives, including their intellectual authority, their relationships and their opinions on a huge range of issues. The importance of women's annotations on books has been largely underestimated, dealt with largely in terms of specific case studies, or assumed to have been confined and suppressed by contemporary gender prescriptions. Annotations have largely been mined for evidence of intellectual engagement with books, for both men and women,

¹⁶⁹ Elaine Leong, "'Herbals She Peruseth': Reading Medicine in Early Modern England," *Renaissance Studies* 28, no. 4 (2014): 556-578.

rather than looking at the ways they reveal the important part books played in people's lives, whether intellectual, emotional, or as participants in relationships. Marginalia was not always contestatory, interpretive, or even necessarily related directly to the text. It might be all these things, but it was also more than this; it shows women using the books for purposes beyond a scholarly accumulation of knowledge. Books and the ideas contained within them could contain useful information for their own lives, either intellectual, spiritual or practical; could provide a space for family memoranda; or could be a record of relationships and transactions.

Annotation practices also contributed to the presentation of women's identities; some form of audience must have been imagined for the manuscript additions, even if it was very small, and thus writing one's name on the book or including marginal notes was an act of self-representation. This could be a simple statement of ownership, claiming the book, and by extension the text therein, as one's own; or it could be an act of interpretation and social, political, or religious positioning through marginalia. As Scott-Warren suggested in terms of gift inscriptions, this was performative, and linked to a woman's concept of her own identity. When we consider marginalia, ownership inscriptions are often separated, and not seen as part of the active intellectualism that led to marginal annotations. However, they both acted in similar ways, claiming ownership of a space, of identity, and of various forms of knowledge.

All of this could still be considered 'active' or 'goal-oriented,' if we do not allow the interpretations of Jardine and Grafton's thesis to exclude all other readers and reading practices. Annotations reveal efforts to gain various forms of knowledge, to govern households and aid or establish relationships, and to create a form of identity. Women used books for their own, individual ends, ends which should not be assessed in relation to a male intellectual ideal. This same argument could be made for other male readers, who would not necessarily have been scholars or intellectuals. There is an implicit

devaluation of the domestic and emotional uses of reading, but these frameworks would have been very important for women's lives, and perhaps this way of reading should be seen as a choice. That is not to deny the many obstacles that actively prevented women from participating in the early modern intellectual culture, but it does not necessarily follow that all other forms of literary engagement were therefore evidence of suppression and subordination.

Writing Reading: Commonplacing, Collecting and Collating Experiences of the Page

Alongside the annotations discussed in the last chapter, early modern readers frequently engaged with their texts by keeping notebooks recording their reading activity. Some of the most extensive and impressive studies of early modern reading have been based on the analysis of commonplace books, collections of quotations and excerpts from printed texts grouped under thematic headings. William Sherman's study of John Dee's reading, for example, followed Jardine and Grafton's active reading model to argue that Dee 'did not read texts just to learn from them in a disinterested process of self-education: he read them to use them.'¹ Annotation and keeping a commonplace book were, according to Sherman, key to this practice. He describes a method of reading in which the material is first surveyed, then processed, 'by digesting its contents ... and by gathering, in one way or another, pieces useful for meeting the reader's future needs.'² Similarly, Kevin Sharpe studied William Drake's reading through his commonplace books, demonstrating how Drake used reading to understand the world in which he was living.³ Drake (1606-1669), the English lawyer and politician, wrote extensive reading notes during the Civil War and Interregnum. Sharpe has demonstrated how Drake's reading, even when not directly linked to the Civil War, indicates a wide-ranging endeavour to understand aspects of the conflict.⁴ He argued that 'the classical and humanist texts became, no less than topical political treatises, texts of revolution, or

¹ William H. Sherman, *John Dee: The Politics of Reading and Writing in the English Renaissance* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1995), 60. Sherman also studied the commonplace book of the lawyer Sir Julius Caesar (1558-1636), calling the manuscript 'a map of [Caesar's] entire world of knowledge.' See William H. Sherman, *Used Books: Marking Readers in Renaissance England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008), 127.

² Sherman, *John Dee*, 60.

³ Kevin Sharpe, *Reading Revolutions: The Politics of Reading in Early Modern England* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000).

⁴ In a similar project, Thomas Fulton has examined Milton's commonplace book, which he calls 'only political notebook known to have belonged to an anti-Stuart writer during the period of the English Civil War'. See Thomas Fulton, *Historical Milton: Manuscript, Print, and Political Culture in Revolutionary England* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2010), 2.

texts that Drake read for his meditation on and negotiation with the revolutionary times.’⁵ Drake’s notebooks and commonplace books, therefore, are seen as an attempt to understand his world. Sharpe goes on to point out that during the Renaissance any act of reading, including excerpting, commentary and gloss, ‘was seen as an act of interpretation, of giving ‘meaning’, an act that blurred the distinction between author and reader.’⁶

This builds up an image of the early modern reader approaching their books pen in hand, drawing on a humanist culture that is overwhelmingly male, and grounded in particular educational institutions. We know that women were significantly less literate than men in this period, likely to be able to read but not write (or at least not write well). They also were not a part of the formal, humanist education system that encouraged the use of commonplace books as a learning tool. Commonplace books were originally part of humanist pedagogy, wherein a reader would collect short extracts of text under various thematic headings in a manuscript book (such as fortune, virtue, justice, death, life), intended to provide a personal compendium of information to be used later, often in original composition.⁷ These compilations were used as part of a young boy’s education, and as part of scholarly work.⁸ The practice was integral to the rise of humanism, as Ann Blair points out: ‘in their effort to lead a return to the purity of classical Latin, the humanists advocated the careful study of models of ancient rhetoric, notably by copying out the best passages from one’s reading in a notebook, where they

⁵ Sharpe, *Reading Revolutions*, 171.

⁶ Sharpe, *Reading Revolutions*, 191.

⁷ Jonathan Gibson, “Casting off Blanks: Hidden Structures in Early Modern Paper Books,” in *Material Readings of Early Modern Culture: Texts and Social Practices, 1580-1730*, ed. James Daybell and Peter Hinds (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 210.

⁸ This originated with the Italian *florilegium* in the fifteenth century: excerpting and collecting quotations from classical texts was an important part of their recovery. Italian private schools in the early fifteenth century were key to the development of European classical education, and the use of notebooks for reading notes were a key part of their curriculum. See Ann Moss, *Printed Commonplace-Books and the Structuring of Renaissance Thought* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1996).

could be retrieved for emulation and citation.’⁹ This ‘information retrieval system,’ as Ann Moss calls it, had relatively codified conventions, at least within the humanist tradition.¹⁰

Commonplace books have therefore been seen as central to the history of reading. They represent a mode of reading that relied on writing and excerpting to properly understand and digest the text, and to absorb its lessons. Few would argue that this was the only way early modern people read – there are no suggestions, for example, that John Dee or William Drake collected extracts from their shopping lists or receipts. However, the commonplace book was still a culturally significant way for men to organise and conceptualise their reading, and continued to be so well into the eighteenth century.¹¹

The more one looks at the commonplace book, however, the more the category starts to dissolve, and blend into a much richer array of note-taking, compilations, memoranda, miscellanies and other writings. Many early modern manuscript notebooks integrated records of reading, including excerpts and transcriptions, with jokes, stories, and various records of life (such as diary extracts or household accounts), so it is often difficult to tell where the diary, memoranda or miscellany ends and the commonplace begins.

Victoria Burke has described the many different types of commonplace book, saying ‘at one end of the spectrum were the Latin commonplace books compiled by schoolboys, organized into ‘topics’ or ‘places’ under which sententious sayings were recorded. At

⁹ Ann M. Blair, *Too Much to Know: Managing Scholarly Information before the Modern Age* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010), 69.

¹⁰ Ann Moss, “Commonplace-Rhetoric and Thought-Patterns in Early Modern Culture,” in *The Recovery of Rhetoric: Persuasive Discourse and Disciplinarity in the Human Sciences*, ed. R. H. Roberts and J. M. M. Good (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1993), 53. Burke has also argued that as the uses and users of commonplace books moved out of the scholarly sphere, the form became less well regarded: ‘when it was removed from this educational sphere, and those without access to this sphere, including women, could tap into this way of codifying knowledge, its stock went down.’ See Victoria E. Burke, “‘Memorial Books’: Commonplaces, Gender, and Manuscript Compilation in Seventeenth-Century England,” in *Ars Reminiscendi: Mind and Memory in Renaissance Culture*, ed. Donald Beecher and Grant Williams (Toronto: Centre for Reformation and Renaissance Studies, 2009), 122.

¹¹ David Allan, *Commonplace Books and Reading in Georgian England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

the other end were the poetical miscellanies compiled for pleasure, which were filled with an apparently random collection of poetry.’¹² However, this implies a clear opposition between the two ends of the scale, pitting reading for pleasure and reading for education against one another. Fred Schurink has cautioned against this type of dichotomy, arguing that the division between pragmatic and recreational reading is too simplistic, and that commonplace books reveal both, often simultaneously.¹³ He uses the commonplace books of three early modern men to demonstrate how they recorded different types and practices of reading, blurring the line between reading for practical use and information-gathering, and reading for pleasure.

The chronology of the commonplace is key to this discussion. The commonplace book was used throughout the sixteenth and into the seventeenth century although, as Moss has pointed out, ‘it is the very nature of the commonplace-book that the quotations it gathers tend to pull away from the norms to which they are attached.’¹⁴ The commonplace book developed and gained new users beyond the intellectual elite, who manipulated and changed the form for their own use. This development allowed more women (and non-elite men) to engage with the form, adapting it for different ends. The manuscripts I am discussing here have come from the seventeenth century, often the late seventeenth century, reflecting the ways in which the commonplace book had become unmoored from its humanist pedagogical roots.¹⁵ This broadening of the category

¹² Victoria E. Burke, “Ann Bowyer’s Commonplace Book (Bodleian Library Ashmole MS 51): Reading and Writing Among the ‘Middling Sort,’” *Early Modern Literary Studies* 6, no. 3 (2001): 6.

¹³ Fred Schurink, “Manuscript Commonplace Books, Literature, and Reading in Early Modern England,” *Huntington Library Quarterly* 73, no. 3 (2010): 453-469.

¹⁴ Moss, “Commonplace-Rhetoric and Thought-Patterns,” 56.

¹⁵ The sources here, as in the last chapter, have been drawn from archival work across the UK and USA, including the Folger Shakespeare Library (hereafter Folger Library); the William Andrews Clark Memorial Library (Clark Library); the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library (Beinecke Library); the British Library; and various archives and local studies libraries. I relied on searching library catalogues using terms such as ‘commonplace’, often in conjunction with a woman’s name (see chapter one for an extended discussion of this methodology). However, a lot depends on the preferences of each cataloguer, as the term ‘commonplace’ can be quite indiscriminately, or can differ depending on the priorities of each institution. The manuscripts here are ones I was able to find through the online catalogue; therefore only those which were clearly identified as belonging to a woman, within the

allows for the inclusion of more women in the study of commonplace books, and for a greater consideration of their reading ‘activity.’

There has been recent, and more focused, work on the problems of categorising these manuscripts, most notably by scholars such as Adam Smyth and Jonathan Gibson. They have recognised the highly individualised nature of manuscript notebooks and the ways in which various forms were employed, and often intermingled.¹⁶ Terms like ‘miscellany’ are often used almost interchangeably with ‘commonplace book,’ although some scholars have argued for stricter definitions of manuscript genres. Harold Love has suggested that we need to maintain a distinction between commonplace books and personal miscellanies. He defines the former along traditional humanist lines, as ‘a series of short *loci communes* arranged under alphabetical headings’; whereas the latter is a ‘class of manuscript books into which the compiler entered texts of varying lengths which were either complete units or substantial excerpts,’ which he suggests were largely drawn from manuscripts circulated through scribal publication, rather than printed texts.¹⁷ ‘Personal’ is not used here to suggest the inclusion of details about the compiler’s life, but rather ‘in the sense that the particular configuration of scribally circulated material in a given book would never be repeated exactly, depending as it did on the tastes and interests of its compiler,’ and the texts to which he or she had access.¹⁸ Love’s distinctions do not leave much room for movement. They are extremely specific, and the number of manuscripts to actually comply with these definitions is likely very small. Love goes on to list other manuscript genres that crossover, but are still, in his

catalogue notes. This does not mean this is representative of the extent of each library’s collection, or of the books that may have been anonymously authored by women.

¹⁶ Adam Smyth, “Commonplace Book Culture: A List of Sixteen Traits,” in *Women and Writing c.1340 – c.1650: The Domestication of Print Culture*, ed. Anne Lawrence-Mathers and Phillipa Hardman (York: York Medieval Press, 2010), 90-110; Gibson, “Casting off Blanks”.

¹⁷ Harold Love, “How Personal is a Personal Miscellany? Sarah Cowper, Martin Clifford and the ‘Buckingham Commonplace Book’,” in *Order and Connexion: Studies in Bibliography and Book History*, ed. R. C. Alston (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1997), 111, 112.

¹⁸ Love, “How Personal is a Personal Miscellany?” 112.

classification system, distinct entities; including collections of maxims, of conversation pieces, aide-mémoires, anthologies, and professionally written manuscript miscellanies.¹⁹ While it is useful to think about generic distinctions in manuscript culture, Love's categorisation system is problematic as some manuscripts are forced into conventions they do not fit, or are disregarded as they do not follow identifiable forms. Manuscript compilations are often uniquely structured, depending on the individual or individuals who created them. Imposing our definitions of form and genre on early modern manuscripts can be useful, but they often exclude those who did not have access to the knowledge required to follow such conventions, or who chose for whatever reason to deviate from the rulebook.

Smyth has suggested that scholars are often more comfortable theorising about commonplacing than defining the form itself.²⁰ He goes on to point out that 'not only was the commonplace book of theory an idea(l) that was in a continual state of modification; the gap between neat prescription and messy practice was also often cavernously wide: where commonplace books end and where other textual forms begin (the note-book, pocket-book, miscellany, table-book, diary, thesaurus ('treasure chest'), *sylvae* ('forest'), florilegia) is often difficult to discern.'²¹ In Smyth's view, we should not impose restrictive boundaries on manuscript genres, which could take so many individualised forms, especially as early modern compilers and readers tended to view such boundaries as fluid and malleable.²² He argues convincingly that it is more important to see compilers of manuscripts as participating in a culture of commonplace books, an approach which I have followed here. Looking at practices of commonplacing and creating miscellanies as evidence of women's participation in, and negotiation of, a

¹⁹ Love, "How Personal is a Personal Miscellany?" 112 – 113.

²⁰ Smyth, "Commonplace Book Culture," 90.

²¹ Smyth, "Commonplace Book Culture," 93.

²² Smyth, "Commonplace Book Culture," 94.

culture of reading, alongside the other areas of interest for this thesis, will lead to a more nuanced discussion of gender and reading practices.

This culture of commonplacing shows how a part of the history of reading is the history of writing, particularly the process of creating records of reading, or of texts derived from reading. Moreover, the relationship between reading and events in an individual's lifetime, and the sociality of reading, as texts are edited or passed between different people, becomes clear. Writing about reading is a process of memorialisation, in which not only the text but the events and relationships surrounding the reading experience are set down in manuscript books.

Women's absence from humanist educational traditions has led to the assumption that early modern women did not read in this active, excerpting and instrumental manner. Certainly, few women produced anything comparable to Drake's commonplace volumes, at least that we know of.²³ Sarah Cowper is one of the few, producing five miscellanies and one commonplace book, alongside her diaries.²⁴ Cowper signalled her use of both reading and note-taking in the beginning of her commonplace book, writing on the title page 'If in the days of my youth, I had not diverted my thoughts with such stuff as this book contains, the unhappy accidents of my life, had been more than enough to have made me mad.'²⁵ This implies a different kind of reading to that of the humanist scholar: one which was more emotional, and served as a comfort or guide during difficult periods of life. The act of note-taking then was not pedagogical; instead it facilitated this comfort, and recorded it for later readings. This should not be seen as

²³ Elizabeth Griffiths and Jane Whittle produced a compelling study of women's manuscript notebooks, investigating the account books of the Norfolk-based Le Strange family, but they do not specifically connect this to reading practices. See Elizabeth Griffiths and Jane Whittle, *Consumption and Gender in the Early Seventeenth-Century Household: The World of Alice Le Strange* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).

²⁴ Anne Kugler has done extensive work on Cowper, see Anne Kugler, *Errant Plagiary: The Writing Life of Lady Sarah Cowper* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002).

²⁵ Sarah Cowper, *Commonplace Book*, D/EP F37, Hertfordshire Archives and Local Studies, Hertford.

different from Drake's reading process, which according to Sharpe was a process of understanding his world. Cowper was doing the same thing, even if it has often been framed differently due to her domestic, rather than political or intellectual, role.

Women could be quite revolutionary in this disruption of the form.²⁶ The very act of commonplacing involves structuring and organising knowledge, traditionally into a set of topics relevant to humanist education. By appropriating and repurposing the form, mixing topics and genres, women challenged the scholarly status quo, and claimed intellectual authority over areas of their own lives. Notebooks provide clear evidence of women developing traditionally male intellectual practices for their own ends. As we saw earlier, women often used humanist reading practices, intended for male scholarly endeavour, in their own lives, and this can be seen in their use of commonplace book traditions as well as annotation practices. They did this in a variety of ways, often playing with and adapting the form of the commonplace book. Some women's commonplace books did follow the formulae set out above. However, a great many of them diverged from the norm in significant ways, indicating a different engagement with texts. This, again, allows us to challenge the 'active' reading paradigm, and question the ways in which both men and women interpreted texts and gathered knowledge.

Ella Ophir has suggested a way in which this blurring of generic boundaries can be considered, in her work on the notebooks of Evelyn Wilson, a London employment register clerk who died in 1934, and whose notebooks were discovered and published posthumously.²⁷ These included diary entries, extracts copied from texts and newspaper

²⁶ This is similar to Laura Gowing's exploration of how female apprentices altered the form of their indentures, as their very gender required a departure from the standard form. The fact of being a woman, as opposed to the universalised man, could lead to a disruption of manuscript and printed form. See Laura Gowing, "Girls on Forms: Apprenticing Young Women in Seventeenth-Century London," *Journal of British Studies* 55 (2016): 447-473.

²⁷ Ella Ophir, "The Diary and the Commonplace Book: Self-Inscription in *The Note Books of a Woman Alone*," *Biography* 38, no. 1 (2015): 41-55.

clippings. While Wilson was writing in a very different historical context, the approach Ophir has taken to the notebooks is useful here. Ophir suggests that we should look at these manuscripts as a practice, not a text, and that the work can therefore be seen as an ‘extended, multifaceted work of periodic self-inscription.’²⁸ She elaborates: ‘Wilson’s practice of transcribing and collecting texts was continuous with the purposes and processes of diary writing with which it was interwoven: self-reflection, self-definition, and perhaps most fundamentally, the desire to wrest from the welter of life the clarity of articulate expression.’²⁹ Discussions of self-definition often come up in talking about writing, and thus could be linked to commonplaceing as an act of writing, rather than of reading. However, Ophir argues that the notebooks she is discussing are evidence of both, and that reading can be a tool for both self-recognition, and self-definition.³⁰

Steven Colclough has argued a similar point in relation to Elizabeth Freke’s commonplace book, arguing that it demonstrates how Freke used reading to ‘refashion her sense of self and history in her autobiographical writings.’³¹ Both commonplaceing and diary-writing are, therefore, a way of understanding the world and the self, and of representing one’s own identity (or aspects of that identity).³²

The purely intellectual commonplace book in the humanist tradition was simply an ideal, not the norm. There are a few examples of women producing commonplaces for what appear to be purely educational or intellectual use, although that is not to say that this did not happen. Anne Wentworth Watson (1629-1695), Baroness Rockingham and daughter of Thomas Wentworth, the first Earl of Strafford, kept a commonplace book

²⁸ Ophir, “The Diary and the Commonplace Book,” 42.

²⁹ Ophir, “The Diary and the Commonplace Book,” 42-43.

³⁰ Ophir, “The Diary and the Commonplace Book,” 48.

³¹ Stephen Colclough, *Consuming Texts: Readers and Reading Communities 1695-1870* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 30.

³² This idea could be applied to the journals of seventeenth-century men such as Thomas Juxon, who wrote largely about political affairs, only rarely recording events from his own life. His identity in the journal was therefore intrinsically connected to the events he reported. See Keith Lindley and David Scott, ed., *The Journal of Thomas Juxon, 1644-1647* Camden Fifth Series, vol. 13 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

that was much more in line with the scholarly ideal than many contemporary women's notebooks.³³ This was written entirely in Latin, beginning with Latin phrases, corrected by another hand. Following this, Watson has copied out 'Physiologiae Paripateticae,' and 'De Phylosophia Moralis.' The former was a textbook on Aristotelian natural philosophy, published by Johannes Magirus in 1597, and still in use in the seventeenth century. The latter was likely taken from Phillip Melanchthon's *Epitome philosophiae moralis*, first published in 1538, which explored the links between natural philosophy and the laws of God. If Watson herself was the transcriber of these texts (it would appear that, even if she did not write the book herself, she caused it to be written, as her name is written on the front flyleaf in the same hand as the majority of the text), then this reveals a good understanding of Latin, and an interest in Aristotelian natural philosophy.

Most notebooks, however, clearly had a variety of uses, and did not follow 'traditional' structures. This was not always explicitly linked to gender: many commonplace books that were identifiably compiled by men, or which have no clear ownership evidence, display this blending of form and content. An anonymously-compiled manuscript in the Brotherton Library, for example, contains medical and culinary recipes; almanac entries for the year 1660; seventeenth- and eighteenth-century verse; and notes on mathematics, the law, and morality.³⁴ It was written in several different seventeenth- and eighteenth-century hands, and the long time-span of its compilation might account for the mix of content. We cannot tell the sex of the authors but should be wary of attributing content to gender. Instead, this manuscript represents the intermingling of form and content that could happen with commonplace books, and illustrates the difficulty in categorising them. Very few, whether by men or women, rigidly stuck to the precepts of the

³³ Anne Wentworth Watson, Baroness Rockingham, [Commonplace Book], [17th Century], Osborn b285, Beinecke Library, New Haven.

³⁴ Commonplace Book, BC MS Lt 102, Brotherton Library, Leeds.

humanist tradition, copying intellectual content under clearly defined headings for scholarly use. It is much more likely that, as manuscript notebooks were tools for people, they used them to gather materials relating to their everyday lives.

Assumptions about the gendered nature of literary genres perhaps feeds into our discussions of women and commonplaces. If we assume that scholarly works were the norm for commonplace books, we exclude the many women and men who would have found no use for reading those works, or had no opportunity to do so. Instead, for literate women of the gentry, works of religion or domestic advice would have been more useful, and therefore more worthy of collecting. Modern scholars are more guilty of imposing these divisions based on content than their early modern subjects, who, as Smyth has pointed out, were comfortable with blurred generic boundaries.

John Evelyn, when he made a record of his daughter Mary's books and papers after her death in 1685, included in the list 'A parchment booke wth some loose papers in it containing collections out of History, divinity &c: by way of comonplace, wth descriptions out of Romances.'³⁵ It is interesting that Evelyn refers to this manuscript as being 'by way of commonplace,' implying an imitation of the form; perhaps this is due to its divergence from the traditional scholarly content. But the commonplace genre is still used as the reference point, suggesting that even if it was manipulated and put to different uses by individual compilers, such books were still regarded as being part of this genre. Mary appears to have been a frequent reader of romances; in a letter to her, Evelyn referenced her enjoyment of the genre, but cautioned her against too much credulity: 'if you looke for perfection, and all things agreable to the *Idias* you reade of in *Romances*, or indeede, Conceive to be in nature: Let me tell you, there is no such

³⁵ Mary Evelyn, daughter of John Evelyn the diarist: Correspondence and papers: [1675]-1685, Evelyn Papers Vol. CCLXXIII, Add MS 78440, f46r, British Library, London. Mary Evelyn was known for her literary talents and interests: see Gillian Darley, *John Evelyn: Living for Ingenuity* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), 264.

thing.³⁶ Despite this warning, she still decided to include extracts from romances alongside quotes from devotional and historical works. This indicates a clear departure from the pedagogical, humanist commonplace book.

Manuscript notebooks provide an invaluable insight into what and how women were reading in the early modern period. What women chose to copy into their notebooks, and the ways in which they structured the entries, allows us to consider their various and complex reading habits, and the temporality thereof. This practice of writing about reading is different to the marginalia discussed in the previous chapter, which perhaps reveals a more immediate response to the text. Instead, extracts copied into books involved careful thought and selection, revealing a great deal about the compiler's own responses to the text, but also what they wanted to reveal to the world about their reading habits.

The manuscripts here are largely from the mid- and late seventeenth century, in contrast to the previous chapter, where the majority of the case studies were pre-1670. The sources range from the 1620s to the 1690s, but most are post-1650. This possibly reflects the development of the commonplace genre, with more women participating as the form was increasingly disrupted. The women examined here were also not particularly godly. There are some devotional works represented but there is also a deep interest in philosophy and science evident in many of the manuscripts, and many could be described as 'cultured' in their literary tastes. I have largely drawn on materials from the Clark Library and the Beinecke Library, both of which (the latter in particular), hold significant collections of women's memoranda.³⁷

³⁶ Douglas D. C. Chambers and David Galbraith, ed., *The Letterbooks of John Evelyn* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2014), 688.

³⁷ A full list of the manuscript books I consulted for this chapter can be found in appendix II.

Sociality and Records of Life in Women's Manuscript Notebooks

Women's notebooks demonstrate the wide range of practices, relationships, and events that could be linked to reading and writing about reading in the early modern period. The sources below reveal women recording their reading of political events, often combined with diary entries recording their participation; creating manuscripts that combine reading and household management; and broadening the usual method of commonplacing to include devotional texts, aiding in their practice of personal piety. They also attest to the range of relationships that could be enacted through reading and writing about reading. The miscellany which Frances Fitzherbert (1667-1723) compiled mostly in the 1690s reveals her wide literary interests.³⁸ It is a collection of extracts from philosophical, literary and religious texts, featuring writers such as Plato, Dryden, Cowley, Richard Ware, and Dr. Lucas (likely Richard Lucas, 1648/9 – 1715, the Church of England clergyman and writer). Although it was compiled by Fitzherbert, it was not intended for her own use: instead, it was dedicated to the Lady Elizabeth Cromwell (*see appendix III, figure 6*). Fitzherbert inscribed the dedication 'To the R:^t Hon:^{able} the Lady Eliz:^a Cromwell' at the beginning of the manuscript, writing:

your witt And judgment ought Nott to be Adress'd to by any female Scribler, but
Love and obedience Are inseperable, I humbley present your Ladyship with a
Collection of Sentences which may when you Arive neere Sixty-years Amuse,
They are truths which your practice Confermes, therefore will be reflected on
with pleasure; That you may Live to see your Childerns Childer And peace upon
Isral, is the sencere wish of Dearest Mad:^m

Fitzherbert is using the commonplace tradition to suit her sociable needs, with the manuscript functioning as a marker of her relationship with Elizabeth Cromwell.

³⁸ Frances Fitzherbert, Frances Fitzherbert manuscript miscellany: dedicated to Lady Elizabeth Cromwell, circa 1693-1703, Osborn b435, Beinecke Library.

Cromwell was likely the daughter of Vere Essex Cromwell, the 4th Earl of Ardglass, and married Edward Southwell in 1704. When her father died in 1687 Cromwell claimed the title of Baroness and was among the peeresses at the funeral of Queen Mary II and the coronation of Queen Anne. It appears that Fitzherbert was the daughter of William Fitzherbert and Mary Cromwell, who was Elizabeth's aunt.³⁹ She was seven years older than her cousin, who was born in 1674, and would have been in her twenties when this manuscript was compiled. The inscription suggests that Cromwell would enjoy the manuscript in her sixties: the manuscript was clearly intended to have a long life, to still be in use by Cromwell over forty years later.

The works chosen by Fitzherbert clearly reflect Restoration and late seventeenth-century literary culture, often with Royalist political sympathies, such as the poetry of Abraham Cowley. However, the political stance of the works was not always simple. John Dryden, an author who had shifting political sympathies, was included.⁴⁰ Indeed, Fitzherbert included extracts from Dryden's translation of Juvenal and Persius, a satirical comment on the reign of William and Mary, at a time when Dryden was known to have Jacobite sympathies.⁴¹ This particular political context is notable in view of the manuscript's intended lifespan: Fitzherbert must have deemed the satires to have long-term significance if she thought they would prove relevant to Cromwell forty years later, although she did not make explicit comment on what this significance might be.

Not all the works were political, however. Fitzherbert's first extract, attributed to Plato, comes from an anonymously-authored text on the abridged works of Plato, published in 1701. The specific excerpt was from a section on Plato's life, outlining his philosophy

³⁹ This identification comes from J. A. V. Chapple, "Christopher Codrington's Verses to Elizabeth Cromwell," *The Journal of English and German Philology* 60, no. 1 (1961): 75-78.

⁴⁰ Annabel Patterson, "Dryden and Political Allegiance," in *The Cambridge Companion to John Dryden*, ed. Steven N. Zwicker (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 221-236.

⁴¹ Ronald Paulson, "Dryden and the Energies of Satire," in *The Cambridge Companion to John Dryden*, ed. Steven N. Zwicker (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 37-58.

on goodness. The compilation overall contained a mix of poetry, philosophy and theology, although it was not organised by subject matter as in traditional commonplaces. It does, however, give an indication of Fitzherbert's reading practices, access to books and, provided it was presented to Elizabeth Cromwell and that she then made use of it, can give us a small snapshot into the texts and ideas she came across. The cultural and political world within which Fitzherbert was placing herself with the extracts may have been a signal of her own familial allegiances to Lady Cromwell, creating a common identity through literary tastes.

The multiple ownership and readership of Fitzherbert's book indicates some of the complexities we encounter when thinking about the use and re-use of manuscript notebooks. They might pass through many hands, and be read or written by many different authors. Elizabeth Lyttelton, daughter of Sir Thomas Browne, the physician and author of *Religio Medico*, kept a commonplace book that reveals some of the complexities of authorship in manuscript culture.⁴² While the book is listed by Cambridge University's online catalogue as belonging to Elizabeth Lyttelton, it contains the signature of her sister, Mary Browne, on both the front and end flyleaves, and according to the catalogue notes was 'kept for the benefit of the daughters of Sir Thomas Browne, and was principally the property of his daughter Elizabeth. It contains pieces by and relating to Sir Thomas Browne, including a poem and piece of prose by him, although none of the writing is in Browne's hand.'⁴³ Victoria Burke has suggested that Lyttelton was the scribe, identifying two distinct phases of compilation probably dating to different times in her life, evidenced by slight handwriting differences. Burke suggests that the 'earlier entries consist primarily of religious verse, Englished extracts

⁴² Elizabeth Lyttelton, *Commonplace Book*, c.1680, MS Add 8460, Cambridge University Library, Cambridge.

⁴³ "Elizabeth Lyttelton: *Commonplace Book*," *Janus*, Cambridge University Library, accessed 13 December 2017

<https://janus.lib.cam.ac.uk/db/node.xsp?id=EAD%2FGBR%2F0012%2FMS%20Add.8460>.

from the classics, proverbial couplets, and fragments from Sir Thomas Browne's writing. Sometimes filling in blank spaces left in her earlier transcriptions, Lyttelton returned, probably after 1687, to write a mixture of religious and secular poetry and prose.⁴⁴

One entry in particular gives a valuable insight into Elizabeth's early reading habits. It is written on behalf of Thomas Browne, and is entitled 'The books which my daughter Elizabeth hath read unto me at nights till she read y^m all out.'⁴⁵ The book list includes Plutarch, various histories (largely European, rather than English), travel narratives, and two mentions of religious texts, namely 'fox his book of Martyrs' and 'some hundreds of Sermons.'⁴⁶ This large, varied reading list is a relatively unusual curriculum for a young girl and the communal reading experience of father and daughter indicates that Thomas Browne was interested in his daughter's education. Margaret King has explored the influence of certain Renaissance men on their daughters' intellectualism, using examples of various Italian learned women, whose fathers were instrumental in their early education.⁴⁷ Thomas Browne seems to have followed this path with Elizabeth, with whom he had a close relationship.⁴⁸ Lyttelton's intellectual interests were clearly heavily influenced by her father: for example, Burke has identified several extracts in the book that came from texts he is known to have owned. Browne himself kept many commonplace books, and he and his daughter shared a love of books.⁴⁹ The predominance of religious and devotional literature in the book list and the textual extracts are reflective of many women's reading habits at the time, at least those that they were willing to record. The explicit mentions that women made of reading reveal

⁴⁴ Victoria E. Burke, "Contexts for Women's Manuscript Miscellanies: The Case of Elizabeth Lyttelton and Sir Thomas Browne," *The Yearbook of English Studies* 33, Medieval and Early Modern Miscellanies and Anthologies (2003): 318.

⁴⁵ MS Add 8460, f44v, Cambridge University Library.

⁴⁶ MS Add 8460, f44v – f45r.

⁴⁷ Margaret L. King, *Women of the Renaissance* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), 184.

⁴⁸ Burke, "Contexts for Women's Manuscript Miscellanies," 319.

⁴⁹ Reid Barbour, *Sir Thomas Browne: A Life* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 433.

both an effort at self-representation, and more practical uses such as cemented sociable relationships and recorded educational endeavours.

Lyttelton's commonplace book demonstrates that one manuscript could have multiple authors; in this case, primarily Lyttelton and Browne. Interventions by either men or women display aspects of gendered textual authority and the various uses of such manuscripts. Women might, as we have seen in the previous chapter, write their names on manuscripts and commonplace books compiled by others within their family, and sometimes added to the content. Francis Cholmondeley's commonplace book bears his signature on the back flyleaf ('Francis Cholmondeley His Booke'), but the manuscript also carries the signature of his wife, Elizabeth, on the same page: 'Elizabeth Cholmondeley her Booke Anno: Do: 1651' (*see appendix III, figure 7*).⁵⁰ The majority of the manuscript, which contains various religious and philosophical reflections, is in Francis' hand. However, on the front flyleaf is a list of costs, in what appears to be Elizabeth's hand, listing payments for fabrics, amongst other items.⁵¹ There was obviously some shared ownership of the manuscript, even if it was written largely in a single hand. We can only speculate as to the reasons why Elizabeth may have signed the book and it cannot be taken as proof of readership, but her intervention in the form of her signature and cost list shows some claim to the manuscript itself, and an active participation in the creation of the book as we see it now.⁵²

A reverse of this gendered intervention can also be seen in the commonplace book written by Anne Ley and her husband, Roger Ley, now held in the William Andrews Clark Memorial Library. This book provides a source for looking at the interplay of

⁵⁰ Francis Cholmondeley, [Commonplace book], [ca. 1652], Osborn b103, Beinecke Library.

⁵¹ Amanda Vickery has noted the importance of house-keeping in the lives of gentry women, albeit with reference to the Georgian period, challenging the supposed separation of the domestic life of a genteel woman from the world of work that is often said to have begun in the Restoration era. See Amanda Vickery, *The Gentleman's Daughter: Women's Lives in Georgian England* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999).

⁵² This is similar to Frances Egerton's list of household costs, examined in chapter two.

gender and authorship in manuscript commonplace culture.⁵³ In this case a woman, Anne Ley, was the primary compiler, with notes and extracts added later by her husband Roger, who was the curate of St Leonard's, Shoreditch. Anne wrote out several poems, which appear to have been her own works, but titles were added in Roger's hand, suggesting he undertook, in Jill Seal Millman and Gillian Wright's words, a 'retrospective (re)ordering of his wife's writings.'⁵⁴ Presumably, the book was first compiled by Anne, with Roger adding material after her death. He wrote a short biography of Anne at the beginning, added titles to her entries, copied out some of her personal letters and her funeral sermon, and finally included sermons of his own. Millman and Wright have also cautioned that he might have edited or manipulated Anne's works, although as it is presumed that it was her own hand, and not copied by a scribe, he could not have edited the poetry too drastically without leaving traces. His additions to the manuscript represent an intervention, adding a layer of structure and order that Anne had not included. Her voice, therefore, was edited and structured through that of her husband.

Roger Ley wrote a biographical note about Anne early in the manuscript, stating that

Anne Ley the wife of Roger Ley Curate of S Leonard Shoreditch was married in the parish church of S Buttolph without Bishopsgate London ffebruarie 25. 1621. From the house of Thomas Norman her father and was buried in Shoreditch October 22 1641 in Middlesex⁵⁵

The first half of the book is taken up with Anne's writing, including extracts from Bishop Joseph Hall's *Meditations*, Anne's own poetry and copies of sermons. It was

⁵³ Manuscript commonplace book of Anne and Roger Ley, c.1623-c.1667, MS.1952.003, Clark Library, Los Angeles.

⁵⁴ Jill Seal Millman and Gillian Wright, ed., *Early Modern Women's Manuscript Poetry* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005), 77.

⁵⁵ MS.1952.003, f2r, Clark Library.

organised under thematic headings, just as in the humanist commonplace form. Many of the poems and original writings were commenting on items that Ley read and were often highly political. For example, Ley wrote a poem that Roger later entitled ‘Upon a booke written at the beginning of the parliament 1640.’ The poem sharply criticised the book, which may have been written by Stephen Marshall, part of the group who wrote, under the acronym Smectynmuus, a text outlining the Presbyterian theory of ministry in response to a publication by Joseph Hall.⁵⁶ Part of the poem reads:

Our Ecclesiasticks those grave learned men
Are vilifide and scornd by thy rude pen,
As subtle shallow quite deprivd of wit,
Good for no bussnesse but a hint or fit,
Foule mouthd detraction thus to slander those,
Because by them thy stile no higher rose,
Is this the way to gaine the vulgars vote,
Now made with preiudice against that coat,
On their desired ruins wilt thou raise
Thy forlorne hopes, and look for better daies⁵⁷

The Leys were Laudians, and Anne’s scathing rebuttal shows her political insights and understanding of current events. Her suggestion that Smectynmuus were not going to gain popular support is a complex critique, rather than just dismissing the book. Despite her disgust with the publication, it is clear that she read it, and read it carefully enough to produce a poem criticising it in detail. Marie-Louise Coolahan has argued that ‘[Ley’s] wife’s texts are incorporated to his own royalist project to fashion a defiantly anti-Independent identity during the Interregnum.’⁵⁸ However, this diminishes Anne’s

⁵⁶ Jane Stevenson and Peter Davidson, ed., *Early Modern Women Poets (1520-1700): An Anthology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 259.

⁵⁷ MS.1952.003, f94v, Clark Library.

⁵⁸ Marie-Louise Coolahan, “Literary Memorialisation and the Posthumous Construction of Female Authorship,” in *The Arts of Remembrance in Early Modern England: Memorial Cultures of the Post Reformation*, ed. Andrew Gordon and Thomas Rist (London: Routledge, 2016), 162.

role, and her own political beliefs. She clearly read widely, often contrary to her own views, and was well aware of the nuances of the political conflict at the beginning of the Civil War period.

The text clearly did function as a memorial, however. Alongside Roger's editorial interventions such as adding headings, he also transcribed several of Anne's letters in the second half of the volume, followed by her will and an extract from her funeral sermon. The will is headed 'Part of that which she made in y^e nature of a will June 7th 1636. When the plague began to breake forth more then before. She died of that sicknesse 5 yeeres and some moneths after.'⁵⁹ Roger's additions to Anne's text therefore move the manuscript from a set of reading and writing notes, to a memorial to his wife. His choice of this particular manuscript to do so suggests that her reading notes and poems were an important part of her, and that he felt the need to preserve them as part of the memorial.

Elizabeth Jekyll's manuscript, held in the Beinecke Library, bears a lot of similarities to Anne Ley's commonplace book.⁶⁰ Jekyll was born Elizabeth Ward, and married the parliamentarian John Jekyll some time before 1623. The manuscript is described in the Beinecke's catalogue as a commonplace book, but is primarily made up of diary extracts, religious meditations, and original verse compositions. This led Elizabeth Clarke to designate it as a spiritual diary.⁶¹ She has argued that 'like so many women's 'commonplace-books,' there is no sense of engagement with traditional commonplaces.'⁶² While she is correct that most women did not follow the formulae of the early humanist commonplaces, there is an underlying implication that this therefore

⁵⁹ MS.1952.003, f106r.

⁶⁰ Elizabeth (Lake) Jekyll, [Commonplace Book], 1643-1685, Osborn b221, Beinecke Library.

⁶¹ Elizabeth Clarke, "Elizabeth Jekyll's Spiritual Diary: Private Manuscript or Political Document?" in *English Manuscript Studies 1100-1700, Vol. 9: Writings by Early Modern Women*, ed. Peter Beal and Margaret J. M. Ezell (London: The British Library, 2000), 218-237.

⁶² Clarke, "Elizabeth Jekyll's Spiritual Diary," 217.

means that the term is inaccurate or unusable. Instead, as Smyth has demonstrated, very few commonplace books did in fact fit the traditional form and structure. There is an implied distinction between the personal and the scholarly endeavour, suggesting that the intention behind the compilation is paramount to its classification. However, if we follow Ophir's argument that all processes of selection and transcription, whether in the form of literary extracts or diary entries, are efforts of self-representation, then the differences between Jekyll's manuscript and that of, for example, Gabriel Harvey or William Drake, become less clear.

The manuscript does begin like a spiritual diary, with Jekyll writing:

I desire in the beginning of this booke to bless god for all forst mercies that hath done me good against my will, whi[ch] are his Afflictions which I would nere have suffered to do me Good if I could possible have helpt it⁶³

She went on to list her many 'afflictions,' including her own health problems and the deaths of two of her children. The page ends with a dedication to God:

In the name of God the ffather: the Sonn, and Holy Ghost. My trust shall be in the name of the Lord the Great God that both made the world by his power, and strecht out the Heauens by his discretion

That is immediately followed by the signature 'Elizabeth Jekyll Anno Dom: 1643'.⁶⁴

This formula, of dedicating the manuscript to God and giving thanks, was relatively common to spiritual diaries, and certainly fits with Clarke's exploration of the spirituality underpinning Jekyll's interpretation and recording of events.

Jekyll's manuscript also includes several diary entries discussing the progress of the Civil War and giving an extended account of her husband's arrest and subsequent

⁶³ Osborn b221, 1.

⁶⁴ Osborn b221, 1, Beinecke Library.

release in 1643. This is not uncommon for spiritual journals and Clarke suggests that she often interpreted these events through a spiritual and providential lens, arguing that Jekyll ‘favoured biblical parallels as a hermeneutic for contemporary events.’⁶⁵ This is evident in many passages recording the conflict, such as when she related the siege of York in 1644 and the parliamentary victory against Prince Rupert’s forces:

The Great deliverance of this Kingdom which God was pleased to give in the yeare 1644 upon the 2 day of July being tewsdai it pleased god that our men which had layn against Yorke to besieged, 6 or 8 weeks or more & could not enter the Towne, : Prince Rupert comeing with a great force to the reliefe of the Towne, as he came would needs give our men battell, which y^e great God so ordered that the Parliament forces S^r Thomas ffairefaxe and Gennerall Cromwell and many more Gallant souldiers did utterly rout Prince Ruperts whole Army⁶⁶

This contains no personal details, revealing the interest Jekyll took in the conflict beyond her own experiences. To see it as an essentially religious rather than political passage would be misleading. The religious and political are, of course, often hard to separate in this period, and as such the political nature of many religious texts should not be overlooked. Arnold Hunt has discussed this in relation to Anne Sadleir’s manuscript writings. Sadleir was a Royalist and was part of a network of English gentry who stayed loyal to the episcopal Church of England during the 1640s and 1650s, and continued using the Book of Common Prayer.⁶⁷ Her commonplace books, according to Hunt, ‘contain a number of overtly political prayers and meditations.’⁶⁸ Hunt concludes that ‘the exclusion of women from the public medium of print did not necessarily

⁶⁵ Clarke, “Elizabeth Jekyll’s Spiritual Diary,” 221.

⁶⁶ Osborn b221, 8.

⁶⁷ For more on Sadleir, see chapters two and six of this thesis.

⁶⁸ Arnold Hunt, “The Books, Manuscripts and Literary Patronage of Mrs Anne Sadleir (1585-1670),” in *Early Modern Women’s Manuscript Writing: Selected Papers from the Trinity/Trent Colloquium*, ed. Victoria E. Burke and Jonathan Gibson (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004), 213.

discourage them from expressing their political and religious opinions in manuscript.’⁶⁹ Jekyll’s manuscript demonstrates this. Her use of biblical paradigms to understand the conflict does not detract from the fact that she was still engaging with and recording a highly politically-charged moment of history, and interpreting events outside of her own personal sphere. If her manuscript was an attempt at self-representation, then the central place of politics to the narrative should not be overlooked.

The manuscript is not in Jekyll’s hand, but is rather a copy. This is clear from the inclusion of ‘The Lady Lyles “Dying Speech”’ as the final entry.⁷⁰ This is in the same hand as the rest of the manuscript, but cannot have been written by Jekyll, who died in 1653, years before Alice Lisle was executed for harbouring non-conformists following the Monmouth Rebellion in 1685.⁷¹ The fact that the scribe was not Jekyll adds a further layer of complexity to the manuscript. Clarke has suggested that the attribution to Jekyll was strategic in the context of early modern feminine piety and spiritual diaries, arguing that these held some sort of devotional capital, particularly when connected to deceased women (who could no longer be accused of self-publicising or self-aggrandisement). She concludes that ‘it is important that the document is linked with dead women rather than a scribe who may or may not be female but who is probably still alive: it thus lays claim to a particular kind of feminised spirituality which was perceived to have maximum persuasive effectiveness.’⁷²

The manuscript can be situated within the context of the 1680s, probably intended as a scribal publication to vindicate John Jekyll, who was arrested during the Civil War and the Monmouth Rebellion. Clarke suggests that Jekyll’s religious rhetoric and the

⁶⁹ Hunt, “The Books, Manuscripts and Literary Patronage of Mrs Anne Sadleir,” 225.

⁷⁰ Osborn b221, 43-45, Beinecke Library.

⁷¹ Lady Alice Lisle’s speech at her execution was published after her death, and the scribe appears to have copied it out accurately. See Anon., *The last words of Coll. Richard Rumbold, Mad. Alicia Lisle, Alderman Henry Cornish, and Mr. Richard Nelthrop who were executed in England and Scotland for high treason in the year 1685* (London: s.n., 1685).

⁷² Clarke, “Elizabeth Jekyll’s Spiritual Diary,” 233.

feminine quality of her diary was exploited as part of this effort: ‘selected scribal publication of [John Jekyll’s] wife’s diary, that harmless, private, feminine form, is just one avenue a master-strategist might have taken at a dangerous time.’⁷³ Moreover, ‘the careful selection of the manuscript’s contents, as well as the historical and social context in which it was compiled, would constitute effective propaganda in the difficult period between the Monmouth rebellion and the Glorious Revolution: its circulation in manuscript would ensure freedom from prosecution.’⁷⁴ Clarke’s argument that the diary was a ‘published discourse with political signification’ rather than a private diary sets the two forms against one another, and gives agency to the scribe in politicising the diary.⁷⁵ However, if we assume that the original author was Jekyll herself, and that the scribe was simply copying from a manuscript she had compiled herself, then we cannot underplay Jekyll’s own agency in creating the content and tone of the text. Moreover, the private/public argument is clearly problematic, as it assumes that Jekyll’s original compilation was intended as a purely private document. However, creating such a manuscript assumes some sort of audience, even if only Jekyll herself, or a small family circle. In re-reading the manuscript, Jekyll could examine herself and her life. The political significance of the document does not have to be attached to its use in the context of the 1680s; instead, we should also view the material presumed to have been authored by Jekyll as an effort at self-representation and a way of understanding her world through a reading experience.

This assumption of the inherent privacy and prioritising of religion over politics is not often seen when referring to men’s manuscripts from the period. As discussed in the introduction to this chapter, Sharpe effectively used William Drake’s notebooks as evidence for how Drake engaged with and understood the political events happening

⁷³ Clarke, “Elizabeth Jekyll’s Spiritual Diary,” 233-234.

⁷⁴ Clarke, “Elizabeth Jekyll’s Spiritual Diary,” 234.

⁷⁵ Clarke, “Elizabeth Jekyll’s Spiritual Diary,” 233.

around him.⁷⁶ In Sharpe's view of Drake, note-taking when reading was not just a way of interpreting the text, but also the world. Jekyll's manuscript, even though it is not filled with the wisdom of classical and renaissance thinkers, should be seen in the same way: as an act of interpretation of contemporary events, both those which directly affected her life and those which were at some remove from her everyday experience. She recorded events and spiritual passages in order to take control of and form an understanding of her world, one that she could draw upon in re-reading the manuscript, or pass on to other, future readers.

A common feature of women's manuscript notebooks is the inclusion of various different forms of extracts, such as household notes, recipes, and diary entries, which do not simply reflect their literary activities, but are evidence of wider reading beyond the print literary sphere. These were clearly read and re-read, both by their compilers and by others, and often had a sole female author. Their departure from the 'traditional' commonplace form and the lack of male intervention or authority has often led to them being overlooked in studies of active reading and note-taking, but in fact they provide valuable sources for a more comprehensive study of women's reading habits.

These could include household accounts or devotional materials. Elizabeth Lowther's commonplace book, held by the West Yorkshire Archive Service, provides a useful demonstration of this. There are few clues within the manuscript to Lowther's identity, but the manuscript does make reference to the 'landes att Marton,' and calls her 'Lady Elizabeth Lowther.' Marton is a parish just south of Middlesbrough, now called Marton-in-Cleveland. According to the Victoria County History, the manor house there was sold by Thomas Layton in 1633 to Sir John Lowther.⁷⁷ This was Elizabeth's

⁷⁶ Kevin Sharpe, *Reading Revolutions*.

⁷⁷ "Parishes: Marton," in *A History of the County of York North Riding: Volume 2*, ed. William Page (London: Victoria County History, 1923), 264-268. *British History Online*, accessed June 20, 2019, <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/vch/yorks/north/vol2/pp264-268>.

grandfather; her father, Ralph, died in 1696, at which point the manor passed to her brother John, who died without issue in 1729. Elizabeth herself was brought up at Ackworth Park, in West Yorkshire, and married Robert Frank, Recorder of Pontefract. Given the name recorded on the notebook, she likely compiled it before her marriage. The manuscript contains a mixture of religious writings, letters, indentures, bills, and other such documents.⁷⁸ The reading of more ephemeral writings, such as receipts and account books, is often left out of studies of early modern reading, which tend to focus on ‘literature.’ However, this was a significant part of the everyday reading experience, particularly for women running their households. The manuscript was written in two hands: one neat secretary hand, presumably a scribe or a household clerk; and one messier italic, belonging to Lowther herself. The scribe’s hand is the most common, but Lowther added notes to the entries, created contents tables and wrote some sections herself.

It is difficult to get an overall sense of the reasons behind compiling the manuscript. It seems likely that it was intended as a record of the running of the family’s property, an area for which many women of the gentry would have been responsible. However, there are also infrequent examples of other materials, for example the pages dedicated to ‘A Brief Accompt of the Returne of the Israelites out of Egypt, of their passage in the Wildernesse of Arabia Petrea, of their Sacrifices during their stay in the wildernesse.’⁷⁹ This page of text is accompanied by a hand-drawn map showing the lands of Egypt and Palestine. Having done key-word searches on Early English Books Online and online, this does not appear to have been directly excerpted from any specific text, but is rather a manuscript account relying on scripture and other religious writings about the

⁷⁸ Elizabeth Lowther, *Commonplace Book*, DD/RA/F/1, West Yorkshire Archive Service, Huddersfield.

⁷⁹ DD/RA/F/1, 29.

persecution of the Israelites.⁸⁰ This is the only entry that does not appear to be directly linked to Lowther and her family, and the reasons for its inclusion and placement are unclear. It is written in the scribe's hand, with no accompanying notes by Lowther.

The book is structured by what Jonathan Gibson has called a 'reverse casting-off of blanks,' which involves the compiler writing from both ends of the book, turning the volume upside down to start from the back of the manuscript.⁸¹ He argues that 'compilers will use this method if a two-part structure is necessary and if they either (a) want to leave an equal amount of space for each type of entry, or (b) do not know how much space is required by each section.'⁸² This implies a clear distinction in subject matter between the two sections, which can be seen only partially in Lowther's manuscript: the front section is largely taken up with copies of letters sent by and to her, which are also present in the end section, although there is a great deal of other material here as well. The deliberateness of the format and the way in which it was read is indicated in the heading for the contents page of the end section, written by Lowther, which reads 'a catalogue of all things in this boock this way wrighten.' This implies that the two sections would be read independently, treated almost as two separate manuscripts.

One of the most interesting features of the book is the fact that Lowther wrote, at the end of the front section of the text, 'this boock loocked over the 27th of aprill 1689' (*see appendix III, figure 8*).⁸³ She wrote the same inscription on the following page, at the end of the second section of the book, again implying that the two sections were treated as distinct (even though she 'loocked over' them on the same day). This is clear

⁸⁰ The story of the Israelites was important for reformers in early modern England, in the century preceding Lowther's manuscript, who figured the English Protestants as God's chosen people. See Victoria Brownlee, *Biblical Readings and Literary Writings in Early Modern England, 1558-1625* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018).

⁸¹ Gibson, "Casting Off Blanks," 209.

⁸² Gibson, "Casting Off Blanks," 209.

⁸³ DD/RA/F/1, 420, West Yorkshire Archive Service.

evidence of the practice of re-reading commonplaces. Lowther clearly read the book at least once, and it is possible (although there is admittedly no clear evidence for this) that this was when she added the notes to the scribe's text, annotating her manuscript in the same way as one would a printed book. Due to the dates on some of the bills entered in the manuscript, this could have been a few years after the composition, although not very many – the documents in the manuscript largely seem to have been created over the course of the 1680s. This is likely not, then, a re-reading from far in the future, motivated by a remembrance, but perhaps a more practical need to use the book to keep track of the family's affairs.

Alongside the evidence of household management, many women's manuscript compilations were primarily religious in nature, often leading them to be classed as meditations or religious miscellanies. As Tom Webster has pointed out, these forms overlapped: 'the commonplace book and the spiritual journal can be seen as relegated forms often intertwined within the same document.'⁸⁴ Devotional literature would not usually be included in scholarly commonplaces (although theology might be), but many manuscript compilations reveal the religious reading that women undertook.⁸⁵ This could include various different types of manuscript notebook: for example, Andrew Cambers has observed that Margaret Hoby kept a commonplace book, a table book, and a sermon book.⁸⁶ These were not self-reflexive, so cannot really be included in the genre of religious meditations. Women followed the formula of creating a collection of texts or quotations, but instead populated their books with devotional material, often hymns

⁸⁴ Tom Webster, "Writing to Redundancy: Approaches to Spiritual Journals and Early Modern Spirituality," *The Historical Journal* 39, no. 1 (1996): 36.

⁸⁵ Kate Narveson has explored the ways in which the seventeenth-century laity read and took notes on the Bible, and the impact this had on the authority of the clergy to interpret scripture. See Kate Narveson, *Bible Readers and Lay Writers in Early Modern England: Gender and Self-Definition in an Emergent Writing Culture* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2012).

⁸⁶ Andrew Cambers, "Readers' Marks and Religious Practice: Margaret Hoby's Marginalia," in *Tudor Books and Readers: Materiality and the Construction of Meaning*, ed. John N. King (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 215.

or verse. Elizabeth Newell's miscellany is comprised of eight religious poems, by authors such as Matthew Hale and Francis Quarles.⁸⁷ She did not copy out the entirety of the poems, but instead included extended extracts from them, although the motivation behind this selection is unclear. Similarly, Mary Webber's commonplace book is made up of hymns and religious poems, grouped together in two different sections.⁸⁸ Each hymn has the name of a seventeenth-century musician at the end, such as Henry Purcell and Matthew Locke.⁸⁹ Presumably this was used as a reference book, for the singing of favourite hymns.

There are no other records of Mary Webber, but the poems hint towards her reading tastes, with verses from George Herbert and Elizabeth Tipper. Herbert, of course, is well known today, but Tipper is much less so. There is little record of her life, except that which we can glean from her work, which identifies her as a poor schoolteacher. She has been described as a 'devout Anglican' poet, and may have been associated with John Dunton, a publisher who founded *The Athenian Society*, which produced the periodicals *The Athenian Mercury* and *The Ladies' Mercury*.⁹⁰ The extent of Tipper's contemporary circulation is unknown, but her collection of poems, *The Pilgrim's Viaticum*, was published in 1698.⁹¹ This indicates that Webber, who dated the manuscript to 1694, was aware of her work at or around the time of its publication, and demonstrates the long term act of compiling a single manuscript. The inclusion of Tipper's work alongside the well-known seventeenth-century male authors is intriguing,

⁸⁷ Elizabeth Newell, [A Collection of devotional verse], [ca. 1655-1668], Osborn b49, Beinecke Library. Quarles is often designated a moderate Jacobean Protestant: for a discussion of his religious and political identity, see Adrian Street, "Frances Quarles Early Poetry and the Discourses of Jacobean Spenserianism," *Journal of the Northern Renaissance* 1 (2009): 88-108. Street argues that Quarles' poetry represents widely held Protestant beliefs at the end of the Jacobean period, but that his Caroline era poetry was markedly different, and of a Spenserian character.

⁸⁸ Mary Webber [Commonplace Book], 1694, Osborn b202, Beinecke Library.

⁸⁹ Purcell and Locke were among the most well-known composers of the Restoration. See George J. Buelow, *A History of Baroque Music* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004).

⁹⁰ Stevenson and Davidson, ed., *Early Modern Women Poets*, 511.

⁹¹ Elizabeth Tipper, *The Pilgrim's Viaticum: Or, the Destitute, but not Forlorn. Being a Divine Poem, Digested from Meditations upon the Holy Scripture* (London: Printed by J. Wilkins, near Fleet-street; and Sold by the Booksellers of London and Westminster, 1698).

especially as one of the poems Webber has excerpted is a largely autobiographical reflection, entitled ‘Some Experimental Passages of my Life, with Reflections upon Jacob’s Words, Few and Evil have the days of the years of my Life been.’ It is rare for women authors to be included in seventeenth-century commonplace books. The female perspective and voice was obviously important enough to Webber to include in her book of extracts, but curiously what was presumably Tipper’s name has been cut out of the book, by Webber or by another reader. We can only speculate as to why this happened, but this at least reflects re-reading, and indeed editorial choices on the part of Webber or someone else.

Recipe Books: Science, Medicine and Food in Manuscript Compilations

If women’s manuscript books reflected their lives and concerns, it is not surprising that they chose to include domestic or devotional materials with such frequency, as these would have been important aspects of their daily lives. Another common concern for women of seventeenth-century gentry families would have been medical and culinary knowledge. Recipe books may seem a slightly different type of manuscript notebook to those discussed so far, but as Catherine Field has pointed out, ‘the genre [of recipe books] evolved out of the medieval books of secrets and the humanist commonplace book traditions but came to be associated with the popular, domestic literature of the house.’⁹² Field goes on to argue that ‘like commonplace books, recipe collections muddy the line between authorship and ownership since owning the book and compiling it (with the help of friends, family, and other texts in manuscript and print) made the owner the “author” of the text as she generated her writing out of the texts and practices of others and as she derived her authority from her established place in the

⁹² Catherine Field, “‘Many hands hands’: Writing the Self in Early Modern Women’s Recipe Books,” in *Genre and Women’s Life Writing in Early Modern England*, ed. Michelle M. Dowd and Julie A. Eckerle (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007), 50.

house.’⁹³ Sara Pennell has made a similar point, writing that ‘the early modern manuscript recipe or household compilation is certainly an amorphous creature, born of the many varieties of manuscript writing – verse miscellanies, table books, adversaria – which were components of the self-directed humanist education of high-status men and women.’⁹⁴ However, she notes that due to their lack of ‘literary’ content, they are often considered as a separate manuscript category.

There has been a lot of scholarship on recipe books in recent years, led by historians such as Sara Pennell, Amanda Herbert and Elaine Leong. Many of the recent conversations in this scholarship have revolved around questions of knowledge, authority, and female self-representation. Pennell and Michelle DiMeo have argued that recipe books, like commonplace books, can be seen as a form of life writing.⁹⁵ They were records of various aspects of the compiler’s life and social interactions, as seen through the attributions and markers of social relationships that litter early modern manuscript recipe books. Moreover, Wendy Wall has argued that there was an intellectual authority displayed in recipe books, often overlooked due to their designation as part of domestic culture. She has suggested that recipes allowed people to interact with philosophical questions and humanist thought, as they ‘asked readers outside formal sites of education to reflect on how something called “nature” was to be positioned in relation to the artifactual; they demanded that practitioners think about how and when to put natural materials in and out of time and how to evidence “truth”’.⁹⁶ This can lead us to question how we treat different kinds of ‘authority’ and knowledge in historical study. As Pennell has argued, ‘the alignment of women’s

⁹³ Field, “‘Many hands hands’,” 54.

⁹⁴ Sara Pennell, “Perfecting Practice? Women, Manuscript Recipes and Knowledge in Early Modern England,” in *Early Modern Women’s Manuscript Writing: Selected Papers from the Trinity/Trent Colloquium*, ed. Victoria Burke and Jonathan Gibson (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004), 240.

⁹⁵ Michelle DiMeo and Sara Pennell, “Introduction,” in *Reading and Writing Recipe Books, 1550-1800*, ed. Michelle DiMeo and Sara Pennell (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2013), 11.

⁹⁶ Wendy Wall, *Recipes for Thought: Knowledge and Taste in the Early Modern English Kitchen* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016), 4.

intellectual practices with the prevailing educational parameters for the male population overshadows the extra-pedagogic ways in which women encountered, meditated and registered varieties of knowledge.⁹⁷ Recipe books are seen as belonging to the domestic world, and therefore fundamentally different from the intellectual and often political culture of humanist commonplaces. However, if looked at in the same way as commonplace books, we can broaden our conception of how women interacted with and participated in seventeenth-century manuscript culture.

We do not know a great deal about the activity and place of reading recipe books. It is not clear whether they were read in the kitchen, perhaps in the process of cooking; although there are rarely marks of use that would indicate this, such as food stains. This might mean that they were more commonly used as reference books. Moreover, we do not know precisely who used them: were they read by the middling and upper class women who compiled them, or did cooks and kitchen maids also read them? We can assume, however, that they were looked over, re-read and filled with recipes copied from other books or scraps of paper, due to the many notations accompanying the recipes.

As Wall has pointed out, recipe books were deeply embedded with a sense of sociability and personal identity. She argues that ‘recipes were transit points that actively created and defined knowledge communities and networks of association.’⁹⁸ Attribution was important in seventeenth-century receipt books, as Herbert has discussed when looking at the place of recipe books in early modern female sociable networks.⁹⁹ It was common for women to not only sign their books, but note the provenance of individual recipes. For example, Rebecca Winch’s receipt book (signed on the front fly leaf ‘Rebeckah

⁹⁷ Pennell, “Perfecting Practice?” 246.

⁹⁸ Wall, *Recipes for Thought*, 3.

⁹⁹ Amanda Herbert, *Female Alliances: Gender, Identity, and Friendship in Early Modern Britain* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014).

Winche 1666'), contains multiple attributions referencing both acquaintances and well-known authors.¹⁰⁰ Her aqua mirabilis recipe has 'Mrs Hobby' written in the margins, while another recipe is entitled 'The Lady Hewets Water.' There is also a recipe for 'Lucatellos Balsom,' a common item in seventeenth-century manuscript recipe books and a reference to the physician Matthew Lucatello.¹⁰¹ Michelle DiMeo has also discussed how attributions can be used to situate women within intellectual networks, and are evidence of knowledge sharing among friends and acquaintances.¹⁰² Providing provenance for recipes and referring to well-known physicians and writers could have been a way of emphasising the compiler's authority, claiming her place within a skilled and knowledgeable community. For the compiler herself, or for other readers (friends, family, and servants), her identity, networks, and reading habits (if, for example, they borrowed a recipe book from a friend and copied out useful entries), were made clear.

Another recipe book in the Folger's collection reveals a different relationship to authority. Margaret Baker's manuscript, which contains provenance notes of many recipes, also includes some recipes which bear striking similarities to those of Hannah Woolley, printed in *The Accomplish'd Lady's Delight*.¹⁰³ For example, Baker's oil of fennel recipe reads 'Take a Quantity of ffennell between two tyles or plates of iron make them very hotte and presse outt y^e licoure; and this oyle is good for the tissicke or dry scabes & for burning or scaldinge';¹⁰⁴ while Hannah Woolley's printed recipe for

¹⁰⁰ Rebecca Winch, *Receipt Book of Rebeckah Winche, ca. 1666*. V.b.366, Folger Library, Washington D.C.

¹⁰¹ Lucatello's balsam was an early modern panacea, known to have been used by Isaac Newton and John Evelyn, among others. See Rob Iliffe, "Isaac Newton: Lucatello Professor of Mathematics," in *Science Incarnate: Historical Embodiments of Natural Knowledge*, ed. Christopher Lawrence and Steven Shapin (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 135.

¹⁰² Michelle DiMeo, "Authorship and Medical Networks: Reading Attributions in Early Modern Manuscript Recipe Books," in *Reading and Writing Recipe Books, 1550-1800*, ed. Michelle DiMeo and Sara Pennell (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2013), 25-46.

¹⁰³ Margaret Baker, *Receipt Book of Margaret Baker, c.1675*. V.a.619, Folger Library. Woolley was a popular writer at the time, and *The Accomplish'd Lady's Delight* underwent nine print runs in the late seventeenth-century (1670-1706). See Doreen Evenden Nagy, *Popular Medicine in Seventeenth-Century England* (Bowling Green, OH: Bowling Green State University Popular Press, 1988), 70.

¹⁰⁴ V.a.619, f52r, Folger Library.

the same product states ‘Put a quantity of Fennel between two Tile-stones, or Plates of Iron, make them very hot, and press out the Liquor; and this Oyl will keep a great while, for it is good for the Tissick, dry Scab, burning and scalding.’¹⁰⁵ There is, however, no mention of Woolley in Baker’s book. These recipes may have been common, but the similarity of language used by both Woolley and Baker implies that Baker was familiar with Woolley’s work, rather than just including recipes that were common knowledge. If that is the case, she is therefore assuming Woolley’s culinary authority, indicating that practice of attribution was complex and individual.

This practice of transcribing printed medical texts gives us an insight into reading practices. Elaine Leong has studied Elizabeth Freke’s notes on Gerard’s herbal, pointing out that Freke rarely copied word for word, but rephrased and paraphrased the printed text.¹⁰⁶ Leong suggests that this indicates that Freke consulted other sources and listened to her own or her acquaintances’ experience; that her ‘reading for [medical] practice was not a hurried consultation of indices or a hunt for particular rare cures, rather it was a slow process of repeated readings, conversations and digestion.’¹⁰⁷ Similarly, she uses the example of Margaret Boscawen, who took notes from Culpeper but imposed her own classification system.¹⁰⁸ These women both ‘engaged critically and selectively with their texts,’ showing a complex and nuanced reading practice that did not simply rely on

¹⁰⁵ Hannah Woolley, *The Accomplish'd lady's delight in preserving, physick, beautifying, and cookery*, (London, Printed for B. Harris, and are to be Sold at his Shop, at the Stationers Arms in Swithins Rents by the Royall Exchange 1675), 171. There have been many questions about the attribution of this work to Woolley, but as her name was on the printed edition in 1675, and thus was the name associated with the book by its readers, the authorship will not be contested here. For a recent discussion of Woolley’s works and attribution, see Margaret J. M. Ezell, “Cooking the Books, or, the Three Faces of Hannah Woolley,” in *Reading and Writing Recipe Books, 1550-1800*, eds. Michelle DiMeo and Sara Pennell (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003), 159-178.

¹⁰⁶ Elaine Leong, “‘Herbals She Peruseth’: Reading Medicine in Early Modern England,” *Renaissance Studies* 28, no. 4 (2014): 564.

¹⁰⁷ Leong, “‘Herbals She Peruseth’,” 567.

¹⁰⁸ Leong, “‘Herbals She Peruseth’,” 572.

intellectual authority as represented by the printed text, but took into account the lived experience of women.¹⁰⁹

As mentioned in the introduction, the development of the commonplace book has been traced by scholars, who argue for a broadening of the form during the seventeenth century. Richard Yeo has examined how intellectual men during the scientific revolution used the form of the humanist commonplace, arguing that they ‘developed an established practice to meet what they perceived as new challenges associated with the progress of the news sciences.’¹¹⁰ He investigated natural philosophers, whose work included horticulture, meteorology and geology. Recipe books can be included in this narrative of change, opening up the discussion to include more women. However, some women did also produce notebooks that fit a more obviously scientific mode, while still including culinary and medical recipes.¹¹¹

Sarah Horsington’s 1666 manuscript, held in the Clark Library, is a collection of medical, chemical and culinary writings, combining extracts from contemporary scientific texts with recipes and her husband’s medical notes.¹¹² It provides a good example of the problems associated with separating commonplace and recipe books in modern scholarship, and demonstrates the ways in which early modern women’s knowledge has been treated. Horsington, of whom there appear to be no other extant records, gave the manuscript a title, with its own title page in imitation of print conventions: *Arcana, or, Mysteries in ye theory of physiology and chymistry: being*

¹⁰⁹ Leong, “‘Herbals She Peruseth’,” 572.

¹¹⁰ Richard Yeo, *Notebooks, English Virtuosi, and Early Modern Science* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2014), xv.

¹¹¹ Elaine Leong has recently explored the place of household medicine and cooking within the field of early modern science, arguing for the relevance of recipe books to social and cultural history, as well as the history of science, medicine and technology. See Elaine Leong, *Recipes and Everyday Knowledge: Medicine, Science and the Household in Early Modern England* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2018).

¹¹² Sarah Horsington, *Arcana, or, Mysteries in ye theory of physiology and chymistry: being authentick rules, for preparing spagyricall medicaments, for my own observation and satisfaction. Also are manyfold private receipts, and remedies, prescriptions of T: H: M: D: Collected by ye Industry of the transcriber, of this manuscript, uxoris ejus S: H:*, 1666, MS.2009.015, Clark Library.

authentick rules, for preparing spagyricall medicaments, for my own observation and satisfaction. Also are manyfold private receipts, and remedies, prescriptions of T: H: M: D: Collected by ye Industry of the transcriber, of this manuscript, uxoris ejus S: H: (see appendix III, figure 9). She clearly identified her role in the compilation of the manuscript, both by the reference to herself as Thomas Horsington's wife ('uxoris ejus') in the title, and by inscribing her name on the first page.¹¹³

Horsington's manuscript has been largely overlooked by scholars. One of its only mentions comes from Lynette Hunter, who has discussed it in relation to scientific writings by women in the mid-seventeenth century, centred on Katherine Jones' circle. Hunter described Horsington's manuscript as a commonplace book, whose 'effect is patterned on Boyle's and Willis's commentaries, yet is hard at work hammering out a distinctive vocabulary and syntax or discussion.'¹¹⁴ However, Hunter does not take this discussion any further, and the manuscript's significance for the history of reading and its relationship to the tradition of commonplacing has not been explored. The book contains extracts from learned works alongside recipes, demonstrating the significant overlap of the two forms. There is, moreover, quite clear evidence of Horsington's personal reading practices in the extracts she has transcribed, particularly those at the beginning and end of the manuscript.

Before the title, on the verso of the first page of the manuscript, Horsington wrote out extracts from Robert Boyle's *Some Considerations Touching the Usefulness of Experimental Naturall Philosophy*.¹¹⁵ She has used quite selective quotation, however,

¹¹³ Although there are no other records of Sarah, her husband Thomas (1616-1666) is recorded as a physician who trained in Leiden and practised in London. He was interested in iatrochemistry, an interest apparently shared with Sarah. See "Dr [Thomas] Horsington (c.1618-1666)," *Early Modern Practitioners: Sample Data*, accessed Apr 25, 2019 <http://practitioners.exeter.ac.uk/sample-data/>

¹¹⁴ Lynette Hunter, "Sisters of the Royal Society: The Circle of Katherine Jones, Lady Ranelagh," in *Women, Science and Medicine 1500-1700: Mothers and Sisters of the Royal Society*, ed. Lynette Hunter and Sarah Hutton (Stroud: Sutton Publishing, 1997), 191.

¹¹⁵ MS.2009.015. f1v, Clark Library.

in one piece quoting at length from Boyle but removing any sentences dealing with St Augustine. The reason for this is unclear, but it is unlikely that it was simply a mistake: in the last sentence, Horsington accidentally omitted the words ‘a provident’ (from ‘by Solomon God sends the sluggard to schoole to the Ant, to learne a provident Industry’¹¹⁶), and made a little mark in the text to indicate missing words, writing them at the end of the quotation. It may have been that some of the passages Boyle quoted from Augustine were in Latin, which Horsington may not have been able to understand. She preceded this extract, the last of three on the page, with a subtitle reading ‘Mr Boyle. speaking of contemplating the works of God,’ providing some provenance for the text.

From her extracts, we can also see her possible interaction with printed marginalia. She quoted: ‘each page in the Great volume of Nature is full of Real Hieroglyphicks, where (by an inverted way of expression) things stand for words, and their qualities for letters. The heavens declare the glorie of God: Psal: 19.’ In the original, this read: ‘each Page in the great Volume of Nature is full of real Hieroglyphicks, where (by an inverted way of Expression) Things stand for Words, and their Qualities for Letters. The Psalmist observes, *That the Heavens declare the glory of God,*’ with a note in the margins reading ‘Psal. 19. 1.’¹¹⁷ Horsington clearly paraphrased the text, making use of the marginal notation for reference.

The extract in between the two discussed above, which are on consecutive pages, comes from much earlier in Boyle’s book, on page sixteen. Here Boyle was discussing Pliny’s writing on insects. It is unclear why this section was inserted; whether Horsington felt that it complemented the other quotations, or if it is evidence of a disrupted or selective

¹¹⁶ Robert Boyle, *Some Considerations Touching the Usefulness of Experimental Naturall Philosophy, Propos’d in a Familiar Discourse to a Friend, by way of Invitation to the Study of it* (Oxford: Printed by Hen: Hall Printer to the University, for Ric: Davis. Anno Dom, 1663), 50.

¹¹⁷ Boyle, *Some Considerations*, 49.

reading process. It may be indicative of re-reading, with Horsington writing out quotes when they struck her as important, if we assume that the transcription took place over an extended period of time. It may also, of course, have been simply a copy of her husband's notes, but the position of the extracts before the title page of the manuscript implies that it could have been a separate endeavour to the transcription of Thomas Horsington's papers. This selective quotation is also evident at the top of the page, where Horsington wrote out Greek script, followed underneath by the words 'The manifold wisdom of God.' This is also present in Boyle's text on page thirty-eight, with Greek script preceding what is presumably an English translation, reading 'manifold Wisdom of God.'¹¹⁸ Perhaps Horsington felt that this was a particularly useful phrase, or was interested in the Greek.

There are more extracts from Boyle's *Experimental Naturall Philosophy* at the end of the manuscript, on the final two pages. Horsington wrote out a short passage about a fear of spiders, taken from chapter sixteen, followed by a longer extract from the very beginning of the book, and one short extract in which Boyle quotes Galen.¹¹⁹ She again quoted very carefully and accurately, but missed out large sections of the text, all of which contained parts in Latin. Indeed, in the passage dealing with Galen, Boyle has provided both the Latin original and the English translation, and it is this latter section that Horsington transcribed. While the rest of the manuscript does contain Latin, perhaps this was from her husband's papers while the extracts from Boyle were Horsington's own selections. This could reinforce the practice of her re-reading her own commonplace book; there would be little point in transcribing passages in Latin if she could not understand them. This might also indicate a mode of reading that passes over Latin script: perhaps when Horsington was reading Boyle, she ignored the Latin

¹¹⁸ Boyle, *Some Considerations*, 38.

¹¹⁹ Referring to Boyle, *Some Considerations*, 262; 6-8; 17.

passages as she knew she would not understand them. This would result in a very different reading experience to those who had the language capabilities to comprehend the entire text. There is no obvious reason as to why Horsington chose these extracts in particular to transcribe, but the carefulness with which she copied from the text, and the selectiveness employed within the extracts, indicates a careful and thoughtful reading process.

The extracts are positioned at the beginning and end of the manuscript, with none of the formatting features (such as pagination) of the main body of the text, which she has entitled the *Arcana*. It is possible that she added them later, or perhaps before she compiled the *Arcana*. Whichever it was, the influence of Boyle's *Experimental Naturall Philosophy* is clear, both in the extracts discussed here and in the main body of the text, where she referenced him several times. Her manuscript is dated 1666, only three years after Boyle published *Experimental Naturall Philosophy*. Horsington, or perhaps her husband, were clearly up to date in the latest scientific thinking: Boyle's work in the 1660s brought him widespread attention, and he was a leading thinker in seventeenth-century mechanical philosophy.¹²⁰

Horsington's ownership of the manuscript itself is evidenced by the inscription on the first page, where she wrote 'Sarah Horsington Her Manuscript. Bought 21, 10mb^r Pretiu[m] 16^d.'¹²¹ This does, admittedly, imply at least some familiarity with Latin ('pretium' translates as 'price'), but it does not mean that she would have been competent enough to read philosophical arguments in the language. While Horsington may have called herself a 'transcriber,' she played a much more direct authorial role, not simply copying out extracts from Boyle and from her husband's papers, but editing

¹²⁰ Michael Hunter, ed., *Robert Boyle Reconsidered* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994); Lotte Mulligan, "Robert Boyle 'The Christian Virtuoso' and the Rhetoric of 'Reason'," in *Religion, Reason and Nature in Early Modern Europe*, ed. Robert Crocker (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 2001), 97-116.

¹²¹ MS.2009.015. f1r, Clark Library.

and commenting on them. Moreover, the manuscript appears to have been intended for her own use, implying a practice of re-reading and referencing.

A great deal of the rest of the manuscript is given over to receipts of various kinds, culinary, medical and chemical. There is a glossary of chemical symbols, and a list of medical terms in Latin, along with comments on the effectiveness and methods of the receipts. Horsington made her ownership of some of the content clear, writing in the title of the work 'for my own observation and satisfaction.' It is interesting that her book has been designated a commonplace by Hunter, when it could in many ways be considered an example of an early modern recipe book, if we follow the categories used in much modern scholarship. The largely scientific content of the book may have been behind this classification, which is notable when thinking about hierarchies of knowledge and what was considered part of the intellectual practice of commonplacing.

Conclusion

Recipe books therefore add another dimension to the place of women in early modern manuscript compilation. The humanist commonplace book involved collecting and categorising knowledge for the compiler's use and education, and the same practice can be seen here. Writers of recipe books gathered knowledge from their friends, family, servants, printed books and their own experience, and collated them into a manuscript, often organised under different sections and headings in the same way as a commonplace. Many imitated the format of print books by including a contents page or index. The exclusion of recipes from studies of manuscript commonplace books and miscellanies indicates the hierarchy of knowledge imposed on early modern manuscript compilations, often serving to obscure women's participation in such practices.

The goal of most commonplace books in the renaissance humanist tradition was, in the words of Jardine and Grafton, to ‘study for action.’¹²² Scholars collected axioms, excerpts and quotations from their books in order to learn from these precepts, and use them in their public and private lives. This automatically implies a level of re-reading commonplaces; they acted as useful reference books reminding their creator how to act and think in certain situations. They also project a sense of self, as Ophir and others have argued, often locating the compiler in a sociable or intellectual world. By producing works for others, referencing friends and family, and excerpting certain texts, compilers could place themselves within a certain social and cultural milieu, engaging in a clear act of identity creation.

The impact of these note-taking practices on the reading experience are worth considering. Just as adding annotations to a printed book results in a different experience for subsequent readers, the practice of excerpting and selecting passages to reproduce in a notebook would directly influence the reading act.¹²³ It is difficult to know the relationship between what women read and what they chose to excerpt, but it would appear that genres such as romances or political texts were some of the least commonly included in notebooks. This may not be an overall trend – there is the example quoted in the introduction of this chapter of Mary Evelyn’s commonplace book. Perhaps, however, women were less likely to leave physical proof of their romance reading, in the form of annotations or extracts in reading notebooks. Instead, they left a record of reading experiences primarily based around devotion, and domestic life. As argued here and in the previous chapter, these reading notes represent individual identity, demonstrating women’s negotiation of both the personal and the political.

¹²² Lisa Jardine and Anthony Grafton, “‘Studied for Action’: How Gabriel Harvey Read his Livy,” *Past & Present* 129 (1990): 30-78.

¹²³ David Allan has explored the ways in which note-taking affected the experience and act of reading in Georgian England, arguing that note-taking was seen as a way of improving comprehension – see chapter nine, Allan, *Commonplace Books and Reading in Georgian England*.

The collected texts indicate the literary (and therefore intellectual) world to which the compiler had access, and give an insight into the mentality of the compiler, in terms of what they were interested in and deemed worthy of collecting. When considering women's place in what Smyth called 'commonplace book culture,' perhaps we should use these aims and theories, but widen our range of evidence. Due to the proscribed social situation of most women in the seventeenth-century, information on so-called 'domesticity,' such as recipes (both culinary and medical), familial records, household accounts, and religious notes would have been more useful than scholarly theories if they were 'studying for action.' The manuscripts discussed here were produced to be used, just as humanist commonplace books were, and thus reflect that purpose. While women may have found domestic information more practical that does not diminish their intellectual authority or the place these books should have in the history of reading.

The manuscripts examined here also attest to the range of practices and themes that can be associated with reading. Writing about reading was often a social and relational activity. Husbands edited their wives' texts, or vice versa, as with Anne Ley, Elizabeth Cholmondeley and Sarah Horsington; compilations of reading notes could be given as gifts; recipes included attributions and were situated within social networks; and the intermingling of excerpts with diary entries reveals a range of relationships. Moreover, reading was temporal and connected to real-world events. It could be used to explore political opposition, as Anne Ley did, or notes could be presented alongside letters, diaries, and accounts that gave a clear insight into the individual's life alongside their reading. Reading, therefore, was not an isolated activity but was bound up in other important aspects of an individual's life. It could be used to understand that life, or memorialise it, but it was deeply embedded in women's lives and concerns. Manuscript notebooks, with all their complexities and intermingling of contents, provide an insight into these women's lives and concerns, and the acts of compiling them and re-reading

them would have been a way of understanding their world. In opening up the discussion of commonplace books and reading notes, we can build up a much clearer picture of women's reading experiences, and challenge the hierarchy of values too often imposed on the study of the past.

'I harde yow once saye yow loved forryne newes': Women as News Readers

In an article about manuscript transmission of the news in the seventeenth century, Ian Atherton suggested that 'it is possible that women may have been less interested in the news. Female correspondents very rarely included even a line of news in their letters, where their male counterparts rarely let a letter pass without some mention of the events of the day.'¹ This is a significant oversimplification of the gendered distinctions of news culture. Moreover, it overlooks some important sources that attest to women's dedicated interest in the news over the seventeenth century. This chapter will consider the many and varied examples of women reading the news, demonstrating that there is evidence for a keen and continued interest in seventeenth-century current affairs among gentry women, and that they also played a significant role in epistolary news networks.

In Atherton's quotation above he implies that 'news' is a narrow category, presumably focused on political or military events. However, women's letters from the period were full of news about their lives, and those of their friends and acquaintances. Atherton acknowledges the 'tendency to call reports from men "news" and those from women "gossip",' and that women had a role in producing, selling, distributing and reading the news, but his statement reflects a common assumption in much historiography about women's lack of participation in what is often seen as a nascent seventeenth-century public sphere.²

¹ Ian Atherton, "'The Itch grown a Disease': Manuscript Transmission of News in the Seventeenth Century," in *News, Newspapers, and Society in Early Modern Britain*, ed. Joad Raymond (London: Frank Cass, 1999), 49.

² For more on early modern gossip and gender, see Bernard Capp, *When Gossips Meet: Women, Family and Neighbourhood in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003); Heather Kerr and Claire Walker, ed., *Fama and her Sisters: Gossip and Rumour in Early Modern Europe* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2015). For the late medieval context, see Susan E. Phillips, *Transforming Talk: The Problem with Gossip in Late Medieval England* (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2007).

In order to move away from this opposition of ‘news’ and ‘gossip,’ and illuminate the myriad ways in which women read the news, it is useful to borrow from existing scholarship on women’s relationship with politics, and the field of women’s writing. It has long been recognised that women’s writing often engaged with ‘news-worthy’ themes, and that women’s political participation often occurred in behind the scenes. Women prophets have received attention for their intervention in the public sphere, as have Quaker women, whose effective use of print has been demonstrated by Kate Peters.³ Scholars such as Ann Hughes have examined women’s more explicit political participation in the Civil War period, demonstrating the extent to which women were able to actively participate in the conflict, taking part in military operations, defending their homes and influencing the political discussion.⁴

Moreover, the political influences and interests in the works of Delarivier Manley, Aphra Behn and Mary Astell, and the political actions of women such as Lucy Hutchinson, Anne Halkett and Ann Fanshawe have all demonstrated the relationship that women had with politics in the seventeenth century.⁵ These women writers and actors must have acquired their information about contemporary events and politics from somewhere, and it seems a very reasonable assumption that they all consumed the

³ For work on prophecy, see Phyllis Mack, *Visionary Women: Ecstatic Prophecy in Seventeenth-Century England* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992); Elaine Hobby, *Virtue of Necessity: English Women’s Writing, 1646-1688* (London: Virago, 1988); Diane Watt, *Secretaries of God: Women Prophets in Late Medieval and Early Modern England* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1998); Manfred Brod, “Politics and Prophecy in Seventeenth-Century England: The Case of Elizabeth Poole,” *Albion* 31, no. 3 (1999): 395-412; Katharine Gillespie, *Domesticity and Dissent in the Seventeenth Century: English Women’s Writing and the Public Sphere* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004). For work on Quaker women and politics, see Kate Peters, *Print Culture and Early Quakers* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005); Catie Gill, *Women in the Seventeenth-Century Quaker Community: A Literary Study of Political Identities, 1650-1700* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005).

⁴ Ann Hughes, *Gender and the English Revolution* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2012).

⁵ Ruth Herman, *The Business of a Woman: The Political Writings of Delarivier Manley* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2003); Derek Hughes and Janet Todd, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Aphra Behn* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004); Jacqueline Broad, *The Philosophy of Mary Astell: An Early Modern Theory of Virtue* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015); Susan Wiseman, *Conspiracy and Virtue: Women, Writing, and Politics in Seventeenth-Century England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006); Helen Wilcox, “Private Writing and Public Function: Autobiographical Texts by Renaissance Englishwomen,” in *Gloriana’s Face: Women, Public and Private, in the English Renaissance*, ed. S.P. Cerasano and Marion Wynne-Davies (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1992), 47-62.

news, in some form or other. This may have been through oral networks, but it may also have been in either manuscript or print. The broadening of our ideas of how women engaged with politics, and how this was expressed, can be applied to news reading. If we take a wider view of what counts as news, and how women may have consumed it, their place in seventeenth-century news culture becomes clearer. This chapter will focus on women's engagement with the category of 'news' as used by Atherton (that is, largely characterised by reporting on political, military, and national or international events), using often-overlooked sources such as familial letters and manuscript newsletters. However, it is part of a wider conversation about the definition of news itself. There is not room to explore the designation of 'gossip' fully here, but this would be a valuable avenue for further research.

The rise of 'news' in the seventeenth century has been much discussed by scholars, tracing a story of increasing interest in and publication of contemporary events from the time of the Civil War, with the development of pamphlet culture.⁶ Although there was an increasing appetite for the news in the early seventeenth century, scholars have identified a turning point in the early 1640s, when censorship collapsed with Charles I's government and print news, particularly in the form of newsbooks, began to enjoy unprecedented popularity.⁷ While the generic differences between the newsbook and the modern newspaper have been noted by Joad Raymond, among others, he nevertheless

⁶ This is, of course, an Anglocentric narrative. There has been a lot of very useful work on European news networks: see, for example, Simon F. Davies and Puck Fletcher, ed., *News in Early Modern Europe: Currents and Connections* (Leiden: Brill, 2014); Joop W. Koopmans, *Early Modern Media and the News in Europe: Perspectives from the Dutch Angle* (Leiden: Brill, 2018); Siv Gøril Brandtzæg, Paul Goring and Christine Watson, ed., *Travelling Chronicles: News and Newspapers from the Early Modern Period to the Eighteenth Century* (Leiden: Brill, 2018); Noah Moxham and Joad Raymond, ed., *News Networks in Early Modern Europe* (Leiden: Brill, 2016).

⁷ Christopher Hill, "Foreword," in *Making the News: An Anthology of the Newsbooks of Revolutionary England 1641-1660*, ed. Joad Raymond (Gloucestershire: The Windrush Press, 1993). Raymond in particular has written extensively on the genre of the newsbook. 1640 is often referred to as having seen an 'explosion' of print, but Jason Peacey argues convincingly that it was not a quantitative shift, but rather a qualitative one: that the volume of *cheap* print increased, with new genres and types of authors emerging. See Jason Peacey, "The Revolution in Print," in *The Oxford Handbook of the English Revolution*, ed. Michael J. Braddick (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 276-293.

suggests that ‘the competitive market of weekly, serial news publications is one of the long-term inheritances of the 1640s.’⁸ The newsbooks, pamphlets and corantos that made up the seventeenth-century print news market have been seen as the fore-runners of the modern newspaper, and have been connected to the developing public sphere. Raymond, in particular, has argued that the origins of the public sphere should be traced back to the 1640s, challenging Habermasian chronology which sees it emerging in the 1690s.⁹

Raymond has sketched the history of early modern news media in the early seventeenth century, in both Britain and Europe. This narrative sees news pamphlets beginning to appear in the late sixteenth century, although these were largely ‘sensationalistic and moralistic.’¹⁰ Monthly periodicals started to circulate in the first decade of the seventeenth century on the continent, with the first newspaper being published in Strasbourg in 1605.¹¹ The first corantos, small folio broadsheets, were published in the early 1620s.¹² In England, these corantos tended to report largely on continental news, as domestic news publication was strictly controlled by the Privy Council.¹³ Corantos developed throughout the seventeenth century, shifting format from a folio to a quarto, usually around three sheets.¹⁴ Charles I suppressed the corantos in 1632, giving rise to longer serial publications such as *The Swedish Intelligencer*.¹⁵ In the 1640s the first

⁸ Raymond, *Making the News*, 9.

⁹ Joad Raymond, “The Newspaper, Public Opinion, and the Public Sphere in the Seventeenth Century,” in *News, Newspapers, and Society in Early Modern Britain*, ed. Joad Raymond (London: Frank Cass, 1999), 109-140. Although, as Peter Lake and Steven Pincus have pointed out, the ‘public sphere’ can be applied to the early modern period as a whole, beginning with the Reformation. See Peter Lake and Steven Pincus, ed., *The Politics of the Public Sphere in Early Modern England* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007).

¹⁰ Joad Raymond, *The Invention of the Newspaper: English Newsbooks, 1641-1649* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2005), 6.

¹¹ Andrew Pettegree, *The Invention of News: How the World Came to Know About Itself* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014), 168.

¹² Raymond, *The Invention of the Newspaper*, 7.

¹³ Richard Cust, “News and Politics in Early Seventeenth-Century England,” *Past & Present* 112, no. 1 (1986): 62. Although, as Cust has demonstrated, domestic news was still in circulation, often in manuscript form.

¹⁴ Raymond, *The Invention of the Newspaper*, 8.

¹⁵ Daniel Woolf, “News, History, and the Construction of the Present in Early Modern England,” in *The Politics of Information in Early Modern Europe*, ed. Brendan Dooley and Sabrina A. Baron (London:

newsbooks appeared in Britain, along with large numbers of topical pamphlets, and the coranto largely died out.¹⁶ Pre-publication licensing lapsed in the 1640s, allowing numerous pamphlets and periodicals to be published without state control.¹⁷ Andrew Pettegree has stated that the ‘output of the press grew almost fourfold between 1639 and 1641, and reached its peak in 1642 with almost four thousand published works.’¹⁸ Licensing was re-introduced in 1649, allowing parliament to control the number of licensed news publications, and Cromwell suppressed unlicensed newspapers in 1655, but the Licensing Act slipped again in 1679.¹⁹ The newspaper developed during the Restoration, with the publication of *The London Gazette* in 1665. This was printed as a half-sheet of paper with two columns on each side, very different in form to the earlier newsbook. The *Gazette* was published twice a week, eventually leading to the first daily newspaper being published in 1703.²⁰

Readers of the news, however, and particularly women readers of the news, have largely been overlooked in the historiography. Raymond and Michael Frearson in particular have studied readership patterns, providing quantitative overviews of readers, but without an in-depth consideration of *how* people read the news, or of the role of gender.²¹ Jason Peacey has noted that there was a great deal of concern around the reading of cheap print and news during the Civil War period, particularly focused on the

Routledge, 2001), 90; Anthony B. Thompson, “Licensing the Press: The Career of G. K. Weckherlin during the Personal Rule of Charles I,” *The Historical Journal* 41, no.3 (1998): 653-678.

¹⁶ Raymond, *The Invention of the Newspaper*, 9-13. Raymond has examined the differences in format between the coranto and the newsbook, arguing that the latter cannot be seen as a direct descendant of the former, and in fact bore a closer relationship to non-periodical pamphlets.

¹⁷ For more on the effect this had on reading, see Sabrina A. Baron, “Licensing Readers, Licensing Authorities in Seventeenth-Century England,” in *Books and Readers in Early Modern England: Material Studies*, ed. Jennifer Anderson and Elizabeth Sauer (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002), 217-242.

¹⁸ Pettegree, *The Invention of News*, 221.

¹⁹ Raymond, *The Invention of the Newspaper*, 14. James Sutherland, *The Restoration Newspaper and its Development* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 123.

²⁰ Raymond, *The Invention of the Newspaper*, 15.

²¹ See Raymond, *The Invention of the Newspaper*; Michael Frearson, “The Distribution and Readership of London Corantos in the 1620s,” in *Serials and Their Readers, 1620-1914*, eds. Robin Myers and Michael Harris (Winchester: St Paul’s Bibliographies, 1993), 1-25.

question of readerly credulity. There was concern that news publications spread lies and falsehoods, deepening political divides.²² However, this concern did not stop consumption of printed news. In looking at news readers, Peacey demonstrates how individuals were discerning about which publications they read, and were very capable of assessing the reliability of the information presented to them.²³ The readers that Peacey surveys are largely male.²⁴ However, when looking at the private circulation of printed news, he argues that ‘gentry women were enthusiastic readers and distributors of topical material, who gained access to “printed papers” even in remote parts of the country,’ suggesting that they often received such material from their husbands.²⁵ This is no doubt true, but it overlooks the many women who subscribed to newsletters themselves. In Peacey’s work, as in many studies, women are secondary examples in discussions of news consumption.

The idea that women were absent from news culture has been challenged by a number of scholars in recent years. Women’s roles in the production and distribution of news have been illuminated by scholars such as Paula McDowell, Claire Walker and Marcus Nevitt.²⁶ Nevitt in particular has recognised that women read newsbooks, citing Lucy Hutchinson and Brilliana Harley in particular, but has otherwise largely focused on women’s roles in the production, rather than consumption, of the news.²⁷ The

²² Jason Peacey, *Print and Public Politics in the English Revolution* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 100-101.

²³ Peacey, *Print and Public Politics*, 105-114.

²⁴ Peacey has done other work on news reading, largely based on case studies of early modern men. See Jason Peacey, “Sir Thomas Cotton’s Consumption of News,” *The Library* 7th series, 7 (2006): 3-24; Jason Peacey, “A Royalist Reads the News: Sir Edward Hyde and Civil War Journalism,” in *Clarendon Reconsidered: Law, Loyalty and Literature, 1640-1674*, ed. P. Major (London: Routledge, 2018), 16-36.

²⁵ Peacey, *Print and Public Politics*, 69.

²⁶ Paula McDowell, *The Women of Grub Street: Press, Politics and Gender in the London Literary Marketplace, 1678-1730* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1998). Claire Walker has done work on the role of nuns in Royalist news networks. See Claire Walker, “Crumbs of News: Early Modern English Nuns and Royalist Intelligence Networks,” *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 42, no. 3 (2003): 635-655.

²⁷ See, for example, Marcus Nevitt, “Women in the Business of Revolutionary News: Elizabeth Alkin, “Parliament Joan,” and the Commonwealth Newsbook,” in *News, Newspapers, and Society in Early Modern Britain*, ed. Joad Raymond (London: Frank Cass, 1999), 84-108; Marcus Nevitt, *Women and the Pamphlet Culture of Revolutionary England, 1640-1660* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006).

developing public sphere of the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, where news was consumed and discussed (particularly in coffee houses), has traditionally been seen as masculine, both rhetorically and in terms of physical space.²⁸ However, this model has been increasingly complicated by historians, who have argued that women could and did participate in coffee house culture.²⁹ There is increasing recognition that women were interested in the news, and were able to be active participants in many areas of seventeenth-century news cultures.

This still leaves room, however, for a discussion of women's roles as readers and consumers of the news. Helen Berry has explored serial publications and the public sphere through examining the *Athenian Mercury*, which appears to have had both male and female readers, and has examined the gendering of that readership.³⁰ She has also argued that certain women were present in coffee houses, although she noted that they might be there for different reasons to men; notably upper-class women attending social events and women of the lower-classes being employed in such establishments.³¹

Coffee houses are of course an important area of research for exploring early modern women and news culture, but less attention has been paid to how women engaged with the news at home, often far from London. In this chapter, I focus on seventeenth-century women news readers in domestic spaces, and consider *how* women read the news.

²⁸ This was not only true of the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. Ann Hughes has explored the intrinsic association of the public and the masculine in the Civil War period, but notes that their private lives were also key to their political identities. See Ann Hughes, "Men, the 'Public' and the 'Private' in the English Revolution," in *The Politics of the Public Sphere in Early Modern England*, ed. Peter Lake and Steven Pincus (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007), 191-212.

²⁹ Steven Pincus, "'Coffee Does Politicians Create': Coffeehouses and Restoration Political Culture," *Journal of Modern History* 67, no. 4 (1995): 807-834; Brian Cowen, "What Was Masculine about the Public Sphere? Gender and the Coffeehouse Milieu in Post-Restoration England," *History Workshop Journal* 51, no. 1 (2001): 127-157.

³⁰ Helen Berry, *Gender, Society and Print Culture in Late-Stuart England* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003).

³¹ Helen Berry, "'Nice and Curious Questions': Coffee Houses and the Representation of Women in John Dunton's *Athenian Mercury*," *The Seventeenth Century* 12, no. 2 (1997): 257-276.

Alongside the sex of news readers, the gendered nature of news reading itself deserves further attention. Raymond has argued that people read the news with a passion, despite contemporary cultural fears about this reaction.³² He has argued that ‘in the increasingly commercialised marketplace of print the mass of injudicious readers threatened to engulf the studied and disciplined few,’ and that passionate or emotional reactions to the news were seen as disruptive, and an ‘enemy to reason.’³³ Raymond implies a contrast between this voracious, emotionally engaged news reading and the traditional model of ‘active’ reading, discussed in the two previous chapters, often characterised by marginalia.

The lack of annotation of news publications has been commented on by several scholars. Raymond sees it as reflective of a lack of advice on how to read the news; there were books advising how to read and annotate other genres, but this did not exist for news publications, leading Raymond to suggest that a lack of training made people unwilling to annotate their newsbooks and newspapers.³⁴ He has argued that the method of reading the news was different to the traditional humanist model of active, goal-oriented reading: that people read the news diligently, but without any particular outcome in mind.³⁵ This is possibly a distinction between the improvement of one’s mind and wisdom, in the humanist model, and a desire to accumulate contemporary information through news reading. Atherton, on the other hand, has argued that the lack of annotation was due to the circulation of news publications among friends and family, and an unwillingness to impose one’s own interpretation of the news upon subsequent readers.³⁶ This is not wholly convincing, given early modern readers’ lack of scruples

³² Joad Raymond, “Irrational, Impractical and Unprofitable: Reading the News in Seventeenth-Century Britain,” in *Reading, Society and Politics in Early Modern England*, ed. Kevin Sharpe and Steven N. Zwicker (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 185-212.

³³ Raymond, “Irrational, Impractical and Unprofitable,” 186, 188.

³⁴ Raymond, “Irrational, Impractical and Unprofitable,” 190-191.

³⁵ Raymond, “Irrational, Impractical and Unprofitable,” 204.

³⁶ Atherton, “‘The Itch grown a Disease’,” 51.

about annotating other texts that might be passed around family and friends.³⁷

Moreover, Raymond's argument that people read the news without a particular 'goal' in mind overlooks the aim of intellectual development, so central to humanist models of reading. The desire to gain knowledge about the world must have been at least a partial motivator behind news reading, as would, presumably, the desire to be able to discuss current affairs, at least in certain circles. Both of these aims would qualify for active reading and annotation under the humanist system. The fact remains, however, that news, whether manuscript or print, rarely bears readers' marks. Perhaps this is more indicative of a lack of repeated reading than anything else. News reading is, by its very nature, immediate and often short-lived: it is unlikely that one would go back to newsletters or newsbooks for multiple readings over a long period of time, as might happen with the Bible or other favoured text.³⁸

A much-discussed phenomenon of seventeenth-century news culture is the plurality of texts open to readers. There was, as has been mentioned above, a rise in print news publications in the 1640s and readers had plenty of choice in the news marketplace, at least during periods when the Licensing Act was not in place. One of the most striking things about the scholarship on seventeenth-century news, however, is the division between manuscript and print genres. In the focus on the rise of new genres and the attempt to both trace and complicate the origins of the newspaper, the manuscript transmission of news has often been overlooked, or at least treated as entirely separate

³⁷ See chapter two for an exploration of book annotations and sociability.

³⁸ There are few examples of news media being collected in the same way that books were in the early modern period, although there are significant exceptions to this in the form of George Thomason and Narcissus Luttrell. For more on contemporary collecting culture, see Marjorie Swann, *Curiosities and Texts: The Culture of Collecting in Early Modern England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001); Daniela Bleichmar and Peter C. Mancall, ed., *Collecting Across Cultures: Material Exchanges in the Early Modern Atlantic World* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011). For more on pamphlet collecting, see Michael Mendle, "Preserving the Ephemeral: Reading, Collecting, and the Pamphlet Culture of Seventeenth-Century England," in *Books and Readers in Early Modern England: Material Studies*, ed. Jennifer Anderson and Elizabeth Sauer (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002), 201-216. For more on news collecting, see Noah Millstone, "Designed for Collection: Early Modern News and the Production of History," *Media History* 23, no. 2 (2017): 177-198.

from print news. It is worth, therefore, considering all the ways in which news was transmitted in the seventeenth century, to examine if women interacted with any forms in particular and how they were approached. From my research, the two forms that emerge most concretely are letters containing news, sent by friends, family or acquaintances; and the manuscript newsletter. The absence of other forms does not necessarily mean that women were not consuming them (there are several references to printed news publications in the sources I discuss here), but rather that we have less evidence thereof. These two genres have often been overlooked by scholars focused on the explosion of print news in the seventeenth century, but there is increasing recognition of their continued importance in the early modern period, despite the influx of new forms of news transmission.

One of the main debates regarding the manuscript newsletter concerns whether it falls in the private or public realm, traced along the lines of a perceived division between manuscript and print: whether it is closer to a personal letter or a printed newspaper. Atherton sees the newsletter as part of a spectrum of manuscript news transmission, arguing that ‘only a broad definition, from professionally written newsletters to ordinary correspondence that refers in passing to an item of news, can convey the wide range of manuscript sources of news in the seventeenth century.’³⁹ Similarly, Gary Schneider has argued for a distinction between newsletters and letters of news – although he is careful to point out that the dividing lines between these two forms are often blurred.⁴⁰ He frames the manuscript newsletter as a point of transformation within the epistolary genre, arguing that there is a move away from the social intimacy upon which letters of

³⁹ Atherton, “‘The Itch grown a Disease’,” 41.

⁴⁰ Gary Schneider, *The Culture of Epistolarity: Vernacular Letters and Letter Writing in Early Modern England, 1500-1700* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2005), 161.

news relied. Letters, in his view, are essentially relational, based upon affective and intimate rhetoric, which the newsletter tried to avoid.

This manuscript, epistolary nature could have been part of what kept them from being censored in the same way as the printed press in the first half of the seventeenth century.⁴¹ Sabrina Baron has suggested that it was possible that newsletters ‘could not be divorced from the fact that they were formatted and transmitted in the same way as all letters, making them personal rather than public, more closely associated with the private individual who wrote the letter and the private individual who received it, than the public actions described in the letter and the public opinion influenced and inspired by these letters.’⁴² This classification of so-called ‘ordinary’ letters as essentially private, however, does overlook the fact that news was often transmitted, to varying degrees, within personal letters, and that they or their contents were often transmitted to many recipients, rather than just one individual.⁴³

Rachael Scarborough King, however, has argued that the manuscript newsletter was a bridge genre between manuscript and print, and has challenged both the chronology of the news genre and the connections made between manuscript and private, print and public.⁴⁴ King has suggested that there is a common misconception about manuscript news in a historiography that ‘persists in seeing the newspaper as quintessentially a print product, and the newsletter as a precursor, supplement, or small-scale alternative to modern commercial printed news.’⁴⁵ She has questioned the chronology that sees the

⁴¹ Sabrina A. Baron, “The Guises of Dissemination in Early Seventeenth-Century England: News in Manuscript and Print,” in *The Politics of Information in Early Modern Europe*, ed. Brendan Dooley and Sabrina A. Baron (London: Routledge, 2001), 47.

⁴² Baron, “The Guises of Dissemination,” 47.

⁴³ James Daybell, “The Scribal Circulation of Early Modern Letters,” *Huntington Library Quarterly* 79, no. 3 (2016): 365-385.

⁴⁴ Rachael Scarborough King, “All the News that’s Fit to Write: The Eighteenth-Century Manuscript Newsletter,” in *Travelling Chronicles: News and Newspapers from the Early Modern Period to the Eighteenth Century*, ed. Siv Gøril Brandtzæg, Paul Goring and Christine Watson (Leiden: Brill, 2018), 95-118.

⁴⁵ King, “All the News that’s Fit to Write,” 95.

newsletter as a largely pre-Restoration genre, and the idea that newsletters were linked to other forms of letter writing, usually placed in the private sphere. Instead, she argues that ‘the manuscript newsletter had more in common with the printed newspaper than with a personal letter containing items designated “news”,’ and that they were mutually reliant well into the eighteenth century, overturning the traditional narrative that newsletters were gradually replaced by newspapers.⁴⁶ This, for King, allows historians to complicate the Habermasian ‘separate spheres’ model and its relation to news culture in England: she argues that the ‘dispersed web of correspondents, editors, and recipients that characterised newsletter services also extends our understanding of late seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century news distribution beyond the urban, print-centric model of coffeehouse news consumption central to Habermas’ description of the public sphere.’⁴⁷

There is recognition, then, that the manuscript transmission of news, as an essentially public genre, challenges our concept of the separation of the private and public spheres. This can be further complicated by looking at how people read the news. As will be demonstrated below, there is plenty of evidence that news was gathered from a multiplicity of sources, both manuscript and print.⁴⁸ King has discussed the interplay between different forms of communication in the news marketplace of the late seventeenth century, arguing that ‘written and printed media worked in tandem and in addition to the traditional oral circulation of news, offering users a range of communicative options rather than replacing or overriding each other.’⁴⁹ This method of

⁴⁶ King, “All the News that’s Fit to Write,” 96-97, 118. Alex Barber has similarly argued for the continued importance of manuscript news forms. See Alex W. Barber, “‘It is Not Easy What to Say of our Condition, Much Less to Write It’: The Continued Importance of Scribal News in the Early 18th Century,” *Parliamentary History* 32, no. 2 (2013): 293-316.

⁴⁷ King, “All the News that’s Fit to Write,” 118; Jürgen Habermas, “The Public Sphere,” *New German Critique* 3 (1974): 49-55.

⁴⁸ Oral transmission of news is also an important facet of this discussion, but not one I plan to explore further here, as I will be focusing on how individuals read the news.

⁴⁹ Rachael Scarborough King, *Writing to the World: Letters and the Origins of Modern Print Genres* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2018), 25.

reading widely is often explored in relation to the idea of the ‘reading revolution’ that scholars have outlined for the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, by which ‘intensive,’ in-depth reading of a small number of (primarily religious) texts was replaced by ‘extensive’ reading of a broad number of (largely secular) works. This idea was first coined by Rolf Engelsing, but has been repeated, revised and challenged by many scholars since.⁵⁰ Although as a broad narrative for diachronic change, the usefulness of this idea may be in question, the idea of reading ‘extensively’ is perhaps more helpful when applied to a smaller subject area. Here, I want to use the model of ‘extensive’ reading to think about how people read the news in the seventeenth century.⁵¹ In gathering knowledge about current affairs, seventeenth-century readers, both male and female, relied on a variety of different sources to keep them informed, relying on both manuscript and print throughout the seventeenth century.

In looking at how women read the news in the seventeenth century, then, I will consider ideas of extensive reading, and the divisions between different types of epistolary communication. I have not found any readers’ marks on contemporary printed news that can be easily traced to women, so therefore I am focusing on evidence from letters, which reveal readership of both manuscript and print.⁵² Women received the news in letters from friends and family, and in formalised documents such as newsletters, newsbooks and corantos. I will explore examples of letters sent to and from women such as Joan Barrington, Elizabeth Mordaunt and Jane Cornwallis Bacon, to consider

⁵⁰ For example see Ian Jackson, “Approaches to the History of Readers and Reading in Eighteenth-Century Britain,” *The Historical Journal* 47, no. 4 (2004): 1041-1054; Reinhard Wittman, “Was There a Reading Revolution at the End of the Eighteenth Century?” in *A History of Reading in the West*, ed. Guglielmo Cavallo and Roger Chartier, trans. Lydia G. Cochrane (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1999), 284-312. The idea of the ‘reading revolution’ is discussed at greater length in the introduction to this thesis.

⁵¹ This has not often been considered by historians of early modern news, apart from King (see footnote 27), and Atherton, although he does not explore the idea in much depth: see Atherton, “‘The Itch grown a Disease’,” 45.

⁵² There is evidence of men annotating news publications, for example Narcissus Luttrell’s collection of broadsides, which he annotated with provenance information (See Narcissus Luttrell, *Broadsides*, single sheets, and pamphlets reporting affairs in Ireland during the war of 1689-1691, 1971 +62, Beinecke Library, New Haven). These marks make it easy to trace readers, but I have been so far unable to find similar evidence for women in the seventeenth century.

the ways in which women participated in epistolary news networks among friends and families; and manuscript newsletters sent to women such as Ann Pole and Barbara Clopton, which demonstrate women's interest in serial news consumption. What emerges is a picture of extensive reading habits, in which gentry women consumed the news in print and manuscript form, often absorbing multiple accounts of the same event, or using different publications to acquire knowledge of different events. This does not appear to be markedly different from the way in which men read the news, challenging the traditional divisions that have been put in place between male and female participation in the public news sphere.

The examples of news reading considered here fall roughly into three chronological periods, corresponding with periods of change in news culture more generally. The late 1620s and early 1630s, with the rise of corantos and serials, is the context for the news reading of figures such as Joan Barrington and Jane Cornwallis Bacon, who received news from their friends and family. Brilliana Harley, Elizabeth Mordaunt, and Mary Hatton Helsby were reading the news in the context of the Civil War and Restoration, when a significant number of new printed forms were available to the reading public. Barbara Clopton and Ann Pole, moreover, were receiving newsletters in the 1680s and 1690s, when news saw another spike alongside the context of the Glorious Revolution and the rage of party. These are all recognised as significant moments in the development of printed news, while the evidence collected here is largely manuscript, in the form of personal letters or scribal newsletters. However, there is evidence throughout that these women were reading printed news forms as well, demonstrating the significance of the rise of the news genre not only for the male public sphere, but for women, who often lived at a remove from the political centre of the country.

Letters of News

Despite Atherton's claim that women's letters rarely contain items of news, or at least what we might traditionally designate as news, as opposed to gossip or rumour, there are examples of women discussing news in epistolary form throughout the seventeenth century. James Daybell has argued that 'the treatment of news of all varieties [...] was commonplace in women's letters' in the Tudor period, examining their place in manuscript news networks.⁵³ This correspondence is often with male family members or acquaintances, usually based in London and updating their female relatives on the news from the capital. There are, however, also examples of women sharing news in their letters to each other. Letters can also give evidence of other forms of news reading, as newsbooks, corantos and broadsides were often sent by friends and family, alongside letters. The examples gathered here, ranging from the 1620s to the 1690s, demonstrate several women's interest in news reading and participation in seventeenth-century news transmission. These are only a select few, chosen for their extensive references to news cultures, and because they are understudied in the historiography of news and women's letter-writing; but they represent a much wider trend that disproves Atherton's suggestion that women were not interested in the news.

Many women received detailed news in letters from their male family members, often their husbands, sons, or sons-in-law, who were in London and could report on events in the capital. The letters sent to Lady Joan Barrington (née Cromwell, 1558-1641), the Puritan gentry woman known for her clerical patronage, and Jane Cornwallis Bacon (née Meautys, 1580/81-1659), the gentry woman and letter-writer, reveal a great deal about their news reading habits and interests. Both received letters from a variety of

⁵³ James Daybell, *Women Letter-Writers in Tudor England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 152.

family members and acquaintances, who updated them, often in great detail, on important items of both foreign and domestic news.

Barrington appears to have been at the centre of an epistolary network within her family. As Arthur Searle has noted: ‘the quantity of letters to Lady Joan Barrington at this period, as well as their content, indicate that she was the focal point of the extended family, the dowager and respected matriarch on a recognisable early seventeenth-century pattern.’⁵⁴ The family’s letters are held in the British Library. Those in the volume edited by Searle come from the years 1628-1632, when a large number of letters were sent to Barrington after the death of her husband, Sir Francis Barrington. Various family members and acquaintances sent Barrington updates about current affairs, and her interest in the news appears to have been common knowledge, at least within the family. This was in the midst of the Thirty Years’ War. Richard Cust has argued that there was a great deal of interest in foreign and domestic news at this time, with the public following the conflict on the continent, the Spanish match and parliamentary politics, citing the fact that there is a ‘marked increase in the survival of newsletters and “separates”’ after 1620.⁵⁵ Barrington’s nephew, Sir Francis Harris, for example, wrote at one point to Barrington ‘I harde yow once saye yow loved forryne newes.’⁵⁶ This particular letter was accompanied by a ‘new boke,’ presumably containing international news, and an apology for not being able to send the ‘weekly currant’ as well.

Barrington was clearly also interested in domestic news, however. Her sons often sent her news of parliament, or other political news from London. On 28th January 1629, her son Robert wrote:

⁵⁴ Arthur Searle, ed., *Barrington Family Letters, 1628-1632*, Camden Fourth Series Volume 28 (London: The Royal Historical Society, 1983), vii.

⁵⁵ Cust, “News and Politics in Early Seventeenth-Century England,” 69. “Separates” were a form of manuscript newsletter.

⁵⁶ Letter 204, October [?] 1631. Searle, *Barrington Family Letters*, 206.

I cannot now have tyme to relate how many excellent speeches were made both yesterday and this day in the cause of religion and against both property and arminianisme. We are to goe to the king to morrow to receive his gracious answer upon the petition of both houses for a generall fast, which we make no doubt of being graunted. Forraigne newes I heare none, only there is a speech that the Hollanders have taken more shippes of late and surprized the convoy that as comeing with money to pay the souldiers in the archduchess' country.⁵⁷

This references the ongoing condemnation of Arminianism by parliament in the 1620s, and the petition for a general fast, which was a common response to outbreaks of disease in England.⁵⁸ The whole letter is taken up with political news, with only scant mention of personal matters, or Robert's welfare. These matters would, however, be personally important to him, as he was describing his professional life. When seen within the context of family intimacy this complicates the idea of a public/private divide, demonstrating that women often necessarily had close links to political proceedings, due to their family members' professional positions. Letters such as these are frequent, often sent every few days, allowing Barrington to stay as up-to-date as possible with the affairs of the day. However, her sons were discerning about what they reported, seemingly based on what they thought would interest their mother. In one letter from 1630, John Barrington wrote to his mother 'I heare of no newes in this towne worthy of your knowledge.'⁵⁹

John Barrington clearly put a premium of certain kinds of news, and was discerning in what he sent to his mother: there was no news 'worthy of [her] knowledge,' rather than simply 'no newes.' It also indicates the role that family members played in deciding

⁵⁷ Letter 23, 28th January 1629. Searle, *Barrington Family Letters*, 50-51.

⁵⁸ Hillel Swartz, "Arminianism and the English Parliament, 1624-1629," *Journal of British Studies* 12, no. 2 (1973): 41-68; Lori Anne Ferrell, "Preaching and the English Parliaments in the 1620s," *Parliamentary History* 34, no. 1 (2015): 142-154.

⁵⁹ Letter 116, 19th February 1630. Searle, *Barrington Family Letters*, 134.

what news was relayed to women. There is a similar example in 1693, when Margaret Grey received a letter from her son William Grey.⁶⁰ William wrote ‘I read over the news[letter] just now but can find nothing worth writing.’⁶¹ Grey appears to have relied on her son to digest the news for her, reading the newsletter and deciding what content may or may not interest his mother. While it is very possible that Grey had other news sources, whether printed or manuscript, it is clear that some family members could play an almost editorial role when passing on the news.

Jane Cornwallis Bacon similarly received news in various letters from her male family members. Her second husband, Nathaniel Bacon, wrote to her detailing the news of the Thirty Years’ War from mainland Europe, in a similar style to the manuscript newsletters:

for news here is very little, but some hopes that the strong report of the King and Prince’s death of Polonia may prove untrue, for here has lately arrived a ship out of these countries, which relates no such thing; and besides, the Spanish ambassador has no such intelligence. The report is also of an ambassador out of Spain for the Low Countries, to treat of peace; for whose entertainment there is there great preparation. A confirmation also of the sea fight betwixt the French King and the Rochellers, 6 of the King’s ships being sunk, and 3 taken; and also of the other news I last wrote, of another navy of ships is also preparing, the intent unclear, some say for Spain, the match proceeding according to the common report.⁶²

⁶⁰ Margaret and William Grey’s biographies are unclear, although they were ancestors of Sir Charles Grey (1785-1865), a colonial governor in India, whose family papers are held in the Bodleian Library.

⁶¹ Letter from William Grey to his mother Margaret Grey, 23rd feb 1693, Grey Family Correspondence, 1691-1788. MS. Eng. c. 6812, f4r, Bodleian Library, Oxford.

⁶² Letter 74, 26th October 1624. Joanna Moody, ed., *The Private Correspondence of Jane Lady Cornwallis Bacon, 1613-1644* (London: Associated University Presses, 2003), 122.

This letter gives a detailed overview of the various events across the continent, referencing the difficulty people had in confirming news reports or reconciling conflicting information. Moreover, it is implied that this is a regular correspondence: Nathaniel Bacon mentioned ‘the other news I last wrote,’ suggesting that this was not a one-off communication, and that he had relayed news to her before.

Bacon’s cousin, Thomas Meautys, gave her updates on the news from London, including the events at Parliament and the accompanying political intrigue and manoeuvring. In one letter he wrote, ‘our Parliament was this day adjourned till Thursday next. The Upper House is not satisfied with the reasons of the King’s detaining my Lord of Arundel from them, and are resolved to press it further.’⁶³ This is referring to Charles I’s arrest of Thomas Howard, the Earl of Arundel, after his son eloped with Lady Elizabeth Stuart, daughter of the Duke of Lennox and the King’s ward. The House of Lords protested his detention, as one of their members, and adjourned parliament until Arundel was released.⁶⁴

She clearly had several news sources, as Meautys later wrote, ‘I am the shorter in news, because I understand by your last that you want not our Parliament news from better and readier hands.’⁶⁵ She also was clearly able to read in at least two languages, and her family were therefore able to send her additional materials and reports to add to her reading. In June 1628, Meautys wrote ‘the enclosed, for those few words which are in French, and for which you want no interpreter, was the King’s answer to our petition; the rest was somewhat which he spoke before and after the answer given.’⁶⁶

⁶³ Letter 105, 1626. Moody, *The Private Correspondence of Jane Lady Cornwallis Bacon*, 148-149.

⁶⁴ Mark Kishlansky, “Charles I: A Case of Mistaken Identity,” *Past & Present* 189 (2005): 55.

⁶⁵ Letter 123, April 1628. Moody, *The Private Correspondence of Jane Lady Cornwallis Bacon*, 176.

⁶⁶ Letter 128, 11th June 1628. Moody, *The Private Correspondence of Jane Lady Cornwallis Bacon*, 181.

Bacon was apparently concerned with the truthfulness and accuracy of the reports she received, as Sir Ambrose Randolph, a cousin and close friend, at one point wrote to her

I knowing your love to the truth of news, rather than first or common report of it, shall, as you wishes me, send you a relation of the King of Sweden's great victory, the 7th September, as it was told by him that brought the news to our King since my coming to town; an Englishman, who the King has now knighted, his name Sir John Castell.⁶⁷

This conflict was the Battle of Breitenfeld, one of King Gustavus Adolphus' most significant victories in the Thirty Years' War, and the rest of the letter is taken up with a very detailed account of the conflict. The similarity to Harris' reference to Barrington's 'love' of the news is striking; they were both keen to keep well-informed, and utilised their large network of friends and family to help them do so, despite any physical distance they might have from London political circles.⁶⁸ Their news reading broadened their political and cultural horizons, allowing them to intellectually engage with current affairs.⁶⁹

Evidence of extensive reading, mixing both manuscript and print genres, is displayed in Barrington's family letters. Her correspondents frequently sent her copies of the latest newsbooks, keeping her up-to-date on events. Her son-in-law, William Masham, wrote in 1631: 'we have noe domesticke newes, only some whispers at Parliament. When the

⁶⁷ Letter 169, 3rd November 1631. Moody, *The Private Correspondence of Jane Lady Cornwallis Bacon*, 211.

⁶⁸ Jason Scott-Warren has examined how letters containing news addressed to Thomas Cornwallis allowed him to keep in touch with the wider world, and how news acted as a commodity or gift in such epistles, creating bonds of intimacy between himself and his correspondents. See Jason Scott-Warren, "News, Sociability, and Bookbuying in Early Modern England: The Letters of Sir Thomas Cornwallis," *The Library* 7th series, 1 (2000): 377-398.

⁶⁹ Susan Wiseman has done work on how seventeenth-century women engaged with politics through writing. See Wiseman, *Conspiracy and Virtue*. Elizabeth Clarke has also looked at letter-writing as a form of political engagement for women: see Elizabeth Clarke, "Beyond Microhistory: The Use of Women's Manuscripts in a Widening Political Arena," in *Women and Politics in Early Modern England, 1450-1700*, ed. James Daybell (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004), 205-221.

booke of newes comes forth I will send it you; as yet I cannot heare of any this weeke.⁷⁰ Masham again, a month later, wrote ‘I have sent you this week’s curranto and I hope the next will make things more certaine,’ after reporting the foreign news in his letter.⁷¹ There also appears to have been an expectation that Barrington would have read English corantos and serials. In 1632, Sir Gilbert Gerard, another son-in-law, wrote that ‘there is noe newes at London but what you may find in the Swedish inteligencer or the last new currant.’⁷²

Given the lack of annotations or other readers’ marks on most print news publications, particularly for women, references such as these to the consumption of print news genres are very useful. While there are few sources which give as much evidence for women reading newsbooks and other print publications as the Barrington family letters, such references do crop up in other women’s letters from the across seventeenth century. In the 1690s, Elizabeth Packer, a friend of the Evelyn family, wrote in a letter to Mary Evelyn: ‘I was told from the publick news letter of the danger M^r [?] had been in but knew not the particulars till y^r letter.’⁷³ This gives an impression not only of women discussing the current events, but also, again, of the mix of manuscript and print transmission of the news.

Brilliana Harley, parliamentarian and third wife of Sir Robert Harley, is often included in studies of women during the Civil War period for her defence of her family home, Brampton Bryan.⁷⁴ She similarly received both letters containing news and other records of current affairs from her family members. In her affectionate correspondence with her son, Edward (Ned) Harley, she frequently referred to texts sent to her by either

⁷⁰ Letter 209, 28th October 1631. Searle, *Barrington Family Letters*, 211.

⁷¹ Letter 216, November 1631. Searle, *Barrington Family Letters*, 218.

⁷² Letter 224, 16th [January] 1632. Searle, *Barrington Family Letters*, 224.

⁷³ Elizabeth Packer to Mary Evelyn, 21st October 1693, Add MS 78436, f83r, British Library, London.

⁷⁴ See, for example, Jacqueline Eales, *Puritans and Roundheads: The Harleys of Brampton Bryan and the Outbreak of the English Civil War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990).

him or her husband. He sent her copies of various declarations and acts of parliament, to keep her up-to-date with news from the capital. On one occasion, she wrote to her son, 'I thanke you for the acts of parlament, and for doctor Dowling booke.'⁷⁵ This likely refers to Calybutte Downing, a clergyman and author who wrote several tracts and sermons in the early 1640s legitimising resistance to the King and promoting Presbyterianism.⁷⁶ Harley displayed a keen interest in following current affairs, and implied a reliance on her correspondents for this information gathering: in another letter to her son, she wrote 'your letter by the post and by the carrier are both very wellcome to me; for besides the knowledge you giue me of the publicke affaires, the assurance of your health is very deare to me.'⁷⁷ Harley here distinguished between different types of news, public and personal, but suggested that they were both of value to her; there was no implication that one was more appropriate.

While the majority of these letters communicating news to women appear to be from male correspondents, there is some evidence of women passing and discussing news with other women.⁷⁸ On one occasion, Judith Barrington, Joan Barrington's daughter-in-law, added in a postscript to her letter, 'I have made bould to send you the booke of news.'⁷⁹ Moreover, Joan St John, Barrington's granddaughter, wrote to pass on news from her husband, acting as a conduit for the information, writing 'my husband comands me to tel you there shal be a parlament; you may beleve it for it cam from my Lord Treseure who told it my Lord Bedford of a sertain. Whither it be cause of joy or

⁷⁵ Letter 128, Brilliana Harley to Edward Harley, 16th July 1641. Thomas Taylor Lewis, ed., *Letters of the Lady Brilliana Harley, Wife of Sir Robert Harley, of Brampton Bryan, Knight of the Bath* (London: Printed for the Camden Society, 1854), 140.

⁷⁶ Barbara Donagan, "Downing, Calybutte," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, 2010. Accessed 26 May 2019 <https://www.oxforddnb.com/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-7980?rskey=45ypi8&result=1>.

⁷⁷ Letter 149, Brilliana Harley to Edward Harley, 6th May 1642. Lewis, *Letters of the Lady Brilliana Harley*, 157.

⁷⁸ For more on women's letters and female alliances and friendships, see Amanda Herbert, *Female Alliances: Gender, Identity, and Friendship in Early Modern Britain* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014).

⁷⁹ Letter 213, 5th November 1631. Searle, *Barrington Family Letters*, 215.

sorrow, the success will shew.’⁸⁰ She added, later in the letter, ‘I have sent you the book of news with a map which is new printed.’⁸¹ Barrington’s female correspondents may have talked about news less than their male counterparts, but they did still participate in this exchange of news. This disparity is perhaps due to situational constraints.

Barrington’s male family members primarily sent her news that they came across through their acquaintances, or which they witnessed themselves; perhaps the infrequency of news in women’s letters is more indicative of the fact that they could not participate in the political sphere in the same way, than it is of lack of interest in the news.

Some women clearly also played important roles in transmitting the news, taking their place in extended epistolary news networks between friends and family. Anne Finch, wife of the Earl of Nottingham and daughter of Christopher, Viscount Hatton (1632-1706) relayed news to her father, based on news that she herself had received and read.⁸² For example, she wrote him an account of the Battle of Steenkerque, fought on the 3rd August 1692, as part of the Nine Years’ War:

This morning came the Flanders letters that were written Tuesday last w^{ch} bring a fuller account of the battle then any we had before for now every body has had time to write to their friends. The Duke of Ormond is not killed but slightly wounded and a prisoner and the Duke of At Albans not mention so I suppose not killed, & by the Imagination of the man y^t came from the Duke of Wirtenberg several other officers were killed w^{ch} now prove to be alive for there is not one

⁸⁰ Letter 221, December 1631. Searle, *Barrington Family Letters*, 222. This letter references the uncertainty surrounding parliament during Charles I’s period of personal rule, following the assassination of the Duke of Buckingham in 1628. See Kevin Sharpe, *The Personal Rule of Charles I* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992).

⁸¹ Letter 221, December 1631. Searle, *Barrington Family Letters*, 223.

⁸² For more on the Hatton family and book collecting, see Nicola Stacey, “Antiquarian Patronage in the 17th Century: Sir Christopher Hatton’s Library at Kirkby Hall,” *English Heritage Historical Review* 9, no. 1 (2014): 66-81.

Collonel killed some slightly wounded but none dangerously except Comte Solmes and they doe not say if he be dead.⁸³

Finch displayed a familiarity with the conflict on the continent that implies regular news reading, and we can speculate that her information came from a newsbook or newsletter. This communication to her father puts her in a position of knowledge and authority: he would have to trust her interpretation and re-telling of events, particularly if he received no other news source.

Mary Hatton Helsby displayed a similar interest in and willingness to discuss the news when writing to her father, Peter Hatton, in 1660.⁸⁴ Her letter contains an insightful analysis of the contemporary political situation during the Restoration, as Charles II and Royalist courtiers returned to England from the continent, and the resulting fears about the influence of European Catholicism. The letter, though lengthy, is worth quoting in full:

It will be a gaine full thing me thinks for the countrey when all is settled, but there be some that fear that the manner of ye new Court will be full of the outlandishe breeding of so many in forreine parts for all these years among popishe people. Tis certaine that some do think religion the the [sic] only medicine for ye times we have had after so much bleeding, & to stay any more of such breakings forth out of the body politicke. But methinks too many doctors will be as bad as too few; but tis so easie in seasons of tryall to make ye people beleive in the pleasant doctoring of them that thinke their church is every thing & the people nothing, which is true enough perhaps of all those that followe such believe. I fear me we have much yet to go through if they aim at this,

⁸³ Anne Finch to Christopher Hatton, [?] 1692, Add MS 29596, f114r-f114v, British Library.

⁸⁴ As far as I can tell, Peter and Mary Hatton were not close relatives of the aristocratic Hatton family mentioned above. For more on Mary Hatton Helsby, see chapter seven of this thesis.

namely, that the popes men shall helpe ye King to governe. Tis not a comfortable thought for any but expecially for ye ffamilyes of those men themselves in after times, who then may live to curse their own fathers & helpe more than any freshe risings & warrings through out ye land.⁸⁵

Hatton showed no reticence about expressing her opinion, and she was evidently very well-informed about the political upheaval. Her predictions about the future of the country reflect a confidence perhaps borne of familiarity with the conflict, perhaps gained through reading newsletters or newsbooks. She was obviously comfortable about expressing her opinions with such authority to her father, and there was no hint that this was outside of her sphere.

This type of communication did not only happen within families. A letter from Jael Boscawen (née Godolphin) to John Evelyn in 1685 demonstrates her role in passing news along:

I imagine when y^u see a letter from me, y^u will expect newes, w^{ch} is y^e chief reason I have not write to y^u sooner, having soe little of any certainty besides what y^u will see in y^e Gasette perhaps as soon as y^u have this, w^{ch} is y^t S^r John Cochran & his son are both taken in Scotland & Argyle beheaded, y^e Rebels in y^e west pop up and down in y^e close cuntry between Bridgewater & Taunton, they plunderd Wells last week, & there was great suspitions that they intended to march towards Exter, where y^e Duke of Albemarle is wth y^e Malitia of Devonshire, & likewise my Lord of Bathe wth some of his new raised men.⁸⁶

⁸⁵ Mary Helsby to Peter Hatton, 1st May 1660, X.d.493 (1), Folger Shakespeare Library, Washington D.C.

⁸⁶ Jael Boscawen to John Evelyn, 6th July 1685 Evelyn Papers, Vol. CXLII, Add MS 78309, f92r, British Library

This refers to the Argyll rebellion, led by Scottish lords against James II and VII, which took place shortly before the Monmouth rebellion.⁸⁷ Not only did Boscawen play a role in sending Evelyn news that the *Gazette* is lacking, but this appears to have been a standing arrangement, as she implied that he was expecting to receive news from her. Boscawen obviously read the *Gazette*, but combined it with other sources, likely both print and manuscript, to get a fuller picture of events. Moreover, the fact that she was loath to simply repeat what was reported in the *Gazette* implies a certain authority, and suggests that Evelyn saw her (or she saw herself) as a useful source of news in her own right.

Often these communications indicate some sort of political involvement or action on a woman's part. Elizabeth, Lady Mordaunt (née Carey) played her part in an extended news network, as the letterbook of her husband, John Viscount Mordaunt, makes clear.⁸⁸ She received and wrote many letters from her husband, other members of her family and various friends and acquaintances, which often consist of in-depth discussions of Royalist affairs in the late 1650s. Mordaunt was deeply involved in the Royalist cause, and with her husband's efforts to set up a Presbyterian-Royalist alliance. She often gave advice to her correspondents, and was a key participant in the transmission of news within the network.⁸⁹

Her correspondents often asked her to pass along information or instructions to others. Nicholas Armorer, a Royalist conspirator, for example, wrote to her in October 1659 with news from Bordeaux, and a request for her to pass on news to another correspondent, Colonel Newgent, in his stead:

⁸⁷ See, for example, A. Kennedy, "Rebellion, Government and the Scottish Response to Argyll's Rising of 1685," *Journal of Scottish Historical Studies* 36, no. 1 (2016): 40-59.

⁸⁸ Mary Coate, ed., *The Letter-Book of John Viscount Mordaunt 1658-1660*, Camden Third Series, Vol 66 (London: Offices of the Royal Historical Society, 1945).

⁸⁹ Nadine Akkerman has included a chapter on Elizabeth Mordaunt in her recent book, examined Mordaunt's political activities. See Nadine Akkerman, *Invisible Agents: Women and Espionage in Seventeenth-Century Britain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018).

I should have writ to Collonel Newgent this day, but I must loose my occasion of going if I doe. Pray, Madame be pleased to send to let him know if he receives no orders from the duke of Yorke, then he has no other thing to doe but to keep his friends right, and the strengthen them as much as may be, untill such time as he have orders from the person most concerned, which he will have with all imaginable speede.⁹⁰

Armorer's letter demonstrates his trust in Mordaunt, allowing her to speak and even give strategic orders on his behalf. There are many such letters within the collection, demonstrating Mordaunt's influence: she corresponded in French with General Schomberg, who was the Duke of Schomberg and a marshal of France, and received several letters from Charles II. Her husband clearly relied on her, at one point writing:

I have so very much to discourse, that you must not chide me if I give you general orders what to doe. In the first place, keep up the designe of Dunkirk. Assure Count Schomburg the warr is begun, and both armies upon their march, Lambert conducts this, and this day we heare nothing but drums and trumpets. 4 regiments march from hence to joyne with the others in Lincolnshire. Monck is come into England with 15 regiments, 9 of foot, 4 of horse, and 2 of dragoons, he has taken Carlisle and Berwick, and marches to Newcastle. I feare Lambert will be too soone distroyed. And if the King loose this opportunity, he will loose both his reputation, and his crown's.⁹¹

The importance of Mordaunt's role in this communication network is evident, both from the breadth of her correspondence and the in-depth strategic and political discussions in which she engaged. However, as with many other of the women mentioned here, these

⁹⁰ Letter 123. Coate, *The Letter-Book of John Viscount Mordaunt*, 91.

⁹¹ Letter 123. Coate, *The Letter-Book of John Viscount Mordaunt*, 81. This refers to the army led by General George Monck, Duke of Albermarle, from Scotland into England in support of Charles II.

discussions largely took place in letters from men; there are a few letters between Mordaunt and other women, but these do not contain similar discussions of politics or current affairs.

Mordaunt, Helsby, Finch and others clearly participated in these epistolary discussions of the news with authority, despite many historiographical claims that women's reading habits, and indeed their lives, were confined to matters of religion and the home. There does not appear to be any hesitation on the part of the women surveyed here to read or report the news, and their male correspondents do not display any condemnation of their interest. Just as the gendered nature of the space of the public sphere has been questioned, so too should the gendering of the genre of news, that is so important to the separate spheres model. By looking at readers, as well as producers, of the news, we can complicate ideas about who could participate in early modern politics.

Manuscript Newsletters

As noted in the introduction, manuscript newsletters were a common form of news communication in the seventeenth-century, and continued in popularity into the eighteenth century despite the rise of printed news forms. There are not many clear examples of women receiving such newsletters, but there are certain significant collections that attest to women's engagement with the genre. I will discuss two such collections here: a small group of letters sent to Barbara Clopton in 1688-1689, and the much larger Pole newsletter collection.

The Beinecke Library holds a letterbook of newsletters sent to one Lady Clopton, likely Barbara Clopton, daughter of Edward Walker, who was Garter King of Arms.⁹² These newsletters cover a few months in late 1688 and early 1689, and contain information

⁹² 25 letters of news relative to the abdication of K. James 2 to Lady Clopton, from Mr. Hamon, 1688-1689. Osborn fb210, Beinecke Library.

about the Glorious Revolution. It appears that they were commissioned specifically in order to follow the political events in the capital. On the last letter in the volume, Clopton's husband has written: 'News lett.^{rs} my wife had of M^r Hamon from K. James his going away.'⁹³ This note makes clear Lady Clopton's ownership of the newsletters, particularly as distinct from her husband. It also underlines her interest in politics and contemporary news; these newsletters do not appear to be part of a larger collection, which might give the impression of a woman keeping generally up to date with international and domestic news, but rather imply a particular interest in a specific moment in history.⁹⁴ The letters are almost completely focused on the progress of the Glorious Revolution; they do not include any international news, and few domestic matters unrelated to the political upheaval are mentioned. They do not seem to favour either the Jacobite or the Williamite cause, but go into detail about the negotiations and political manoeuvrings surrounding William and Mary taking the throne.

It is not clear whether Clopton had any other news sources, or whether this was a fleeting interest. Other collections, however, attest to some women's long-term news reading. The Pole newsletter collection, also held partially at the Beinecke Library, provides a more extensive insight into women's reading in the late seventeenth century. It is likely one of the largest extant newsletter collections belonging to an early modern woman. Between the 1680s and early 1710s, Anne Pole of Radbourne, Derbyshire, received hundreds of manuscript newsletters from London. Pole was probably born Anne Newdigate, daughter of Sir Richard Newdigate, a lawyer and landowner.⁹⁵ She

⁹³ Osborn fb210, f358v.

⁹⁴ There is no address on the letters, but Clopton was likely based at the family seat in Warwickshire, relatively far from London's political centre and the military clashes taking place on the south coast after William invaded.

⁹⁵ Steve Hindle has studied the Newdigate family, focusing on Newdigate's son (also named Richard) and his household at Arbury Hall. See Steve Hindle, "Below Stairs at Arbury Hall: Sir Richard Newdigate and his Household Staff, c.1670-1710," *Historical Research* 85, no. 227 (2012): 71-88. Vivienne Larminie has also explored various members of the Newdigate family and their position in seventeenth-century society. See, for example, Vivienne Larminie, "Fighting for Family in a Patronage Society: The Epistolary Armoury of Anne Newdigate (1574-1618)," in *Early Modern Women's Letter-Writing, 1450-*

married German Pole in 1650 (he died in 1683), and died in 1710. The Poles were a gentry family based at Radbourne Hall in a small village near Derby. The letters themselves are usually addressed to ‘Madam Pole’ and were delivered frequently, at an average of one every two or three days, over three decades. Alongside the Beinecke Library, part of the collection is held at the Clark Library, with a few also at the Derbyshire Record Office.⁹⁶

The newsletters have been largely overlooked by scholars, with the exception of King, who used the Clark Library’s collection to discuss the continued importance of the manuscript form in late seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century news transmission.⁹⁷ Despite this underrepresentation in modern historiography, they represent an extensive source for scholars exploring women’s place in the contemporary developing news cultures, and clearly demonstrate the keen interest women could have in reading the news.

As discussed above, the continued importance of manuscript news, and its interaction with printed news media, has been explored in several recent studies. A significant collection of manuscript newsletters, belonging to the Newdigate family and covering the period 1673/4-1715, is now held in the Folger Shakespeare Library.⁹⁸ Sir Richard Newdigate (Pole’s brother) was an avid collector and reader of news, something Barber attributes to him spending a great deal of time at the family estate in Warwickshire, rather than in London.⁹⁹ Pole evidently shared her brother’s interest. She even received her own newsletters when she was visiting her family at Arbury Hall, despite Richard’s

1700, ed. James Daybell (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2001), 94-108; Vivienne Larminie, “Marriage and The Family: The Example of the Seventeenth-Century Newdigates,” *Midlands History* 9, no. 1 (1984): 1-22.

⁹⁶ The collection at the Beinecke is the smaller of the two, comprising around 300 letters and mostly from 1691-95, with a few letters from 1705. The Clark’s collection spans the entire period of the 1680s-1710s. I will focus primarily on the pre-1700 letters here.

⁹⁷ Rachael Scarborough King, “The Manuscript Newsletter and the Rise of the Newspaper, 1665-1715,” *Huntington Library Quarterly* 79, no. 3 (2016): 411-437.

⁹⁸ <https://findingaids.folger.edu/dfonewdigate.xml>

⁹⁹ Barber, “‘It is Not Easy What to Say of our Condition,’” 297.

own subscription to scribal newsletters.¹⁰⁰ Perhaps she preferred her own particular newsletter, or wanted to ensure she received her news independent of her brother.

The letters are in different scribal hands, with one scribe working for several years, before being replaced. This change was rarely remarked upon, and the scribes were usually unnamed. There is one exception to this, when in January 1694 one John Sims addressed Pole directly, discussing the terms of his employment in a note added on to the end of the letter:

Madam I was ordered by M^r Smith to send you this Letter allso acq^t you that 4^l p[er] annum is the price that all men have that desire to live and perform their buisness dillegently I shall continue the Letter unless I receive an order to the contrary pray order y^r Letter directed for me to be left at the Widow Humphreys Coffee house in S^t Peters alley Cornhill I am y^r Ladyshipps most humble servant
– John Sims.¹⁰¹

This is the only evidence we have in the whole collection as to the writer's identity, and gives an insight into his profession and the cost of doing his job. The connection with the late seventeenth-century coffeehouse culture is notable: Sims requests that letters to him are to be directed to the 'Widow Humphreys Coffee house' in central London, near London Bridge. Brian Cowan has noted, using poll tax records, that in the early 1690s around twenty percent of coffeehouse proprietors were women.¹⁰² Coffeehouses were recognised centres for news consumption, and so the links that newsletter writers evidently maintained with these institutions are an insight into the business: perhaps

¹⁰⁰ Several newsletters are addressed to Madam Pole at Arbury – see, for example, 22nd August 1693, box 1, folder 75, MS.1951.021, Clark Library, Los Angeles.

¹⁰¹ 25th January 1693/4, box 3, folder 55, OSB MSS 60, Beinecke Library.

¹⁰² Brian Cowan, *The Social Life of Coffee: The Emergence of the British Coffeehouse* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005), 251.

writers picked up on news items here, or networked with clientele. Pole clearly did not issue any orders to the contrary, as Sims continued writing to her until 1695.

King has stated that there are ‘only two personal notes to Pole in the entire sequence’ of the Clark collection.¹⁰³ However, most of the scribes appear to address Pole directly at some point, dealing primarily with postage problems, but also discussing payment and occasionally offering seasonal greetings.¹⁰⁴ The newsletter on 25th December 1693 began by saying ‘Madam, I pray yo^r Ladysp to excuse the Brevity by reason of the day.’¹⁰⁵ A few days later, he wrote in a note in the bottom lefthand corner of the last page to thank her for his payment: ‘Madam I have rec^d my quarterage & humbly thank yo^r Ladye wishing you a happy new year.’¹⁰⁶

Moreover, another writer excused himself for illness, writing at one point:

Madame? The sudden Indisposition which this day was seuennight by stoppage of urine violent ague, a great paine in the side & ^{did} put a stop to my duty in serueing you with my letter these holly dayes for which I begg your favourrable excuse, & haveing got God be thanked this day some reliefe I hoape I will recover my strength as to be able to serve you, as formerly if you please¹⁰⁷

All the direct addresses to Pole make clear the hierarchical relationship between newsletter writer and reader. Pole was clearly in the position of power, with the scribes providing a service for her, and that relationship was reinforced through all their communication to her. Newsletters such as these were more expensive than broadsides or newsbooks, and could be a marker of status. Indeed, Harold Love has suggested that some newsletter writers ‘enjoyed circulations that would have justified printing, if it

¹⁰³ King, “The Manuscript Newsletter and the Rise of the Newspaper,” 432 (note 61).

¹⁰⁴ There are a series of letters in the Clark collection from the 1700s that reference ongoing problems with postage, specifically postage charges. See, for example, box 5.

¹⁰⁵ 25th December 1693, box 2, folder 46, OSB MSS 60.

¹⁰⁶ 30th December 1693, box 2, folder 46, OSB MSS 60.

¹⁰⁷ 4th January [?], box 2, folder 54, OSB MSS 60.

were not necessary to maintain the supposed exclusivity and hence the high price of the product.¹⁰⁸ The newsletters for Pole, then, could act as a marker of status, but the fact that she received the letters for such a long time implies a real interest in and dedication to reading the news.

There is little known about the business of manuscript newsletter writing. It seems that businesses were run out of London, so that they could report on events from Parliament and Court, and they then distributed their output throughout the country. They appear to have been mass produced to an extent, with a writer creating the same letter for numerous recipients. There is evidence for this in the Pole newsletters with the scribes often heading their letters with the word ‘S^r,’ despite being addressed on the back to ‘Madam’ or ‘Lady Pole.’ King, in her article about a collection of newsletters sent to the Hobson-Newey family, now held at the Huntington Library, has observed a similar heading, despite the newsletters generally being addressed to Mrs Hobson or Mrs Newey.¹⁰⁹ There are a few newsletters which are headed ‘M^{dm}’ in the Pole collection, but this is relatively rare.¹¹⁰ The reason for this occasional change are unclear – perhaps the writer simply forgot, most of the time, to use the female address. There is even one occasion where the scribe originally wrote ‘S^r,’ but then crossed it out and replaced it with ‘Madam’ (*see appendix III, figure 10*).¹¹¹

This makes the question of readership interesting. The newsletter writer clearly had a male reader in mind, suggesting either that men made up a significant part of their market, or that the ideal audience was thought to be male, irrespective of who they were writing to. This has arguably led to a general assumption in the historiography that men were the primary readers of newsletters. Most extant collections of newsletters were

¹⁰⁸ Harold Love, “Scribal Publication in Seventeenth-Century England,” *Transactions of the Cambridge Bibliographical Society* 9, no. 2 (1987): 141.

¹⁰⁹ King, “All the News that’s Fit to Write,” 115.

¹¹⁰ January 1693/4, box 3, folder 55, OSB MSS 60, Beinecke Library.

¹¹¹ 21st-24th December 1695, box 3, folder 38, MS.1951.021, Clark Library.

addressed to men, although that does not necessarily mean that Pole was unusual in her consumption of newsletters; perhaps many addressed to women have been lost.¹¹²

Whatever the make-up of their audience, however, the recipients of the letters were gendered from when they were first written, and in reading them, Pole was subverting gendered expectations.

The letters themselves are detailed, and often follow stories across several weeks or months. Common themes include the progress of the Nine Years' War, the Jacobite resistance to William and Mary's reign, and criminal arrests, particularly of highwaymen and those accused of clipping coins, in light of the 1690s monetary crisis.¹¹³ The 1690s in particular saw considerable parliamentary instability, with the many elections during the Rage of Party, and a moral reform movement.¹¹⁴ The political context, and the lapse of pre-publication licensing in 1695, led to a significant increase in news publication and consumption.¹¹⁵ Mark Knights has argued that this rise in print publications sidelined scribal news, although, as noted above, scholars such as Barber and King have disputed this.¹¹⁶

There were also sometimes items of more humanitarian concern in the newsletters, for example of natural disasters or outbreaks of the plague, and news of particularly bad

¹¹² The Folger finding aid for the Newdigate papers has lists of similarly significant collections of newsletters; of these, the Pole collection is the only one specifically addressed to a woman. See "Newdigate Family Collection of Newsletters," *Folger Finding Aids*, accessed Jan 20, 2019 <https://findingaids.folger.edu/dfonewdigate.xml>

¹¹³ For more on coin clipping and the 1690s financial revolution, see Carl Wennerlind, "The Death Penalty as Monetary Policy: The Practice and Punishment of Monetary Crime, 1690-1830," *History of Political Economy* 36, no. 1 (2004): 131-161. For more on news and crime, see Lena Liapi, "'The Talke of the Towne': News, Crime and the Public Sphere in Seventeenth-Century London," *Cultural and Social History* 14, no. 5 (2017): 549-564.

¹¹⁴ See, for example, Mark Knights, "Politics after the Glorious Revolution," in *A Companion to Stuart Britain*, ed. Barry Coward (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2003), 455-473; Richard Connors, "The Nature of Stability in the Augustan Age," *Parliamentary History* 28, no. 1 (2009): 27-40; Tina Isaacs, "The Anglican Hierarchy and the Reformation of Manners, 1688-1738," *The Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 33, no. 3 (1982): 391-411.

¹¹⁵ Mark Knights, *Representation and Misrepresentation in Later Stuart Culture: Partisanship and Political Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 227-228.

¹¹⁶ Knights, *Representation and Misrepresentation*, 227; King, "All the News that's Fit to Write"; Barber, "'It is Not Easy What to Say of our Condition'".

weather conditions, usually in parts of England. There were even items of scientific interest. Occasionally, patents and new inventions or discoveries were mentioned, such as in July 1692, when it was reported that ‘A Grant has been lately obtained by M^r John Talham, Chymist for the sole use & benefit of a certaine Engine by him invented, containing a small copper boyler & a wooden vessell of a new invented fashion for brewing & distilling of all sorts of spirits & liquors.’¹¹⁷

They followed a formalised structure whereby they began by discussing news from continental Europe, then moved on to more domestic matters. News about the court society or about criminal proceedings almost always appeared last in the newsletters. It has long been argued that news in seventeenth-century England often had to focus on events abroad, due to censorship laws.¹¹⁸ This appears to have been largely true of the Pole newsletters. As King has noted, ‘between January and June 1691, a period for which a continuous sequence of letters is available, half of the items in the letters contained foreign news, with an additional 42% pertaining to London and 8% to other locations in England. From March to August 1695, 60% of the items included London news, 24% foreign, and 16% provincial.’¹¹⁹ However, the fact that they contained even this much domestic news is notable; Barber has argued that, due to censorship, scribal news became an important transmitter of parliamentary affairs. He has noted that ‘even elite participants read scribal news to attain information about government, court and parliament.’¹²⁰

The exception to this is certain occasions when the writer did not have access to any foreign news. Generally, they relied on letters from various cities abroad to keep them

¹¹⁷ 23rd July 1692, box 1, folder 24, OSB MSS 60, Beinecke Library.

¹¹⁸ Atherton, “‘The Itch grown a Disease’,” 42; Joad Raymond, “Introduction,” in *Making the News: An Anthology of the Newsbooks of Revolutionary England 1641-1660*, ed. Joad Raymond (Gloucestershire: The Windrush Press, 1993), 3.

¹¹⁹ King, “All the News that’s Fit to Write,” 112.

¹²⁰ Barber, “‘It is Not Easy What to Say of our Condition,’” 296.

abreast of the news, often beginning paragraphs by citing these letters. For example, the newsletter from 10th February 1691 began ‘the fforaine Letters com this day say,’ then summarised the information.¹²¹ However, this news was reliant on clement sailing conditions. If adverse weather prevented ships bearing letters to cross the channel, the newsletter writer was only able to report domestic news. In October 1693, for example, the writer opened with ‘The wind being contrary wee have noe forraine Maile.’¹²² In such cases, the newsletters tend to focus more on domestic news, occasionally adding more information from Europe towards the end, if it was received before the letter was sealed.¹²³

King has argued that the letters are structured according to the order in which the information was received, accounting for the foreign news appearing first.¹²⁴ This does not appear to be generally true; I would argue that the nature of the news was the more important factor in determining the structure of the letters, although there are examples when newly-received information has to be added on at the end. On occasion the writer has resorted to pinning in slips of paper with extra information, received after the letter was finished and sealed (*see appendix III, figure 11*).¹²⁵ Furthermore, sometimes extra news is added or stories corrected in the margins, usually when new information is gained just before sealing the letter. In one instance, the writer had reported an earthquake in London, and wrote that no harm was done, but then added in the margin, ‘Just upon sealing the letter I heare, y^t one of the great houses in Leisterfeild burst

¹²¹ 10 February 1691, box 1, folder 3, OSB MSS 60, Beinecke Library.

¹²² 19th October 169[3?], box 2, folder 45. OSB MSS 60.

¹²³ For more on the relationship between British news publications and the European communication system, focusing on the mid-seventeenth century, see Paul Arblaster, “Posts, Newsletters, Newspapers: England in a European System of Communications,” in *News Networks in Seventeenth Britain and Europe*, ed. Joad Raymond (Abingdon: Routledge, 2006), 19-34.

¹²⁴ King, “The Manuscript Newsletter and the Rise of the Newspaper,” 432.

¹²⁵ See, for example, 14th June 1692, box 1, folder 21, OSB MSS 60.

asunder & is ready to fall, 2 houses fell to the ground in York buildings & more harm I fear is done else where.’¹²⁶

There is, unfortunately, no evidence of Pole’s reading habits of the letters; she did not annotate or mark them in anyway, and we do not have any writings of hers that reference these newsletters.¹²⁷ However, there are several clues within the letters themselves as to how they were intended to be read. For example, there was clearly an assumption of a certain level of knowledge about current affairs, international relations, and parliamentary politics. Events were usually reported with little to no explanation of their significance. However, on occasion the writer did provide some explanatory details, for example when discussing the outcome of a court case. He wrote that ‘Mr Croone is now reprevied sine die, which is the next door to a Pardon.’¹²⁸ *Sine die* is a legal term meaning that no day has been assigned for a hearing, so that the defendant essentially is reprevied through lack of a trial. The writer’s explanation shows an awareness that the reader may not have much legal knowledge (*sine die* was a standard term). Conversely, there are other occasions where Latin terms have not been translated, such as when new regulations are introduced for the East India Company. The newsletter reports: ‘[t]he Regulations, which the K. has made for the E. India Company, are now passed the seales & are in substance the same as were agreed by the H. of Coms & are not for any time of years but Durante Regis Beneplacito.’¹²⁹ The writer did not explain the Latin phrase, which means ‘for the duration of the king’s pleasure,’ assuming either a level of Latin comprehension or of common political terms. It is not

¹²⁶ 8th September 1692, box 1, folder 27, OSB MSS 60.

¹²⁷ There are no extant writings of Pole’s that I have been able to identify, The Derbyshire Record Office holds several letters addressed to her, but nothing in her own hand. See Pole Family Correspondence, D5557.2 and D5557.3, Derbyshire Record Office, Matlock.

¹²⁸ Undated, box 1, folder 2, OSB MSS 60, Beinecke Library.

¹²⁹ 14th November, 1693, box 2, folder 40, OSB MSS 60.

clear if Pole had either, but this level of knowledge was at least assumed by the newsletter writer.

This assumption of knowledge was not always present. A newsletter from the early seventeenth century, sent to Elizabeth Tollemache, reveals a very different relationship between scribe and recipient. Tollemache was born Elizabeth Stanhope, daughter of Sir John Stanhope, and married Lionel Tollemache, an MP and Privy Councillor to both James I and Charles I. Their family home was Helmingham Hall, in Suffolk. The letter was written in 1619, by one Arthur Grant, whose connection to the family is unclear. He was likely a professional newsletter writer, similar to the scribes who wrote to Pole, but he appears to have had a closer, or more personal, relationship with his reader. Instead of assuming a level of knowledge of the places and events he was describing, Grant wrote to Tollemache: ‘there is much news abroad but what I send shall be [sic] true, [...] if yo^r Ladye^{sp} please to send mee word, of what you doe not understand, because you shall read of strange countres, men and towns I shall in writtinge discribe them.’¹³⁰ This concern for Tollemache’s comprehension, and the obvious exchange of letters between the two, contrasts to Pole’s more detached, business-like interactions with her scribes. Perhaps this suggests that Grant was operating on a smaller scale than the almost mass-produced newsletters that Pole received. The imagined male reader is not obvious here, although only two of the letters from Grant to Tollemache survive in the Clark Library, so it is difficult to be certain.

In the Pole collection, the writer occasionally outlined hypothetical outcomes of certain events. In February 1691, he wrote that ‘[t]here is a hott report, that the L^d Prestons pardon is passing the seales, which if true, will convince the world, y^t he has made a

¹³⁰ Arthur Grant, Autograph Letters signed to Elizabeth Tollemache, 1615-1619, Misc Mss, Clark Library.

Confession, that deserves the same.’¹³¹ This is referring to Richard Graham, Viscount Preston, a Jacobite politician due to be executed for treason but whose confession granted him a pardon. On another occasion the writer intimated the potential consequence of the death of the King of Denmark, writing ‘By a Vessel arrived in the North from Denmark wee heare y^t that King is dead, which if true, & true also, y^t his eldest & not second son is in France, some strange things wee may expect to heare upon it.’¹³² However, most of the time the consequences of political manoeuvres or international events are left to the reader’s imagination. To discern the significance of these events would rely on a working knowledge of international relations, perhaps one that readers were expected to gain through frequent reading of various news publications.

This assumption that readers would consume multiple news texts is evident in the letters. The writer often refers to other publications, particularly the *London Gazette*, the paper published twice-weekly from 1665, by the office of the Secretaries of State.¹³³ Occasionally he paraphrases the news from the *Gazette*, giving no further or contradictory details. On 26th May 1692, he wrote ‘The Gazette mentioned, y^t the Dutch Paquet boat was attacked by a French Privateer of 22 Guns that she maintained 2 hours fight, & then was boarded for above half an hour, which made the Captain throw the Mail overboard, tho the French were afterward beaten off againe, so y^t we are thereby deprived of our former Intelligence.’¹³⁴ This is very similar to the *Gazette*’s reporting of the event, which was dated the 23rd May and read: ‘The Paquet-Boat, *Robert Winnet* Commander, that came from *Holland* with the last Fridays Letters. being attack’d by a French Privateer of 22 Guns and 6 Patereroes; and after an Engagement of two hours,

¹³¹ 28th February 1691, box 1, folder 4, OSB MSS 60, Beinecke Library.

¹³² 21st July 1692, box 1, folder 24, OSB MSS 60.

¹³³ Natasha Glaisyer, “‘The Most Universal Intelligencers’: The Circulation of the *London Gazette* in the 1690s,” *Media History* 23, no. 2 (2017): 256.

¹³⁴ 26th May 1692, box 1, folder 20, OSB MSS 60, Beinecke Library.

being boarded for above half an hour, the Commander of the Pacquet-boat threw the Mail over-board, lest it should be taken: but at last, they beat off the French; and getting clear of them, came in here this afternoon, having 3 or 4 Men killed, and 6 wounded.’¹³⁵

This close paraphrasing of the newspaper implies that the newsletter’s reader was not expected to have read the *Gazette*; the story was repeated almost in full, and was easily comprehensible without reference to the printed publication.

More often, however, the newsletter supplements or corrects the account given in the *Gazette* with its own information, displaying an evident reliance on Pole reading the newspaper as well.¹³⁶ For example, in June 1692 the newsletter writer reported: ‘[w]ee rec^d yesterday 2 fforaine Mailes of the 10th & 12th ins^t which give many particulars of the proceeds of the seige of Namour, but I shall give (without whats mentioned in the Gazett) as briefe an acc^t as I can.’¹³⁷ If the reader of this passage was not familiar with the *Gazette*’s reporting of the siege, then it is unlikely that the newsletter would have made as much sense. There is clearly an underlying assumption that the recipient of the newsletter would also be reading the *Gazette*. Whether Pole did so or not we do not know, but it seems likely, given the frequency with which the newsletters cross-reference reports from the publication. Indeed, even if she did not originally read the *Gazette*, she may have been encouraged to by the newsletters, in order to follow the stories properly. The newsletters attest to the fact that women not only read manuscript news, but likely supplemented that with reading various forms of printed news media.

¹³⁵ *The London Gazette*, Monday 23rd May to Thursday 26th May, 1692. Issue 2769.

¹³⁶ Erin Keating has argued that this way of referencing printed publications indicates the position of the manuscript newsletter within the news genre, and the social status of their readers. She has suggested that the newsletter writers ‘clearly position their information as supplementary to the public news, as information meant for a more elite class of reader who can be trusted with sensitive details both with respect to the political events outlined in the papers but also with respect to the gossipy anecdotes.’ See Erin M. Keating, “The Role of Manuscript Newsletters in Charles II’s Performance of Power,” *Restoration: Studies in English Literary Culture, 1660-1700* 41, no. 2 (2017): 38.

¹³⁷ 7th June 1692, box 1, folder 21, OSB MSS 60.

The combination of print and manuscript culture becomes even more apparent later in the collection. Some newsletters consist of print publications, either *The Post Boy* or *The Post-Man: And the Historical Account, &c*, with manuscript additions on the back page (see appendix III, figure 12).¹³⁸ This adds another dimension to Pole's reading habits. The *Post-Man* was one of several tri-weeklies established following Parliament's failure to renew the Licensing Act in 1695.¹³⁹ The printed text covers two sides, and the notes are written on the blank back page and sometimes on the same side as the address. The relationship between the print and manuscript text is interesting. In some ways, they supplemented each other: the print publication deals with mostly foreign news, while the manuscript letter generally focuses on domestic events. However, the manuscript writer showed no real awareness of the adjacent print; he did not refer, either explicitly or implicitly, to the printed text. The connections between the stories they reported, if there were any, were not made clear.

Moreover, sometimes they reported on the same event, with the manuscript writer showing no obvious awareness of the repetition. For example, in the newsletter covering the 28th April to 1 May 1705, both print and manuscript sections relayed news of the French King's illness. The print publication stated: 'Paris, May 4. The King has been very ill of the Gout, but is now pretty well recovered, and intends to return on Saturday from Marli to Versailles.'¹⁴⁰ The manuscript section, however, wrote: 'Yesterday a Dutch Post came in with Letters to the Jews adviseing y^t y^e Emperor was

¹³⁸ This was an amalgamation of two publications: *The Post Boy, With Foreign and Domestic News*, established in May 1695, and *The Historical Account, &c*, which then became *The Post-Man* in October 1695 after the original printed of *The Historical Account* withdrew. See Stanley Morison, *The English Newspaper: Some Account of the Physical Development of Journals Printed in London 1622-1932* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1932), 57-59.

¹³⁹ Udo Fries, "Newspapers from 1665 to 1765," in *News as Changing Texts: Corpora, Methodologies and Analysis*, ed. Roberta Facchinetti, Nicholas Brownlees, Birte Bös and Udo Fries (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2015), 56-57.

¹⁴⁰ 28th April – 1st May 1705, box 3, folder 84, OSB MSS 60, Beinecke Library. Louis XIV often suffered from gout, among other illnesses. He frequently spent time at his residence, Château de Marly, in Marly-le-Roi, a commune in Île-de-France.

dead & also y^e ffrench King who has been so ill y^t he has not ^{been} of his Chamber these 3 weekes & his Courtiers gave out y^t he had y^e Gout in his ffeet & hands these Letters were produced upon y^e Exchange.¹⁴¹ These two accounts are not exactly contradictory, but they do not completely match up. This may be due to the fact that they appear to have been drawn from different sources, from the French and Dutch letters respectively. There may also be a difference in when the information was received, as the manuscript section is dated 1st May, whereas the print item is dated 4th May (although it is unclear how accurate this is, as it appears to be outside of the scope of the broadside). However, the point is that the manuscript letter does not make any reference to the discrepancies between the accounts, or to the fact that they are reporting on the same issue.

The manuscript section, being written after the printed publication, could also provide more up to date information. In the manuscript notes on the edition of *The Post Boy* from 31st August – 3rd September 1695, the scribe included an item of news not present in the printed sheet. He wrote ‘23 Roman Catholick Lords and Gentlemen are Indicted at the Old Baily in an order to an Outlawry to seize their Estates among them are the Lords Griffin Castlemain, Middleton, Stafford S^r Edward Hales &c.’¹⁴² This item of news was then reported in the next edition of *The Post Boy*, covering the 3rd – 5th September, which recorded:

Last week at the Sessions held at the *Old-bayley*, there were bills of High Treason found by the Grand Jury against the Earls of *Midleton*, *Stafford*, *Castlemaine*, and the Lord *Griffin*. The Duke of *Berwick* Lieutenant General *Hamilton*, Sir *Edward Hales*, Sir *William Walgrave*, and many others to the number of 23, upon an Account of their being in *France* with the late King

¹⁴¹ 28th April – 1st May 1705, box 3, folder 84, OSB MSS 60, Beinecke Library.

¹⁴² 31st August-3rd September 1695, box 3, folder 34, MS.1951.021, Clark Library.

James, and if they do not come back into *England*, and surrender themselves they will be Outlawed, and their Estates confiscated.¹⁴³

Both accounts were referring to a prosecution of Jacobite politicians and courtiers opposed to the Williamite regime.¹⁴⁴ The latter account is more detailed, but it is clear that receiving the newssheet with the manuscript additions gave the reader a much more up to date picture of events, which could then be expanded on several days later.

There was no obvious gendering of the newsletters, other than in the use of ‘Sir’ or ‘Madam’ as an introductory heading, as discussed earlier. In terms of content, they do not appear to be specifically directed at a female reader; there are no discernible differences in content between those addressed to the women here and newsletters addressed to men. The letters sent to Pole included information on parliamentary debates, military tactics, and political manoeuvrings. There were some pieces of what we might see as ‘society’ news, dealing with marriages amongst the nobility, but these were few and far between, and tended to come at the end of the letter. There was very little embellishment, but the women were rarely referred to by their names, instead using their father’s name, giving the impression of a social transaction taking place. Overall, however, there were few details about seventeenth-century court society, which were so common in contemporary women’s letters to each other.¹⁴⁵ This was not specific to Pole’s newsletters, moreover; other similar manuscripts from the period demonstrate the same layout and focus on international and political news. Indeed, a newsletter within the Pole collection, but addressed to Samuel Pole, bears few

¹⁴³ 3rd-5th September 1695, box 3, folder 34, MS.1951.021.

¹⁴⁴ For more on the Jacobite presence in England, see Daniel Szechi, *The Jacobites: Britain and Europe, 1688-1788* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1994).

¹⁴⁵ The limited space given to court and society news is similar to that of contemporary newssheets, which would include items about marriages, illnesses and deaths among the court, but without much detail, and usually towards the end of the letter.

discernible differences in terms of content or overall structure, other than the fact that it was written by a different scribe.¹⁴⁶

Another way to consider the gendering of news readers in the early modern period is to look at the adverts included in the editions of *The Post Boy* and later *The Post-Man* that Pole received. These were placed in the second column on the second page of the newsheet, following the reported news items, and the amount of space given over to adverts seems to have been determined by how much news there was to report. The adverts also do not seem to be gendered in any obvious way. They were mainly advertisements for newly published books; occasionally a tutor looking for business; or notices about lost or stolen items with rewards for their return.¹⁴⁷ The book listed in the edition of *The Post Boy* from 7th – 9th January exemplify the range of genres often present. This paper advertised Charles Patin's *Travels through Germany*; Zachary Babington's *Advice to Grand Jurors in Cases of Blood*, advising on indictments of murder; *Female Falsehood, or the unfortunate beau* by Charles de Saint-Evremond; and William Salmon's *The Family Dictionary, or Household Companion*, containing culinary and medical recipes.¹⁴⁸ This is a very mixed selection of books. The Babington text was clearly aimed at professional men, specifically grand jurors. Charles Patin's text was travel literature; *The Female Falsehood* was a piece of French prose fiction, subtitled *The Amorous Memoirs of a Late French Nobleman*. They both likely enjoyed a mixed-gender readership.¹⁴⁹ Salmon's *Dictionary* was a household companion, presumably targeted at women, who would have used such recipes in looking after their

¹⁴⁶ 6th December 1705, box 3, folder 81, OSB MSS 60, Beinecke Library.

¹⁴⁷ Christine Ferdinand has suggested that booksellers saw a ready-made literate market in readers of periodicals, allowing them to focus their advertising. See Christine Ferdinand, "Constructing the Frameworks of Desire: How Newspapers Sold Books in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries," *Prose Studies* 21, no. 2 (1998): 160. For more on newspapers advertising books, see Jill Campbell, "Domestic Intelligence: Newspaper Advertising and the Eighteenth-Century Novel," *The Yale Journal of Criticism* 15, no. 2 (2002): 251-291.

¹⁴⁸ 7th-9th January 1697, box 4, folder 1, MS.1951.021, Clark Library.

¹⁴⁹ For more on readers of romance and fiction, see chapters five and seven.

households.¹⁵⁰ It appears then, that there was no real expectation that men would be the sole readers of either printed or manuscript news: the advertisements in printed publications were aimed at both men and women, while the content of manuscript news was not altered for male or female readers.

Women, therefore, clearly could participate in manuscript news culture in the later seventeenth century. Both Pole and Clopton appear to have been intensely interested in the news, be it a general, long-term understanding of current events or a desire to know more about a specific political event. Moreover, we can gain an insight into how they read the news. It is clear that the manuscript newsletters addressed to Pole were meant to be read extensively, and frequently. They give a picture of news reading that happened every few days, and relied on references to other texts; both back to previous letters, and to other publications, such as the *London Gazette*. The imagined reader in this scenario may have been male, but it is clear that women participated in this same practice as well. There is no reason to believe that Pole's news reading habits were any different to those of male recipients of newsletters.

Conclusion

It is clear that some gentry women in the seventeenth century were voracious readers of the news. They consumed news in both manuscript and print, reading combinations of manuscript newsletters, letters that contained news, and print publications such as newsbooks, pamphlets, periodicals and broadsheets. Their practice of reading the news was extensive and frequent, with information coming from multiple sources and reading often happening at least every few days. Suggestions that women were not interested in,

¹⁵⁰ The dictionary's prefatory address is not gendered, simply addressing the 'Courteous Reader,' but the book is focused on domestic duties normally undertaken by women, including directions for cleaning and caring for furnishings, and medical and culinary recipes. See [William Salmon], *The Family Dictionary; Or, Houshold Companion: Wherein are Alphabetically laid down Exact Rules and Choice Physical Receipts for the Preservation of Health, Prevention of Sickness, and Curing the several Diseases, Distempers, and Grievances, incident to Men, Women, and Children* (London: Printed for H. Rhodes at the Star, the Corner of Bride-lane, in Fleetstreet, 1695).

or did not read, the news are misleading, and represent a fundamental misunderstanding of the archival evidence available. They moreover rely on assumption that discussions of events between women is largely categorised as gossip, rather than being 'news-worthy', imposing a hierarchy of value on male and female epistolary traditions.

However, the story of news reading and gender in the seventeenth century does not appear to be one of difference at all. Instead, men and women read and transmitted the news in similar ways, despite potential disparities in gendered expectations. While the typical news reader was (and is) assumed to be male, it was possible for women to participate in this developing culture of information transmission.

In discussing the explosion of news in the seventeenth century, we should not overlook the readers who participated in and fuelled this phenomenon. Paula McDowell and others have demonstrated that we need to look beyond the author to find women's roles in early modern news culture, but this has rarely been applied to the readers of the news. Women were responding to these new genres as men were, and, even while they may have had limitations on their political participation, were clearly able to keep abreast of and intellectually involve themselves in the many upheavals that characterised seventeenth-century politics, both international and domestic. They, moreover, spoke with authority on such events, and participated fully in contemporary news networks, exchanging information and opinions with male and (albeit less frequently) female correspondents. While it may be harder to find traces of news reading, with few readers' marks in comparison to many books of the period, it was clearly a significant part of many women's literary diets, a fact that seems to have remained constant throughout the seventeenth century.

If there was little difference between the ways in which men and women read the news, despite the gendering of the news reading public as overwhelmingly male, this implies that 'the woman reader' was a largely imaginative category. Writers may have assumed

a male readership in their addresses to the readers, and written with a male public sphere in mind, but women clearly felt able to participate in this discourse. The gendering of readers and reading will be explored in the next section of this thesis, focusing first on how contemporary commentators constructed a gendered notion of reading, and then on how individual women responded to these idea(l)s.

Part Two: Gender, Genre, and Representations of Women's Reading

Cultural Views of Women Readers

Chapters two and three closely examined women's *practices* of reading, looking at their inscriptions and transcriptions; the marks that they left on their books and commonplaces. This highlighted how far a history of women's reading can also be seen as a history of women's writing, viewing the ways in which women recorded, and responded to, their reading in written form. The records of reading were also often records of life, as women signalled their identity through their book ownership or marginalia, or their notebooks mixed reading extracts with diary entries. The history of women's life-writing, touched on in those chapters, has been a huge area of growth in recent decades. There have been new editions of women's autobiographical writings, and many collections of thematic essays focusing on early modern women's life-writings.¹

Another area which has been explored in recent decades is the field of instruction manuals for women: the literature on how to behave and how to act in early modern society.² Scholars have noted the complexities of this genre, examining the different voices and themes that arose throughout instructional literature. These texts included conduct manuals, giving advice for how to behave in polite society; religious advice books which instructed the reader on how to run a godly household and practice proper

¹ See, for example, Alice Thornton, *My First Booke of my Life*, ed. Raymond Anselment (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2014); Elspeth Graham, ed., *Her Own Life: Autobiographical Writings by Seventeenth-Century Englishwomen* (London: Routledge, 1989); Anne Clifford, *Anne Clifford's Autobiographical Writing, 1590-1676*, ed. Jessica Malay (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2018); Katherine Hodgkin, ed., *Women, Madness and Sin in Early Modern England: The Autobiographical Writings of Dionys Fitzherbert* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2010).

² Suzanne W. Hull, *Chaste, Silent and Obedient: English Books for Women, 1477-1640* (San Marino, CA.: Huntington Library, 1988); Kate Aughterson, ed., *Renaissance Women: A Sourcebook: Constructions of Femininity in England* (London: Routledge, 1995); N. H. Keeble, ed., *The Cultural Identity of Seventeenth-Century Woman: A Reader* (London: Routledge, 1994).

piety and devotion; and practical household management guides. Moreover, there has been a recognition that women wrote some of these texts, with scholarship focusing on the work of writers such as Hannah Woolley, Elizabeth Jocelin and Dorothy Leigh.³

Despite the complexity of this work, however, a picture has emerged of women's lives being policed, confined and constrained by the social and cultural norms promoted in advice literature. Some have argued that this played out in women's reading life. Kevin Sharpe and Zwicker, for example, in a passage quoted in the introduction to this thesis, argued that 'for most literate women the experience of the book was confined to spiritual genres and to household manuals, to books of housewifery, herbals, and cookery books.'⁴ They clearly view women's reading lives as reflected the prescriptions set out in contemporary advice literature. Scholars have mined women's life-writing for examples of reading and wider behaviour, which supposedly showed women's conformity with these norms.

There are several problems with this approach. The assumption that the norms presented in advice literature resulted in the confinement and limitation of real women is extremely problematic. It denies agency to the women themselves, and takes a simplistic view of the domestic world.⁵ Women's writing about their reading needs to be re-examined, producing a more complex understanding of how they responded to cultural norms and the choices they made in representing reading habits. Moreover, it

³ Sylvia Brown, ed., *Women's Writing In Stuart England: The Mothers' Legacies of Dorothy Leigh, Elizabeth Jocelin and Elizabeth Richardson* (Stroud: Sutton Publishing, 1999); Elaine Hobby, "A Woman's Best Setting Out is Silence: The Writings of Hannah Woolley," in *Culture and Society in the Stuart Restoration*, ed. Gerald MacLean (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 179-200; Margaret Ezell, "Cooking the Books, Or, The Three Faces of Hannah Woolley," in *Reading and Writing Recipe Books, 1550-1800*, ed. Michelle DiMeo and Sara Pennell (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2013), 159-178.

⁴ Sharpe and Zwicker, "Introduction: Discovering the Renaissance Reader," 13.

⁵ A recent article by Jane Whittle has called for a different approach to the history of the household and household work, arguing that assumptions made about women's domestic labour is influenced by a modern distinction between paid and unpaid work. See Jane Whittle, "A Critique of Approaches to 'Domestic Work': Women, Work, and the Pre-Industrial Economy," *Past & Present* 243, no. 1 (2019): 35-70.

also relies on a reductive reading of advice literature, assuming a generic set of rules for women's behaviour that was common across much of the early modern period. The distinction between godly reading and leisured reading was certainly present, but, as this chapter will demonstrate, attitudes towards different types of reading were complex, influenced by the specific genre of advice literature and the context in which it was written. In order to examine women's responses to cultural conventions regarding femininity and reading, then, this chapter will review a selection of seventeenth-century didactic literature, exploring the ways in which ideas about reading and women were presented and developed, followed by an analysis of how women responded to these prescriptions in chapters six and seven.

Advice literature was a subset of didactic literature, which, as Sara Pennell and Natasha Glaisyer have shown, was a wide-reaching genre in early modern literature, and often depended on the reader's use of the text as well as authorial or publisher's intention.⁶ It offered instructions for how men and women should behave, based on contemporary gender ideology. Jacques Carré has argued that 'la littérature de civilité des XVII^e et XVIII^e siècles en langue anglaise se présente comme un ensemble assez disparate, aussi bien par le genre des textes que par leur contenu. Ses frontières sont assez floues, notamment parce que la notion même de savoir-vivre est alors en pleine mutation en Grande-Bretagne.'⁷ In the collection of essays in which his article appears, 'conduct literature' is broadly defined to include letters from parents to children, treatises on education, advice for servants and apprentices, conversation and letter-writing manuals,

⁶ Natasha Glaisyer and Sara Pennell, ed., *Didactic Literature in England 1500-1800: Expertise Constructed* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003).

⁷ Jacques Carré, « Communication et Rapports Sociaux dans les Traités de Savoir-Vivre Britanniques (XVII^e – XVIII^e siècle) » in *Pour une Histoire des Traités de Savoir-Vivre en Europe*, ed. Alain Montandon (Clermont-Ferrand : Associations des Publications de la Faculté des Lettres et Sciences Humaines de Clermont-Ferrand, 1994), 269. Translation : 'the literature of civility of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries in the English language presents itself as quite a disparate ensemble, in terms of both the genre of the texts and their contents. Its borders are quite fluid, notably because even the notion of knowing how to live is being transformed in Great Britain.'

collections of maxims and proverbs, and critical essays, amongst other genres.⁸ Carré also argues that some works of fiction, such as *Pamela*, could be classed as conduct literature.⁹ The genre therefore is hard to define, and is a specifically early modern manifestation of a longer tradition; as Robert Shoemaker argues, ‘conduct books form part of a long tradition of books of moral instruction, including discussions of the purpose of marriage and the proper ordering of domestic relations.’¹⁰ It was a popular genre, as demonstrated by the large print runs (Shoemaker suggests that a standard print run in the later seventeenth century was around 1000), largely aimed at a middle- or upper-class audience.¹¹

Shoemaker has argued that conduct texts aimed at a female readership became increasingly common as the seventeenth century progressed, and women’s literacy rates rose.¹² He identifies certain commonalities in the ideals of feminine behaviour, arguing that ‘the female virtues mentioned most frequently by these commentators were chastity and purity; modesty, meekness, and patience; tenderness and charity; and piety and devotion.’¹³ Women’s education was rarely included in this list, although Shoemaker suggests that this question became more complex towards the end of the seventeenth century, when certain types of learning began to be represented as beneficial for women, and women’s conversation was seen as an important civilising influence on men.¹⁴ However, women were also portrayed as morally weak, and inclined towards laziness and idleness, faults that Shoemaker argues were ultimately connected to ‘their tendency to be governed too much by their passions and too little by reason.’¹⁵ He

⁸ Jacques Carré, « Communication et Rappports Sociaux, » 269.

⁹ Jacques Carré, « Communication et Rappports Sociaux, » 269.

¹⁰ Robert Shoemaker, *Gender in English Society, 1650-1850: The Emergence of Separate Spheres?* (London: Longman, 1998), 21.

¹¹ Shoemaker, *Gender in English Society*, 22.

¹² Shoemaker, *Gender in English Society*, 22.

¹³ Shoemaker, *Gender in English Society*, 23.

¹⁴ Shoemaker, *Gender in English Society*, 24, 29.

¹⁵ Shoemaker, *Gender in English Society*, 29.

outlines a convincing continuity and change argument, at least in relation to gender relations in the wider seventeenth century, but, detrimentally, overlooks the roles of class and age in this conception of gender. Prescriptions given for women in various forms of conduct literature were not essentialist, aimed at all womankind, as his work suggests. Instead, as will be explored here in relation to reading habits, distinctions were made on the basis of both social status and age.

It has often been argued that the gender norms presented in conduct literature give a view of society that functioned on binaries, and set out clear and distinct forms of behaviour for different genders and classes. The clearest of these is the spatial divide between male and female areas of influence, with women occupying private, domestic space and men public space. This is usually expressed using the well-known separate spheres theory, and the work of scholars such as Davidoff and Hall on the gendered division of labour in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.¹⁶ There has been much debate about the usefulness of this theory, with scholars such as Amanda Vickery convincingly challenging the idea and chronology of this grand narrative about gender.¹⁷ The definition of the public and private sphere has also been complicated, with some scholars arguing for multiple types of public or private sphere.¹⁸ Shoemaker bases his discussion of eighteenth-century gender around this idea of gendered spheres, but ultimately concludes that ‘the concept of separate spheres may be useful if we define it as a loose division of responsibilities between men and women within both public life and private life, and we recognise that the impact of ideological prescriptions on day-to-day practice was limited: the spheres were never truly separate, certainly not

¹⁶ Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall, *Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middle Class, 1780-1850* (London: Hutchinson, 1987).

¹⁷ Amanda Vickery, “Golden Age to Separate Spheres: A Review of the Categories and Chronology of English Women’s History,” *The Historical Journal* 36, no. 1 (1993): 383-414.

¹⁸ For example see Jane Rendall, “Women and the Public Sphere,” *Gender & History* 11, no.3 (1999): 475-488.

physically.¹⁹ There may have been strict guidelines given for men and women's behaviour, but these behaviours were not necessarily completely distinct and separate. For example, a woman was permitted to take on male roles in the household under certain circumstances, such as in the absence of the husband. This suggests that, if we want to retain the language of spheres, we need to talk of overlap rather than just binaries, complicating our notion of gender relations.

Cultural discourses surrounding gender were present in many media, with representations of femininity present in art, literature, and theatre.²⁰ I am focusing here on advice literature, as these texts presented some of the clearest discussions of gender. This is, of course, a large oeuvre; I will be focusing on specific examples within the form, in order to give a broad sense of how the genre and its concepts of gendered reading developed over the course of the seventeenth century. The stylistic and generic boundaries for this type of literature were, at best, porous, so designating texts as advice literature is not always clear cut. Most were written in prose, and structured in similar ways, with chapters on certain social groups and the behaviours expected of them. However, there were variations within the style, and, increasingly towards the end of the seventeenth century the genre could be repurposed or adapted for different aims. The works of writers like Mary Astell, for example, offered polemical arguments concerning women's roles in society that, to varying extents, countered prevailing patriarchal ideals.²¹

¹⁹ Shoemaker, *Gender in English Society*, 318.

²⁰ Jessica Murphy has done an extensive study of the representation of 'virtuous women', taking into account various genres of early modern literature, and how they relate to the prescriptions for gendered behaviour set out in conduct books. See Jessica C. Murphy, *Virtuous Necessity: Conduct Literature and the Making of the Virtuous Woman in Early Modern England* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2015).

²¹ This can be connected to the repurposing of the advice genre by mothers' legacies, and by defences of women written in the early seventeenth century. Elaine Beilin has argued that these forms, while at first glance very different in character, shared a conception of an idealised, devout female virtue. While writers such as Mary Astell based their works on more secular grounds, arguing for women's intellectual capacities, the similarities in their use of the advice literature form is evident. See Elaine V. Beilin,

I will be discussing various different forms of advice literature here, including godly advice books, mothers' legacies, civil instruction manuals, and polemics. This is not an exhaustive list of advice literature forms, but they all deal with the specific topic of women's reading habits, and represent the changes taking place across the seventeenth century. While these can all broadly be grouped under the heading of advice literature, as they provide a guide for (often gendered and moralistic) behaviour; they had quite distinct provenances, had different aims, and were in some cases speaking to different audiences. The 'mother's legacy' genre, for example, was a specific form instructing parents how to raise their children, written by women or at least in a female voice.²² The godly instruction texts of writers such as William Gouge formed another type of advice literature. These texts were concerned with human behaviour as dictated by their interpretation of scripture, and was produced by protestant writers, often clergymen. They can be seen as a form of religious or scriptural commentary in some ways, as authors interpret the Bible's dictates about behavioural norms and practices. There are many examples of these writings from the period, but I will focus on William Whately and William Gouge from the early seventeenth century, and Richard Baxter and Richard Allestree from the mid-century, as they gave some of the most comprehensive instructions for women's behaviour in general, and in terms of their reading habits. More secular or polemical writings about women's conduct and place in society became increasingly common in the second half of the seventeenth century, although they were present throughout the 1600s, paving the way for the familiar eighteenth-century conduct book.²³ While religious themes were in almost all cases still evident, as would

Redeeming Eve: Women Writers of the English Renaissance (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987).

²² The origin of the genre may lie with Nicholas Breton's advice book to Thomas Rowe, in which he assumes the voice of Lady Bartley, Rowe's mother. See Kristen Poole, "'The Fittest Closet for All Goodness': Authorial Strategies of Jacobean Mothers' Manuals," *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900* 35, no. 1 *The English Renaissance* (1995): 69-88.

²³ For examples of eighteenth-century constructions of femininity, see Vivian Jones, *Women in the Eighteenth Century: Constructions of Femininity* (London: Routledge, 1990).

be expected from any seventeenth-century cultural discourse, these texts were not as explicitly based on scriptural interpretation as their more theological counterparts. They offer advice for behaviour in both the home and society at large. The distinction between these texts and more polemical tracts is a little blurry at times. The polemics considered here all take the form of women writing about a woman's place in society, with the aim of changing it in some way, rather than upholding the status quo.

A key question is whether advice literature reflected contemporary power relations, already at play within society; or whether it attempted to form these ideals by debating them in print. This literature is often portrayed by historians as being a reflection of social ideas – or ideals – held by the patriarchal hegemony.²⁴ Thus they become a measure for wider cultural perceptions. Perhaps, instead, we should see these texts more as a discursive arena in which conflicts were played out. This is particularly evident in the ways in which writers such as Mary Astell, Judith Drake, and others used the advice literature form. Their works are often seen as separate to other forms of conduct literature, as they promoted a more progressive agenda in relation to a woman's place in society. However, it is interesting that they used this particular literary form to do so. They were playing out new, complex social arguments in a form usually seen as being a mouthpiece for the prevailing hierarchy.

Despite the differences in form and genre, some common ground can be traced through all these forms of advice literature, in terms of their recommendations for women's reading. There was often a focus on two specific genres: romantic fiction and religious

²⁴ The ideas of the conduct writers, particularly relating to the concept of patriarchy and familial/social order, has been much discussed by scholars of the seventeenth century. I will not go into detail on their work, but I want to focus specifically on their prescriptions and injunctions regarding reading habits and femininity. For classic studies on the patriarchal and Puritan context, see Gordon J. Schochet, *The Authoritarian Family and Political Attitudes in Seventeenth-Century England: Patriarchalism in Political Thought* (London: Transaction Books, 1988); and Christopher Hill, *Society and Puritanism in Pre-Revolutionary England* (London: Secker and Warburg, 1964). For explorations of early modern gender relations, see Anthony Fletcher, *Gender, Sex and Subordination in England, 1500-1800* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995); and Susan Kingsley Kent, *Gender and Power in Britain, 1640-1990* (New York: Routledge, 1999).

or devotional texts. Sasha Roberts discussed this, connecting these genres to contemporary stereotypes of female behaviour, saying ‘women readers were typically identified with a restricted range of texts: works deemed to meet ideological imperatives for feminine chastity – pious and theological volumes, conduct literature and instruction manuals – and the more risqué matter of romances, love poetry, and ‘light’ fiction, often trivialised as recreational and indulgent or sensationalised as dangerous to sexual honour when they were read by women.’²⁵ These genres were discussed in detail by writers throughout the seventeenth century, continuously framing their discussion in the terms Roberts has identified. Reading in almost all cases was explicitly connected to women’s perceived roles in society, either as a devout wife or as a sexually transgressive figure.

The fears about reading were based in a belief that reading was transformative, and had a powerful effect on the individual. As Adrian Johns has shown, there was a common belief that ‘if one wished to retain reliability and independence of mind, then one must be careful of what, and how, one read.’²⁶ Johns gives many examples of early modern readers being harmed, sometimes irreparably, by reading, particularly reading done during childhood. Reading the wrong genre (particularly romances), or reading in the wrong way could have deep and long-lasting physiological effects.²⁷ Johns describes the story of the natural philosopher Robert Boyle, who had been recommended romances as a boy to ease his melancholy. He tried to counter the influence of these books later in life, disciplining his mind by reading Algebra, but found that his mind often wandered and indulged in romantic imaginings. As Johns noted, ‘the effects of reading those

²⁵ Sasha Roberts, “Reading in Early Modern England: Contexts and Problems,” *Critical Survey* 12, no. 2 (2000): 3.

²⁶ Adrian Johns, *The Nature of the Book: Print and Knowledge in the Making* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 382.

²⁷ Johns notes that this was not a gender-specific process; it ‘transcended place, time, sex, and social rank’. (p383).

romances had proved permanent, and Boyle simply had to live with them.²⁸ Given the potential to cause damage, it is no wonder that writers of advice books were often preoccupied with reading.

This chapter, therefore, will draw out common views and prescriptions surrounding reading present in seventeenth-century advice literature. This will largely focus on the two genres that were the most discussed: religious literature and romance.²⁹ The final section will show that the focus on education (which can be seen as access to reading) in the late seventeenth-century *querelle des femmes* was a part of this cultural conversation. The propriety of reading for women was of central concern to conduct writers, with a desire to control both their early education and the books they had access to later in life, although this was presented in different ways by different types of advice literature.

Godly advice books

Women's role in life was central to the exhortations surrounding their reading habits. The instructions for reading as a married woman were centred on the religious and devotional. Anthony Fletcher has argued that these post-Reformation English conduct book writers came 'from the first generation of married pastors, and saw it as their task to model the patriarchal family afresh for this new world.'³⁰ In their view, the family was based on hierarchy, with absolute male authority, and acted as a 'bedrock of evangelisation.'³¹ These writers therefore set out codes of conduct for women that enabled them to fulfil their role as a wife and mother in a godly household. The clergyman William Gouge was the author of one of the most prolific early seventeenth-

²⁸ Johns, *The Nature of the Book*, 381.

²⁹ This latter category also included poetry (to a lesser extent), plays, and, in the eighteenth century, the novel, although the seventeenth-century romance genre will be the focus on this exploration.

³⁰ Anthony Fletcher, "The Protestant Idea of Marriage in Early Modern England," in *Religion, Culture and Society in Early Modern Britain: Essays in Honour of Patrick Collinson*, ed. Anthony Fletcher and Peter Roberts (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 162.

³¹ Fletcher, "The Protestant Idea of Marriage," 162-3.

century advice books, *Of Domesticall Duties*. In it, he set out the duties of a wife in overseeing the religious practices of her family:

As the man especially is to performe the very actions of prayer, reading the word, catechizing, and other like duties in the family, so the wife may be a great helpe in putting her husband in minde both of the dutie it selfe, and of the time of performing it, and incouraging him to doe it, in gathering the family together, and exhorting them to be forward, in making her selfe an example to the rest by her diligent and reuerend attention, in oft vrging and pressing to her children and seruants such points of instruction as her husband hath taught; yea, in praying, reading, teaching, and performing like exercises her selfe, so farre as she is able, when her husband is absent, or negligent and carelesse, and will not himselfe doe them; or it may be, is not able to doe them.³²

Here the husband's primary place in the household is made clear, but women are given some authority in certain cases, taking on a male role in to lead religious observances.³³

Men were 'especially' to perform devotional duties, and a woman's role was to support that, or take on the task in his absence. Reading was presented alongside prayer as integral to a godly lifestyle.³⁴

Devotion and reading was often relational in these godly advice texts. Religious observance was conducted in conjunction with other members of the household, particularly the woman's husband, whom Gouge declared responsible for providing his

³² William Gouge, *Of Domesticall Duties Eight Treatises* (London: printed by Iohn Haviland for William Bladen, and are to be sold at the signe of the Bible neere the great North doore of Pauls, 1622), 259-260.

³³ Susan Amussen has explored the gendered division of labour and the hierarchy between husbands and wives as depicted in conduct books of the period. See Susan D. Amussen, *An Ordered Society: Gender and Class in Early Modern England* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988).

³⁴ Cambers and Wolfe have explored the place of reading in familial devotion. See Andrew Cambers and Michelle Wolfe, "Reading, Family Religion, and Evangelical Identity in Late Stuart England," *The Historical Journal* 47, no. 4 (2004): 875-896.

wife's spiritual education and devotion. He outlined that a woman's devotional practice should take the form of:

holy and religious exercises in the house, as reading the word, praier, catechising, and such like; which being the spirituall food of the soule are to be euery day, as our bodily food, prouided and vsed. An husband as a master of a family must provide these for the good of his whole house; but as an husband, in speciall for the good of his wife: for to his wife, as well as to the whole house he is a King, a Priest, and a Prophet.³⁵

Reading therefore was figured as spiritual nourishment, and again presented as a part of a woman's 'religious exercises.' William Whately, the Puritan preacher, prefigured Gouge's words about the relationship between the husband and wife, and their respective roles in household devotion.³⁶ He argued that they should 'reade the Word of God together,' and outlined a similar hierarchy for household religious observances.³⁷ In strikingly similar words to Gouge he described the place of the husband and wife in this hierarchy: 'they must also bee good rulers at home, and ioyne in guiding the houshold: the man as Gods immediat officer, and the King in his family: the woman as the Deputie subordinate, and associate to him, but not altogether equall.'³⁸ They were instructed to oversee the religious practices of their children and servants, including reading scripture with them, duties which the husband should preferably perform but which the wife could take on in his absence.³⁹

³⁵ Gouge, *Of Domesticall Duties*, 397.

³⁶ For more on the marital relationship, see Adrian Wilson, *Ritual and Conflict: The Social Relations of Childbirth in Early Modern England* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2013). For more on Whately himself, see Jacqueline Eales, "Gender Construction in Early Modern England and the Conduct Books of William Whately (1583-1639)," *Studies in Church History* 34 (1998): 163-174.

³⁷ William Whately, *A Bride-Bush, Or A Wedding Sermon: Compendiously Describing the Duties of Married Persons: By performing whereof, Marriage shall be to them a great Helpe, which now finde it a little Hell* (Printed at London by William Iaggard, for Nicholas Bourne, and are to be sold at his shop at the entrance into the Royall Exchange, 1617), 10.

³⁸ Whately, *A Bride-Bush*, 16.

³⁹ Whately, *A Bride-Bush*, 16.

Religious reading for women was strictly defined, however. Theological tracts were not seen as appropriate as devotional texts or scripture. Whately, for example, gave advice on which texts women should read, proposing that

women of Quality (who are presumed to want neither Parts nor lesure for it) would a little look into the inside of the Religion they profess; if it be a true one, 'twill bear the inspection, truth never shunning the light; if it be not, the discovery cannot be too early. And indeed among the many remarkable impresses of truth our Church bears, this is one, that she does not blindfold her Proselytes, leaves them the use of their discerning Faculty, and does not by obtruding upon them an implicit belief, force them to lay down their Reason when they take up their Faith. And now why should not Ladies spend a few of their many idle hours in this inquisition, I mean not to embark them in a maze of controversies, but only to discern those plain grounds of Truth on which our Church builds; which if well digested, will prove a better amulet against delusion then the reading whole Tomes of Disputations, more apt to distract then fortify their understandings.⁴⁰

Women were encouraged to read some theological tracts and treatises, as enquiry and discovery in Whately's view is permitted by the church to a certain extent. Reading theology was seen as an appropriate use of 'idle time,' but only in order to better understand scripture, not to delve into religious controversies. Whately did not think that women should read too deeply into theology, specifically cautioning against 'Tomes of Disputations,' which could lead them astray.⁴¹

This reflects the common fear during the early modern period about the dangers of individual interpretation of scripture. As Kate Narveson has shown, 'Bible reading

⁴⁰ Whately, *A Bride-Bush*, 35.

⁴¹ For more explanation of this, see chapter six.

helped to usher in a transitional world in which the growing availability of printed resources was in tension with the sense that lay people should turn for answers to the authority of learned men.⁴² The clergy in particular wanted to ensure that lay reading was still governed by expert exegesis. Narveson has argued that this led to the publication of many interpretative guides: ‘pastors therefore provided this guidance in the paratexts to printed Bibles and in directions for lay scripture reading that appeared both within larger works of practical divinity and as free-standing publications.’⁴³

A key term in the passage above is the address to ‘women of Quality.’ There was a distinct social hierarchy in the prescriptions set out by Whately and Gouge, who focused their advice on women of a certain rank. They were clearly speaking to men and women who were heads of households, employing servants, which immediately restricted their audience to the middling and upper echelons of society. In all likelihood these were aimed at upper middle class and gentry women, mainly married, who had the education to be able to read, the authority within the household to direct devotion, and the leisure time to dedicate to scriptural study.

Romance reading, by contrast, was the target of most of the ire of advice books, particularly from the mid-century onwards. It was repeatedly warned against in conduct books, for both men and women. Richard Baxter, the ejected minister and non-conformist, addressed the issue of male romance reading practices in his *Treatise on Conversion*. According to Baxter, many men

Can delight to read a Romance, or a book of Fables and Fictions, like the Knights of the Sun, the old Champions, or *Palmerine*, or *Guy of Warwick*, or such like wicked devises of mens brains, that are made to rob God of mens

⁴² Kate Narveson, *Bible Readers and Lay Writers in Early Modern England: Gender and Self-Definition in an Emergent Writing Culture* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2012), 28.

⁴³ Narveson, *Bible Readers and Lay Writers*, 21.

hearts, and to rob themselves of their time and wit; than to read over the sacred Story, and the holy Precepts of Christ, and the spiritual Doctrine of Faith and Salvation.⁴⁴

Romances were portrayed as seductive, enticing readers away from God and stultifying their minds. The author of the romance was seen as 'wicked,' intentionally creating stories that would encourage readers to reject piety and devotion. Baxter himself had enjoyed romances when he was young, but he realised the error of his ways in his mid-teens.⁴⁵ His criticism at men in the passage above was directed at men, but the disapproval surrounding the reading of romances in the seventeenth century was primarily attached to women, in whom the habit was often seen as spiritually and morally dangerous.

There was a common fear that women would mimic the behaviour of romantic heroines. Richard Allestree, the Church of England clergyman and Royalist, repeatedly discussed the dangers romance reading in his book *A Ladies Calling*:

There is another thing to which some devote a very considerable part of their time, and that is the reading Romances, which seems now to be thought the peculiar and only becoming study of young Ladies ... I fear they often leave ill impressions behind them. Those amorous passions, which 'tis their design to paint to the utmost life, are apt to insinuate themselves into their unwary readers, and by an unhappy inversion, a copy shall produce an original.⁴⁶

⁴⁴ Richard Baxter, *A Treatise on Conversion Preached, and now published for the use of those that are strangers to a true conversion, especially the grosly ignorant and ungodly* (London: Printed for R. W. for Nevil Simmons Bookseller in Kiderminster, and are to be sold by Joseph Nevil, at the Plough in Pauls Church-yard, 1657), 45.

⁴⁵ N.H. Keeble, *Richard Baxter: Puritan Man of Letters* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982), 34.

⁴⁶ Richard Allestree, *The Ladies Calling. In Two Parts. By the Author of the Whole Duty of Man, The Causes of the Decay of Christian Piety, and the Gentlemans Calling* (Oxford: Printed at the Theater, 1673), 151.

Young women here are portrayed as easily influenced by their reading material, fitting into the idea of the inherent weakness of female nature. There is an implication of irrationality and impressionability in this depiction, assuming that women were prone to copying what Allestree saw as the deeply problematic behaviour displayed in romantic fiction. The act of reading had an explicit effect on behaviour and character; it is portrayed as transformative in some way for the impressionable young woman, in the way described by Johns, discussed above.⁴⁷ The reader is ‘unwary’ (the implication being that they were passive), and Allestree very specifically stated that romance reading was the ‘peculiar ... study of young Ladies.’ Allestree was an Anglican, and not part of the Puritan tradition of Gouge, Whately and Baxter, but he replicated some of the same tropes, demonstrated the general concern about women’s reading amongst devout men.

Age was crucial to the representation of romance reading. The concerns about the genre did not apply to all women, but focused specifically on the young and unmarried. This is particularly true in the ‘conversion narratives’ that were used by some conduct book writers to depict romance reading. This term broadly refers to the narrative depicted by many early modern writers, which usually follows the path of youthful spirituality, a descent into ‘worldliness,’ and then a ‘conversion’ where they rediscover devotion.⁴⁸ Conversion was a central part of seventeenth-century spiritual autobiography, as scholars such as D. Bruce Hindmarsh and Kathleen Lynch have demonstrated, but it was also used by conduct book writers.⁴⁹ It was a common rhetorical tool in the Puritan

⁴⁷ Johns, *The Nature of the Book*.

⁴⁸ John Bunyan, in particular, is noted for his use of the narrative in many works, including *Grace Abounding*. See Nigel Smith, “*Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners* (1666),” in *The Oxford Handbook of John Bunyan*, ed. Michael Davies & W. R. Owens (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 204-219.

⁴⁹ D. Bruce Hindmarsh, *The Evangelical Conversion Narrative: Spiritual Autobiography in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005); Kathleen Lynch, *Protestant Autobiography in the Seventeenth-Century Anglophone World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).

literary tradition, used sporadically in the sixteenth century and reaching a height of popularity in the mid-seventeenth century.⁵⁰

The term can be applied more closely to a particular narrative used in representations of women's reading, particularly in conduct literature, where a path to piety from youthful transgressions is charted by outlining a move to religious reading from romance reading.⁵¹ For example, Allestree declared that once women found piety the 'devout temper of her mind will by a holy *leger-demain* shuffle the Romances out of her hand and substitute the Oracles of Truth; will not let her dream away her time in phantastic scenes, and elaborate nothing, but prompt her to give all diligence to make her Calling and Election sure.'⁵² Piety physically removed romances from women in this scene, and Allestree made clear the division between spiritual truth and romantic fantasy.

Baxter employed this conversion narrative in his funeral sermon for his wife, Margaret, referring back to his work on conversion quoted above. He said of Margaret that

In her vain youth, *Pride*, and *Romances*, and *Company* suitable thereto, did take her up ... But in a little time she heard and understood what those better things were which she had thought must be attained ... The Doctrine of Conversion (as I preached it as now in my Treatise of Conversion) was received on her heart as the seal on the wax. Whereupon she presently fell to self-judging, and to frequent prayer, and reading, and serious thoughts of her present state, and her salvation.⁵³

⁵⁰ Abigail Shinn, *Conversion Narratives in Early Modern England: Tables of Turning* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), 6-7.

⁵¹ As noted above, this was not a device solely used in discussing women's reading habits; Richard Baxter and John Bunyan record similar experiences of enjoying romances when young, but then reforming their reading habits. However, it was certainly a common for women's reading habits to be framed in these terms.

⁵² Allestree, *The Ladies Calling*, 115.

⁵³ Richard Baxter, *A Breviate of the Life of Margaret, The Daughter of Francis Charlton, of Apply in Shropshire, Esq; And Wife of Richard Baxter* (London: Printed for B. Simmons, at the Three Golden Cocks at the West-end of St. Pauls, 1681), 4.

Youth is inextricably tied to romance reading here, and is condemned as ‘vain.’

Romance reading represented an improper indulgence of leisure time, which women must put aside in order to become devout and fulfil their role in society. Baxter’s role in his wife’s ‘conversion’ is significant: his preaching, it is implied, brought her to better understanding. The portrayal of her later in life, engaging in frequent prayer, devotional reading and self-reflection presents an idealised form of femininity for older, married women, who were able to cast of the transgressions of their youth.

The gendered make-up of the readership of these texts is unclear, but it is evident that women were the target audiences. Allestree indicated how he would like his own treatise to be approached by his female readers, writing:

And now would God it were as easie to persuade, as it is to propose; and that this Discourse may not be taken only as a Gazet for its newness, & discarded as soon as read; but that it may at least advance to the honor of an Almanac, be allowed one Year ere it be out of date: and in that time, if frequently & seriously consulted, it may perhaps awaken some Ladies from their stupid Dreams, convince them that they were sent into the World for nobler purposes, then only to make a little Glittering in it; like a Comet, to give a blaze, and then disappear.⁵⁴

He wanted his female readers to read the text frequently, as one would an almanac, using it almost as a reference book. It is implied that it would take this repeated study for the lessons to be absorbed effectively. The reader in question would be improved through act of reading – significantly, it is implicit they would become better than their peers.

⁵⁴ Allestree, *The Ladies Calling*, 235.

Aside from the obvious fact that Allestree envisioned women reading his own book, there are indications as to what else they may have been reading, beyond the much-discussed romances and religious texts. The mention of the ‘Gazet,’ referring to the *London Gazette*, discussed in chapter four, suggests that women would have read the news. However, this was in a way that was fleeting and relatively passive, with the implication is that no lessons were drawn from it.⁵⁵ There is no indication that this representation of news reading is intended to be gender-specific; perhaps Allestree was making a general comment on how both men and women received daily or weekly news. The opposition to this is framed as the reading of an almanac, which we know from the work of scholars such as Margaret Spufford to have been a prolific genre in the early modern period.⁵⁶ Almanac reading practices were clearly based on re-reading and reference, as the form of the genre intended. Ideal reading of appropriate books should be done in a serious and studious manner, to ensure that the lessons were properly comprehended and absorbed.

Religious conduct literature, then, emphasised a clear cut division between genres which were recommended for women to read, and those which were seen as transgressive. The impetus behind this binary rests in the role to which these writers wanted women to aspire: that of a pious wife and mother, looking after the spiritual well-being of her household. There was a recognition that women would read romances, but it was framed as temptation, and women were then expected to realise and repent their errors. This dichotomy was present in other forms of seventeenth-century advice literature, but it was far more nuanced and complex than is often presented by modern

⁵⁵ For a fuller discussion of news reading, see chapter 4.

⁵⁶ Margaret Spufford, *Small Books and Pleasant Histories: Popular Fiction and its Readership in Seventeenth-Century England* (London: Methuen & Co. Ltd: 1981). For more on almanacs, see chapter two.

scholars, with writers' concern about the education and reading habits of women taking a variety of forms throughout the period.

Mothers' Legacies

If godly advice books provided prescriptions for women both before and during marriage, maternal instructions laid the groundwork for childhood reading. The exhortations to read devotional literature were strikingly similar to those of Gouge and Whately, and were designed to prepare girls for a pious life. The 'mother's legacy' is a genre specific to the early modern period, in which women wrote to their children, in the form of a conduct or advice book. Jennifer Heller has identified around twenty of these books, dating from the late sixteenth to the late seventeenth centuries. This section will focus on some of the most significant examples of the genre.⁵⁷ As Sylvia Brown has noted, these legacies drew on the language of the deathbed, with women writing as if to leave advice for their children after they have passed away.⁵⁸ Although often addressed to the author's own children, they were aimed at expectant mothers, teaching them how to raise and educate their sons and daughters.

In these texts, young girls were advised to read devotional texts, and mothers were encouraged to teach their children (both boys and girls), to read the Bible. Elizabeth Jocelin (1596-1622), author of the *The Mothers Legacie*, which was published two years after her death, instructed young girls to 'Reade the holy Scriptures often and diligently,' with few other prescriptions for literary endeavour.⁵⁹ There are similar exhortations in Dorothy Leigh's *The Mothers Blessing*, perhaps the best known example of the mother's legacy. Leigh's book was first published in 1616, and was so popular

⁵⁷ Jennifer Heller, *The Mother's Legacy in Early Modern England* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2011), 1.

⁵⁸ Brown, ed., *Women's Writing In Stuart England*, v. Indeed, both Leigh and Jocelin had died when their legacies were first published.

⁵⁹ Elizabeth Jocelin, *The Mothers Legacie, to her unborne childe* (London: Printed by Iohn Haviland, for William Barret, 1624), 43.

that there were at least nineteen editions before 1640.⁶⁰ Leigh recommended that mothers teach their children to read, suggesting that ‘all your Children may be taught to reade, beginning at foure yeeres old or before, and let them learne till ten, in which time they are not able to do any good in the Commonwealth, but to learne how to serue God, their King & Country by reading.’⁶¹ Reading and an early education were thus linked to a sense of nationhood and duty, alongside religious devotion. Leigh was a Puritan who believed in vernacular Bible reading, and Edith Snook has described her stance in *The Mothers Blessing* as ‘at once feminine and Puritan, maternal and political.’⁶² The focus on religious education was part of the Protestant culture of godliness, mentioned above, which was based around devotional reading and stimulated early modern literacy. This communal devotion would include servants, who may have also been encouraged to read, as Leigh demonstrated when she recommended that servants were encouraged to ‘spend al their idle time in reading.’⁶³ Reading thus formed an integral part of early seventeenth-century Protestant culture, for both men and women, of all classes and ages.

Education for girls, however, was often limited, and therefore their reading was confined to scripture. Jocelin made it clear her views on the extent of a young girl’s education, stating ‘I desire her bringing vp may bee learning the Bible, as my sisters doe, good houswifery, writing, and good workes: other learning a woman needs not.’⁶⁴ Reading was a functional skill, facilitating a woman’s role as a pious wife and mother;

⁶⁰ Catherine Gray, “Feeding on the Seed of Woman: Dorothy Leigh and the Figure of Maternal Dissent,” *ELH* 68, no. 3 (2001): 563-592. Gray has argued that the designation of Leigh’s book as ‘conduct literature’ has resulted in it being characterised as domestic, with the political aspects of Leigh’s work largely overlooked.

⁶¹ Dorothy Leigh, *The Mothers Blessing. Or the Godly Counsaile of a Gentle-woman not long since deceased, left behind for her Children: Containing many good exhortations, and godly admonitions, profitable for all Parents to leaue as a Legacy to their Children, but especially for those, who by reason of their young yeeres stand most in need of Instruction* (Printed at London for Iohn Budge, and are to be sold at the great South-dore of Paules, and at Britaines Burse, 1616), 46-47.

⁶² Edith Snook, *Women, Reading, and the Cultural Politics of Early Modern England* (London: Routledge, 2005), 59.

⁶³ Leigh, *The Mothers Blessing*, 59.

⁶⁴ Jocelin, *The Mothers Legacie*, 15.

intellectual learning beyond that was considered at best unnecessary.⁶⁵ Teresa Feroli has described Jocelin as a ‘hesitant advocate of women’s education,’ although she was herself clearly an educated woman.⁶⁶ Jocelin gave different prescriptions for male and female learning, hoping that a son of hers would be educated to go into the ministry, while daughters should be taught the skills for her role as a Christian wife. As Beilin has noted, she suggested that education was only suitably for virtuous, wise women, unlike writers such as Juan Luis Vives and Thomas More, who argued that education led to virtue.⁶⁷

The cautions against female learning may seem at odds with these published texts written by obviously educated women. Many scholars have discussed the ways in which these authors positioned themselves, and the apologies they often made for their writing.⁶⁸ The prefaces often made it clear that the women did not write with any intention of publishing. Elizabeth Richardson, first Lady Cramond and author of *A Ladies Legacy to her Daughters*, wrote:

I Had no purpose at all when I writ these books, for the use of my selfe, and my children, to make them publicke; but have beene lately over perswaded by some that much desired to have them. Therefore I have adventured to beare all censures, and desire their patience and pardon, whose exquisite judgements may finde many blameworthy faults, justly to condemne my boldnesse; which I thus

⁶⁵ Linda Pollock has briefly outlined the differences in male and female education in the upper ranks of early modern society, noting that while young girls received less intellectual training, girls were still taught important skills for their future lives. See Linda Pollock, “‘Teach her to Live Under Obedience’: the Making of Women in the Upper Ranks of Early Modern England,” *Continuity and Change* 4, no. 2 (1989): 231-258.

⁶⁶ Teresa Feroli, “‘*Infelix Simulacrum*’: The Rewriting of Loss in Elizabeth Jocelin’s *The Mothers Legacie*,” *ELH* 61, no. 1 (1994): 94.

⁶⁷ Beilin, *Redeeming Eve*, 273.

⁶⁸ See, for example, Feroli, “‘*Infelix Simulacrum*’”; Poole “‘The Fittest Closet’”; Wendy Wall, “Isabella Whitney and the Female Legacy,” *ELH* 58, no. 1 (1991): 35-62.

excuse, the matter is but devotions or prayers, which surely concernes and belongs to women, as well as to the best learned men⁶⁹

Richardson here excused her authorship, but defended herself by arguing that she was only writing about women's concerns; situating herself in the devotional-domestic sphere. However, Heller has noted that this is a clever rhetorical device, arguing that 'this apologia subtly inverts the gender hierarchy, placing only the "best learned men" on a plane with women while ostensibly demeaning her own status.'⁷⁰ The work itself is a collection of prayers for various occasions, organised into three books. There are a few references to reading, always in a devotional context. For example, in one prayer she beseeches God to help her to 'strive alwaies to keep faith and a good conscience before thee towards all; and indue me with grace, will, understanding and ability, to do good workes to thy glory, and bring comfort and profit to my soule in praying, reading, and hearing of thy most holy word at all times.'⁷¹

The function of religious reading, therefore, was clear: it increased personal devotion and piety. Leigh declared that 'reading good bookes worketh a mans heart to godliness.'⁷² She gave prescriptions for the correct way of reading devotional books, focusing on the emotional or spiritual response to the text, suggesting 'when you begin to read any part of the scripture, lift vp your harts, soules and mindes vnto God.'⁷³ Thus reading was both a way for individual women to access God, and for them to teach their children spirituality and proper devotional practices.

No other literary genres were mentioned in mothers' legacies: they focused on encouraging children to read scripture. This reflected the usual curriculum for young

⁶⁹ Elizabeth Richardson, *A Ladies Legacie to her Daughters. In three books. Composed of prayers and meditations, fitted for severall times, and upon severall occasions. As also several prayers for each day in the weeke* (London: Printed by Tho. Harper, and are to be sold at his house in Little Britaine, 1645), 3.

⁷⁰ Jennifer Heller, "The Legacy and Rhetorics of Maternal Zeal," *ELH* 75, no. 3 (2003): 619.

⁷¹ Richardson, *A Ladies Legacy*, 122.

⁷² Leigh, *The Mothers Blessing*, 93-94.

⁷³ Leigh, *The Mothers Blessing*, 103-104.

girls, who were rarely taught skills such as mathematics or Latin. The Bible was integral to early modern education; reading was often learned both by reading the Bible, and in order to do so. Most girls of wealthy families would be at least able to read, if not write. Their education revolved around what they needed to learn for their future lives as a wife and mother: often including reading, writing, needlework, cookery and medicine.⁷⁴ The mothers' legacies of the first half of the seventeenth century were designed to lay the early educational foundations for a pious woman, formed partially through her reading habits.⁷⁵ However, there were no warnings in mothers' legacies about genres that should be avoided. It was only once women reached young adulthood that advice books became preoccupied with the books they should not read.

Civil Instruction Manuals

Godly advice books and mother's legacies emphasised the importance of devotional reading, with the former contrasting this to the dangers of the romance genre. This was not restricted to the godly, however. More secular books of civil instruction also took up the war against romance reading, although the focus was slightly different. Connections to a problematic female sexuality and a misuse of leisure time were made more explicit than in religious conduct texts, although they still largely focused on young women. However, as explored below, not all advice books so roundly condemned romance reading. From the mid-century onwards, some authors praised the romance genre as a tool for educating young women.

⁷⁴ Caroline Bowden has explored girls' education in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries in England (and the lack of information we have about curricula), concluding that most women were largely self-taught, and that learning often took place outside formal educational spaces. See Caroline Bowden, "Women in Educational Spaces," in *The Cambridge Companion to Early Modern Women's Writing*, ed. Laura Lunger Knoppers (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 86-96.

⁷⁵ The importance of these early precepts for gendered behaviour should not be underestimated. Linda Pollock has argued that childhood was when the gendered hierarchy was inculcated in women, in preparation for adulthood, when their roles in real life became more complex. By having an early grounding in their subordinate role, it could be ensured that women did not stray too far out of line when they became more independent. See Pollock, "'Teach her to Live Under Obedience'".

Literature about civility was common in early modern England. The term civility became increasingly connected to politeness and ‘elegant behaviour,’ rather than political systems, during this period.⁷⁶ As Anna Bryson has observed, early modern writers ‘not only emphasised the importance of appropriate manners for the individual but also believed that manners could make or unmake their society.’⁷⁷ This was particularly true for the nobility and gentry, whose personal behaviour could impact on the government of society as a whole.⁷⁸ Bryson has argued that this concern led to the concept of civility as a ‘personal rather than collective attribute,’ which appeared ‘principally in literature devoted to the education and personal qualities of the nobility and gentry.’⁷⁹ In order to uphold this concept of polite society, then, many books and pamphlets were produced instructing their readers how to dress, converse, and behave in society.

Female sexuality was a preoccupation of many writers of conduct books, with a binary created between passive, idealised femininity, and a transgressive, threatening sexual nature.⁸⁰ The poet and writer Nicholas Breton (1554/5-1626) made the distinction between the manifestations of femininity, and the perceived dangerous nature of transgressively sexual women, clear, when outlining the characters of ‘A good Wife’ and ‘A wanton Woman.’ The former he said was ‘a care of necessity, and a course of Thrift, a booke of Huswifery, and a mirror of modestie. In summe, she is Gods blessing, and Mans happinesse, Earths honour, and Heauens creature,’⁸¹ while the latter ‘a spice

⁷⁶ Peter Burke, “A Civil Tongue: Language and Politeness in Early Modern Europe,” in *Civil Histories: Essays Presented to Sir Keith Thomas*, ed. Peter Burke, Brian Harrison and Paul Slack (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 36.

⁷⁷ Anna Bryson, *From Courtesy to Civility: Changing Codes of Conduct in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), 3.

⁷⁸ Bryson, *From Courtesy to Civility*, 53.

⁷⁹ Bryson, *From Courtesy to Civility*, 53.

⁸⁰ Laura Gowing has pointed out that in the early modern period, lust was seen as a natural (and sinful) part of female nature; whereas chastity was something they should aspire to. See Laura Gowing, *Gender Relations in Early Modern England* (Harlow: Pearson, 2012), 17.

⁸¹ Nicholas Breton, *The Good and the Badde, Or Descriptions of the Worthies, and Unworthies of this Age. Where the Best may see their Graces, and the Worst discern their Baseness* (London: Printed by George Purslowe for Iohn Budge, and are to be sold at the great South-dore of Paules, and at Brittaines Bursse, 1616), 30.

of madnesse, a sparke of mischiefe, a tutch of poyson, and a feare of destruction.’⁸² The fact that Breton referred to a good wife as a ‘booke of Huswifery’ indicates that these types of books were seen as embodying and reflecting certain feminine virtues.

This manifestation of sexuality was often explicitly connected to romance reading.

Richard Brathwaite, the Kendal-born author of the conduct manual *The English Gentlewoman*, which is often said to be the first conduct book specifically aimed at women.⁸³ Books and reading were central to his construction of an ideal gentlewoman, provided they were the right books.⁸⁴ Brathwaite claimed that ‘*Books* treating of light subjects, are Nurseries of wantonnesse [...] *Venus* and *Adonis* are vnfitting Consorts for a Ladies bosome.’⁸⁵ The term ‘wanton’ is a common one when referring to the reading of such novels, and recalls Breton’s use of the term for a threateningly sexual woman. Some writers made this connection an explicitly physiological one, such as Nicholas Culpeper, the well-known physician and herbalist, in his chapter ‘Of the Frenzie of the Womb.’⁸⁶ According to Culpeper, this condition ‘is a great and foul Symptome of the womb; both in Virgins and Widdows, and such as have known man.’⁸⁷ He went on to outline the symptoms and causes, declaring that ‘the outward Causes, are hot meats spiced, strong wine, and the like, that heat the privities, idleness, pleasure, and dancing,

⁸² Breton, *The Good and the Badde*, 28.

⁸³ Fletcher, *Gender, Sex & Subordination*, 380.

⁸⁴ Elaine Leong has noted Brathwaite’s prescriptions for reading, paying particular attention to *how* he directs women to read herbals. See Elaine Leong, “‘Herbals she Peruseth’: Reading Medicine in Early Modern England,” *Renaissance Studies* 28, no. 4 (2014): 556-578.

⁸⁵ Richard Brathwaite, *The English Gentlewoman, drawne out to the full body: Expressing What Habilliments doe best attire her, What Ornaments doe best adorne her, What Complements doe best accomplish her* (London: Printed by B. Alsop and T Fawcet, for Michael Sparke, dwelling in Greene Arbor, 1631), 139.

⁸⁶ The womb was often described in emotional terms in the early modern period, and could be constructed as a malevolent force. Various conditions, including the ‘frenzy’ of the womb, were thought to be caused by excess seed or fluid, and connected to lust and hysteria. See Amy Kenny, *Humoral Wombs on the Shakespearean Stage* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019).

⁸⁷ Nicholas Culpeper, *Culpeper’s Directory for Mid Wives: Or, a Guide for Women. The Second Part* (London: Printed by Peter Cole, Printer and Bookseller, at the Sign of the Printing-press in Cornhill, near the Royal Exchange, 1662), 115.

and *reading of bawdy Histories*.⁸⁸ A person's choice of reading matter was seen as symptomatic of a medicalised, uncontrolled sexuality.⁸⁹

The use of the term 'idleness' in Culpeper's work indicates another facet to the portrayal of romances. Concerns about reading this genre often revolved around a misuse of leisure time. It was feared that romantic fiction would divert attention away from devotional duties. The courtier and author Sir Thomas Overbury (1558-1613) declared, in his poem *A Wife*:

That *Leasure* space for *Fancies* not admit:
Their *Leasure* tis corrupteth *Woman-kind*,
Else being plac'd from many vices free,
They had to heau'n a shorter cut then we⁹⁰

Free time that was not employed properly could drive people away from devotion, even if they may have had the capability for great piety. This narrative is a reminiscent of the conversion narrative employed by Allestree and Baxter, with Overbury portraying the vices of idleness and leisure preventing women from achieving salvation. Leisure time and 'fancies' (a word often used to describe romances and poetry) are described as corrupting women in particular.

At first glance, Overbury's *A Wife* presents itself as a commentary on ideal female qualities that a good wife should possess. The poem is followed in many editions by a collection of character studies (covering figures such as 'A good Woman,' 'A Courtier' and 'A Wise-man') attributed to Overbury and his friends. Character studies were used

⁸⁸ Culpeper, *Culpeper's Directory for Mid Wives*, 116. My italics.

⁸⁹ The physiological effects of reading are a very fruitful line of enquiry, and were central to early modern concerns surrounding reading, as mentioned in the introduction. For more on this, see Johns, *The Nature of the Book* (chapter six).

⁹⁰ Thomas Overbury, *A Wife Now the Widdow of Sir Thomas Overburye. Being a most exquisite and singular poem of the choice of a Wife. Whereunto are added many witty Characters, and conceited Newes, written by himselfe and other learned Gentlemen his friends* (London: Printed for Lawrence Lisle, and are to bee sold at his shop in Paules Chuch-yard, at the signe of the Tigers head, 1614), 9.

in some other contemporary advice literature, such as Breton's *The Good and the Badde, Or Descriptions of the Worthies, and Unworthies of this Age*.⁹¹ Moreover, the description of the wife in the poem is reminiscent of many contemporary gender prescriptions. As such, it could be considered a form of advice literature. However, there are debates over the purpose of the poem, with some suggestions that Overbury wrote it to deter his friend Robert Carr from becoming involved with Frances Howard, the Countess of Somerset, by emphasising how little she fit the contemporary feminine ideal.⁹² The truth of this is, at best, uncertain; Overbury's authorial intentions are not clear. Moreover, the character studies were added after his death, as his poem was published by the London publisher and bookseller Lawrence Lisle with the title *A Wife Now the Widdow of Sir Thomas Overburye. Being a most exquisite and singular poem of the choice of a Wife. Whereunto are added many witty Characters, and conceited Newes, written by himselfe and other learned Gentlemen his friends*.

It appears, then, that the poem changed form and genre in the process of being published. It seems unlikely that Overbury intended it to be advice literature, even if it does comment on idealised gendered behaviour. However, in printing it alongside common conduct literature tropes such as character studies, Lisle repurposed the poem. Capitalising on the drama that surrounded Overbury's death (he was imprisoned in the tower at the behest of Carr, and died of what was later suggested to be poison, for which Carr and Howard, by then married, were incarcerated⁹³), Lisle released many editions,

⁹¹ Bruce McIver has argued that the popularity of character studies can in fact be traced back to Overbury's publication, and suggested that Lawrence Lisle, Overbury's publisher, was instrumental in the development of the form. See Bruce McIver, "'A Wife Now the Widdow': Lawrence Lisle and the Popularity of the Overburian Characters," *South Atlantic Review* 59, no. 1 (1994): 27-44.

⁹² John Considine, "Overbury, Sir Thomas," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Jan 2008, accessed 9th Feb 2017, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/20966?docPos=1> Howard had sued for divorce from her first husband in order to marry Carr, a favourite of James I. She claimed to be a virgin, and that her husband was impotent towards her, but the divorce and subsequent marriage to Carr was seen as a scandal, and rumours abounded that Howard had cheated her virginity examination. For a full account see David Lindley, *The Trials of Frances Howard: Fact and Fiction at the Court of King James* (Abingdon: Routledge, 1993).

⁹³ Considine, "Overbury, Sir Thomas."

often adding new material with each reprint.⁹⁴ Randall Ingram has pointed out the difficulties in drawing the line between seventeenth-century texts that were purely literary, and those that were didactic. He argues that ‘volumes that now seem most clearly literary were in fact immediately practical works for some seventeenth-century readers, and volumes that seem clearly didactic were in fact often literary exercises.’⁹⁵ The generic classification, then, is ultimately placed on the reader, and the ways in which they use and react to the text.

If we look at the character ‘A good Woman,’ as outlined by Overbury, we can see many common tropes employed in contemporary advice literature. He declared that an ideal woman’s ‘greatest learning is religion,’ and that ‘She hath so much knowledge as to loue it [...] though shee vse it neuer the worse.’⁹⁶ This is reminiscent of many other conduct book writers, who emphasised the benefits of religious learning and of circumscribed knowledge for women. Thus when taken in the form in which it was presented in 1614, Overbury’s work can be considered advice literature, at least in a broad sense of the term: that which prescribed gendered behaviour. The work certainly fits with the conventional construction of the pious feminine reader and her inverse, the overly learned woman reader who misused her leisure time.

Despite the ubiquity of these gendered concerns about reading, however there were some representations of romance reading as socially acceptable for women. These were admittedly few in number, but those that did exist appeared in the mid-seventeenth century onwards, and focused on the potential beneficial influences they might have on a woman’s character.⁹⁷ Hannah Woolley, for example, argued for some benefits to

⁹⁴ McIver, “‘A Wife Now the Widdow’.”

⁹⁵ Randall Ingram, “Seventeenth-Century Didactic Readers, Their Literature, and Ours,” in *Didactic Literature in England, 1500-1800: Expertise Constructed*, ed. Natasha Glaisyer and Sara Pennell (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003), 63.

⁹⁶ Overbury, *A Wife Now the Widdow*, 12-13.

⁹⁷ Lori Humphrey Newcomb has demonstrated the changing attitudes towards romance reading for both men and women, arguing the mid-seventeenth century onwards saw increasing appreciation of the genre,

romance reading, despite her exhortations to women to read theological and devotion materials:

Some may imagin, that to read Romances after such practical Books of Divinity, will not only be a vain thing, but will absolutely overthrow that fabrick I endeavoured to erect: I am of a contrary opinion, and do believe such Romances which treat of generosity, gallantry, and virtue, as *Cassandra*, *Clelia*, *Grand Cyrus*, *Cleopatra*, *Parthenessa*, not omitting Sir *Philip Sydney's* *Arcadia*, are Books altogether worthy of their Observation. There are few Ladies mention'd therein, but are character'd what they ought to be; the magnanimity, virtue, gallantry, patience, constancy, and courage of the men, might intitle them worthy Husbands to the most deserving of the female sex.⁹⁸

Woolley here rejected the binary created by so many religious and secular conduct writers between devotional and romantic literature. The concept of romantic reading being transformative, as seen in Allestree's work, was still present, but she turned the idea on its head, and instead saw these novels as having the potential to improve women's characters by presenting exemplary figures in the text. She connected the romance genre to the qualities of 'generosity, gallantry and virtue,' reminiscent of the chivalric tradition, and argued that it presented female characters that were patient, constant and courageous. Lori Humphrey Newcomb has suggested that empathetic reading habits were increasingly accepted towards the end of the seventeenth century,

connected to the rise and respectability of leisure reading practices. See Lori Humphrey Newcomb, "Gendering Prose Romance in Renaissance England," in *A Companion to Romance: From Classical to Contemporary*, ed. Corinne Saunders (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2004), 121-139.

⁹⁸ Hannah Woolley, *The Gentlewomans Companion; O, A Guide to the Female Sex: Containing Directions of Behaviour, in all Places, Companies, Relations, and Conditions, from their Childhood down to Old Age: Viz. As, Children to Parents. Scholars to Governours. Single to Servants. Virgins to Suitors. Married to Husbands. Huswives to the House. Mistresses to the Servants. Mothers to Children. Widows to the World. Prudent to all. With Letters and Discourses upon all Occasions. Whereunto is added, A Guide for Cook-Maids, Dairy-Maids, Chamber-Maids, and all others that go to Service. The whole being an exact Rule for the Female Sex in General* (London: Printed by A. Maxwell for Dorman Nowman at the Kings-Arms in the Poultry, 1673), 9.

suggesting a development in the idea of reading for profit. While originally ‘profit’ tended to be framed in scholarly terms, Newcomb argues that by the later seventeenth-century ‘profit’ could be more emotional, intertwined with the idea of reading for pleasure.⁹⁹ The idea of pleasurable profit cannot be seen in Woolley’s work, but this recognition of the potential beneficial effects of an empathetic reading of romance is an early stage of that development. Woolley did, however, recognise the dangers of other types of reading in her section ‘Of wanton Songs and idle Ballads,’ in which she also discussed poetry and plays along with the eponymous genres:

Ladies, accuse me not of too much severity, in endeavouring to take away this too much accustomed delight in singing wanton, though witty Sonnets: I say excuse me rather, since I aim at nothing more than your welfare. I know your inclinations as you are young and youthful, tend rather to these things, than what is more serious; and are apt to read those Books which rather corrupt and deprave good manners than teach them.¹⁰⁰

Woolley therefore set up a distinction between various genres in which romances actually depicted idealised models of female – and male – behaviour, while certain songs and ballads are the more problematic genre.¹⁰¹ She did not deny that books had the power to corrupt, but she chose not to replicate the common association between this corruption and romantic fiction.

Arguments about women’s reading, alongside discussions about character and the fear of corruption, also focused on prescriptions for women’s education. While the picture in the historiography again is one of confinement and limitation, in fact this was a

⁹⁹ Newcomb, “Gendering Prose Romance,” 137.

¹⁰⁰ Woolley, *A Gentlewoman’s Companion*, 77.

¹⁰¹ For more on women, reading and ballads see Sandra Clark, “The Broadside Ballad and the Woman’s Voice,” in *Debating Gender in Early Modern England 1500-1700*, ed. Cristina Malcolmson and Mihoko Suzuki (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), 103-120.

similarly complex picture, with different writers advocating varying levels of education and appropriate subjects. As Shoemaker and others have demonstrated, women's intelligence and knowledge was not greatly valued in the early modern period, although some change in this attitude can be observed in literature from the end of the seventeenth century. Laura Gowing has suggested that women's education was more social than intellectual, but that towards the end of the century there was an increasing awareness that some women would need to financially support themselves, and that therefore they had to be educated in order to earn.¹⁰² The rhetoric surrounding women's education does appear to have developed in this way over the course of the century. For much of the period, however, contemporary writers were concerned to repeat the claims found in religious conduct literature, stressing that women should not be too highly educated, at least no more than was required of them to fulfil their roles as devout wives.

Overbury dealt with the question of women and learning in his poem, saying

*A passiue vnderstanding to conceiue,
And Iudgment to discern, I wish to find,
Beyond that, all as hazardous I leaue,
Learning and pregnant wit in Woman-kind*¹⁰³

Education beyond a basic level was condemned as 'hazardous,' and there was a hint as to why Overbury was so concerned with this advanced learning. He suggested that women should cultivate a 'passive' understanding; that is, an unquestioning level of education. Women were given no authority over their own knowledge, instead they were meant to absorb but not question information.

¹⁰² Gowing, *Gender Relations*, 25.

¹⁰³ Overbury, *A Wife*, 9.

A key part of the question of reading and education was how women should display their knowledge in public. Brathwaite also took up this question of female knowledge, expanding on what is only hinted at in Overbury's work. He suggested that women 'read not to *dispute*, but to *live*: Not to *talke*, but to *know*.'¹⁰⁴ This fits in with the many dictates for female silence in the period, and again argued for a basic level of female education that would not encourage intellectual challenge. It is also reminiscent of Whately's suggestion that women read theological works only so far as they would give them a greater understanding of scripture, and not the controversies surrounding it; women's possession of knowledge was beneficial to an extent, but it had the potential to become threatening or undesirable.

This was not simply a case of limiting the ways in which women used their education, however. Space was integral to this discussion of women demonstrating their knowledge and reading. In one work, Brathwaite argues that conversation could be an appropriate way to improve one's mental faculties: 'conference will singularly improve your knowledge; but that is not altogether so convenient nor decent for your sexe in publike places.'¹⁰⁵ He proposed that the acceptable place for women to engage in this conversation was in the domestic sphere: 'in priuate Nurseries, which may be properly termed your *houshold Academies*, it will suit well with your honors to treat and enter into *Conference* one with another; or in such places, where your owne sexe is onely conuersant.'¹⁰⁶ Women were permitted to learn and to discuss their learning with others, but only in very defined spaces.

¹⁰⁴ Richard Brathwaite, *Ar't asleepe Husband? A Boulster Lecture; Stored with all variety of witty jeasts, merry Tales, and other pleasant passages; Extracted, From the choicest flowers of Philosophy, Poesy, antient and moderne History. Illustrated with Examples of incomparable constancy, in the excellent History of Philocles and Doriclea* (London: Printed by R. Bishop, for R.B. or his Assignes, 1640), 317.

¹⁰⁵ Brathwaite, *The English Gentlewoman*, 187.

¹⁰⁶ Brathwaite, *The English Gentlewoman*, 187.

Brathwaite did recommend some types of learning and literary exploration for women, but this was largely centred on religious learning, and was heavily circumscribed. Brathwaite dealt with recommendations for women's reading in detail in his book *The English Gentlewoman*, outlining various genres and the benefits that might be gained from reading them. He proposed 'bookes of *instruction*,' but said that they are too easily forgotten once read.¹⁰⁷ He then referenced Juan Luis Vives' enduring sixteenth-century work on women's roles in society, saying

Learned *Viues* in his *instruction* of a *Christian woman*, recommends vnto them these glorious Lights of the Church, S. *Hierom*, *Cyprian*, *Augustine*, *Ambrose*, *Hilary*, *Gregory*; annexing vnto them those morall Philosophers: *Plato*, *Cicero*, *Seneca*, &c.¹⁰⁸

For the most part, he agreed with Vives' prescriptions, suggesting that women's reading should be largely religious in nature (with a focus on the Fathers of the Church), with some classical philosophy. Vives had advocated education for women in his work, which was dedicated to Catherine of Aragon and intended as a guide for Princess Mary's education. His work therefore was clearly aimed at a very different class of readers than most of the literature surveyed here, which focused on members of the gentry rather than nobility or royalty, but his work was influential on writers such as Brathwaite. Vives specifically included a chapter on what books should and should not be read, warning against romances and some Greek poetry. He wrote that a woman

should avoid these books as she would a viper or a scorpion. And if a woman is so enthralled by the reading of these books that she will not put them down, they should not only be wrested from her hands, but if she shows unwillingness to

¹⁰⁷ Brathwaite, *The English Gentlewoman*, 183.

¹⁰⁸ Brathwaite, *The English Gentlewoman*, 184.

peruse better books, her parents or friends should see to it that she read no books at all and become unaccustomed to the reading of literature.¹⁰⁹

This chapter is almost entirely focused on what women should not read, rather than what they should, as Gloria Kaufman has noted.¹¹⁰ He did recommend 'better books' for women, which Brathwaite reproduced, but Kaufman describes the list as an 'afterthought,' following the invective against romances and poetry.¹¹¹

As noted, however, prescriptions for women's education were not always clear cut. Not all writers agreed with the limited view of female education promoted by the likes of Bathwaite and Overbury. The Franciscan writer Jacques du Bosc acknowledged the controversy surrounding women and knowledge, saying that

a Lady should be learned to excell in conversation, It may be this opinion will offend at first, that of Ignorant and stupid men, that imagine to make a neere resemblance to themselves, that a woman cannot study nor read without forgetting honour and vertue, at least without requiring a justification for it¹¹²

He argued that learning made women better conversationalists, and therefore better company for men, and saw reading as a primary way for them to further their education:

reading fortifies this good inclination, and those that perswade themselves, that reading is a Schoole to learn to doe ill cunningly, it would become them better to beleeeve, that Ladies find in it more arms to defend, then to hurt themselves; and

¹⁰⁹ Juan Luis Vives, *The Education of a Christian Woman: A Sixteenth-Century Manual*, ed. and trans. by Charles Fantazzi (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 78.

¹¹⁰ Gloria Kaufman, "Juan Luis Vives on the Education of Women," *Signs* 3, no. 4 (1978): 894.

¹¹¹ Kaufman, "Juan Luis Vives," 894.

¹¹² Jacques du Bosc, *The Accomplish'd Woman. Written Originally in French, since made English, by the Honourable Walter Montague, Esq* (London: Printed for Gabriel Bedell and Tho. Collins, at the Middle Temple Gate in Fleetstreet, 1656), 65-66.

more means to Conquer, then to be overcome. Reading and conference are absolutely necessary to render both the wit and the humor acceptable¹¹³

Although Du Bosc was French, his works were translated into English in the period, and formed part of the cultural discourse surrounding gender and education. *The Accomplish'd Woman* was originally published in France in 1632 as *L'Honneste Femme*, and first published in English in 1639 as *The Compleat Woman*.¹¹⁴ It underwent numerous reprintings and new translations in England, France and Holland, continuing in popularity into the eighteenth century.¹¹⁵

Conversation, then, was a part of the more nuanced views on women's reading. Hannah Woolley argued that 'Reading furnisheth them [women] with agreeable discourse, and adopts them for the conversation of the most ingenious, without which I know not how the fancy can be supplied with what is acceptable to the Auditor.'¹¹⁶ The conversation proposed by Woolley and du Bosc was different to that advocated for by Brathwaite, who envisioned a private, single-sex space for the exchange of ideas. Instead, they wanted women to be able to converse in public, in presumably mixed company. Instead female education, in their view, should be used to prepare women for sociability.¹¹⁷

¹¹³ Du Bosc, *The Accomplish'd Woman*, 71, 66-67.

¹¹⁴ Aurora Wolfgang and Sharon Diane Nell, "The Theory and Practice of Honnêteté in Jacques Du Bosc's *L'Honnête femme* (1632-36) and *Nouveau recueil de lettres des dames de ce temps* (1635)," *Cahiers du Dix-Septième : An Interdisciplinary Journal* 13, no. 2 (2011): 60.

¹¹⁵ Colleen Fitzgerald, "To Educate or Instruct? Du Bosc and Fénelon on Women," in *Women's Education in Early Modern Europe: A History, 1500-1800*, ed. Barbara J. Whitehead (New York: Garland, 1999), 162.

¹¹⁶ Woolley, *The Gentlewomans Companion*, 7.

¹¹⁷ Reading was often intertwined with seventeenth- and eighteenth-century sociability. Kate Loveman, for example, has examined information exchange, reading, book collecting and sociability in the late seventeenth century by looking at Samuel Pepys' library and reading habits. See Kate Loveman, *Samuel Pepys and his Books: Reading, News Gathering, and Sociability, 1660-1703* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015). For an examination of Restoration sociability, see Susan E. Whyman, *Sociability and Power in Late-Stuart England: The Cultural World of the Verneys 1660-1720* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999); for the eighteenth-century French context and the role of the salon, see Antoine Lilti, *The World of the Salons: Sociability and Worldliness in Eighteenth-Century Paris*, trans. Lydia G. Cochrane (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).

This emphasis on sociability and conversation gave their advice a specific class dimension. As Katherine Larson has noted, women's conversation occupied a complex cultural space, due to the general prescriptions against women's public speech.¹¹⁸ The acceptability of a woman's speech rested on her position in society. A 'civilised' woman's conversation could be seen as having a beneficial influence on men, but this was limited to women of the upper ranks of society.¹¹⁹ Woolley made this class distinction clear in her books, giving different sets of instructions for women of different social standings. Her advice to servant women consisted of 'read good books,' which in the context were presumably religious, as they were listed with activities such as prayer and hearing sermons.¹²⁰ She gave a much broader curriculum for gentlewomen, retaining the emphasis on religion, but indicating a wider range of acceptable genres. She did, however, also make it clear that gentlewomen should be careful in the books they choose, and suggested that they should seek the advice of those more educated than themselves. She wrote 'In perswading you to read, I do not advise you should read all Books; advise with persons of understanding in your choice of Books; and fancy not their quantity but quality.'¹²¹

Concepts of women's education and the necessity of broader reading habits therefore developed from the middle of the century, with a shift away from Brathwaite's emphasis on knowledge, but without a public demonstration thereof, to the likes of du Bosc and Woolley, who argued that a more comprehensive reading syllabus for

¹¹⁸ Katherine Larson, *Early Modern Women in Conversation* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 30-31.

¹¹⁹ Larson, *Early Modern Women in Conversation*, 31. For more on the class-based variations in the concept of women's civility, see Sara Mendelson, "The Civility of Women in Seventeenth-Century England," in *Civil Histories: Essays Presented to Sir Keith Thomas*, ed. Peter Burke, Brian Harrison and Paul Slack (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 111-126.

¹²⁰ Hannah Woolley, *The Compleat Servant-Maid; Or, the Young Maidens Tutor. Directing them how they may fit, and qualifie themselves for any of these Employments. Viz. Waiting-Woman, House-keeper, Chamber-Maid, Cook-Maid, Under Cook-Maid, Nursery-Maid, Dairy-Maid, Laundry-Maid, House-Maid, Scullery-Maid. Composed for the great benefit and advantage of all young Maidens* (London: Printed for T. Passinger, at the Three Bibles on London Bridge, 1677), 1.

¹²¹ Woolley, *The Gentlewomans Companion*, 87.

gentlewoman would make them more attractive, and be of benefit to society. This was, of course, a distinctly class-specific development; Woolley's advice to servant woman, for example, demonstrated a much more conservative representation of reading, fitting more closely with that which was advocated by religious and secular conduct writers in the first half of the seventeenth century. Prescriptions for reading in these civil instruction manuals were much more nuanced and complex than often recognised; the distinction between devotional and romance reading set up so clearly in godly advice books was less present. There was less concern about how reading affected women internally, and more about how women would use their reading in company.

Polemics and the *Querelle des Femmes*

The discussion of reading for education was given a different dimension when taken up by female writers such as Bathsua Makin, Mary Astell and Judith Drake, as part of the *querelle des femmes*. This four-century-long debate about the place of women was, according to Joan Kelly, where most early feminist thinking was articulated.¹²² In late seventeenth-century England, this largely revolved around questions of education for women. Women authors, such as the three considered here, proclaimed the benefits of female learning, arguing against claims earlier in the century that too much knowledge acquisition could be harmful to women. They were often built on ideas of space, either focusing on the need for education within domestic spaces, or proposing the creation of a distinct space in which women could learn, as in Astell's call for a female academy.¹²³ The concept of women gathering knowledge was therefore more complex than in earlier civil instructions, with the homosocial space allowing for a different view of reading.

¹²² Joan Kelly, "Early Feminist Theory and the *Querelle des Femmes*, 1400-1789," *Signs* 8, no. 1 (1982): 4-28.

¹²³ For more on the idea of homosocial educational spaces, see Nicole Pohl, *Women, Space and Utopia, 1600-1800* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006).

In the 1670s, the scholar and teacher Bathsua Makin argued

I verily think, Women were formerly Educated in the knowledge of Arts and Tongues, and by their Education, many did rise to a great height in Learning. Were Women thus Educated now I am confident the advantage would be very great: The Women would have Honour and Pleasure, their Relations Profit, and the whole Nation Advantage¹²⁴

Women's education here is not only for the benefit of the individual, but for society and the nation. Makin herself was well-educated; her father was a schoolmaster in London. She was a tutor to Princess Elizabeth, daughter of Charles I, during the early 1640s, and she opened a 'school for gentlewomen' in Tottenham in the 1670s, which is described in her *Essay to Revive the Antient Education of Gentlewomen*.¹²⁵ In the *Essay*, she suggested that women's education had practical advantages: personally, socially, and in terms of them fulfilling their gendered role within the household. She wrote:

To buy Wooll and Flax, to die Scarlet and Purple, requires skill in Natural Philosophy. To consider a Field, the quantity and quality, requires knowledge in Geometry. To plant a Vineyard, requires understanding in Husbandry: She could not Merchandize, without knowledge in Arithmetick: She could not govern so great a Family well, without knowledge in Politicks and Oeconomicks: She could not look well to the wayes of her Houshold, except she understood Physick and Chirurgery: She could not open her Mouth with Wisdom, and have

¹²⁴ Bathsua Makin, *An Essay to Revive the Antient Education of Gentlewomen in Religion, Manners, Arts & Tongues. With An Answer to the Objections against this Way of Education* (London: Printed by J. D. to be sold by Tho. Parkhurst, at the Bible and Crown at the lower end of Cheapside, 1673), 3-4.

¹²⁵ Frances Teague, *Bathsua Making, Woman of Learning* (London: Associated University Presses, 1998). Also see Jean R. Brink, "Bathsua Reginald Makin: 'Most Learned Matron'," *Huntington Library Quarterly* 54, no. 4 (1991): 313-326.

in her Tongue the Law of kindness, unless she understood Grammar, Rhetorick and Logick.¹²⁶

This passage contains a broad suggested curriculum for women, but it is worth noting that she still connected this education to a woman's role within the household. Makin had a more complex conception of the domestic sphere than many of her male predecessors and contemporaries, and of the various skills needed to fulfil a woman's traditional role.¹²⁷ The skill, knowledge and domestic authority possessed by early modern women is something ignored by many male conduct book writers, and by modern scholars, resulting in a devaluing of the domestic and therefore of the feminine in the early modern world, an issue that has been discussed elsewhere in this thesis. However, Makin demonstrated how forms of knowledge often seen as public or male, were applicable and even necessary to the ordering of the domestic sphere.

These ideas of female education were built on in the 1690s, notably by Mary Astell, the well-known philosopher and writer, but also by others of her circle.¹²⁸ In her *Essay in Defence of the Female Sex*, often misattributed to Mary Astell, Judith Drake identified what she saw as the main problem in the differences between male and female education:¹²⁹

¹²⁶ Makin, *An Essay to Revive the Antient Education of Gentlewomen*, 35.

¹²⁷ For the relationship between Makin and male contemporaries and predecessors, such as Milton and Poulain de la Barre, see James L. Helm, "Bathsua Makin's *An Essay to Revive the Antient Education of Gentlewomen* in the Canon of Seventeenth-Century Educational Reform Tracts," *Cahiers Elisabethains: A Journal of English Renaissance Studies* 44, no. 1 (1993): 45-51.

¹²⁸ Recent work on Astell includes William Kolbrener and Michal Michelson, ed., *Mary Astell: Reason, Gender, Faith* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007); Jacqueline Broad, *The Philosophy of Mary Astell: An Early Modern Theory of Virtue* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015).

¹²⁹ Both Drake and Astell are viewed as early feminist thinkers. Hannah Smith has situated both Drake and Astell within the context of seventeenth-century philosophy, arguing for a focus on their Cartesian and Lockean, rather than feminist, influences; while providing an interesting context, this does little to challenge to the male domination of the seventeenth-century canon. See Hannah Smith, "English 'Feminist' Writings and Judith Drake's 'An Essay in Defence of the Female Sex' (1696)." *The Historical Journal* 44, no. 3 (2001): 727-747.

Here then lies the main Defect, that we are taught only our Mother Tongue, or perhaps French, which is now very fashionable, and almost as Familiar amongst Women of Quality as Men; whereas the other Sex by means of a more extensive Education to the knowledge of the Roman and Greek Languages, have a vaster Feild for their Imaginations to rove in, and their Capacities thereby enlarg'd.¹³⁰

Drake therefore saw language learning as the key to women's education, believing that this would open up new intellectual fields for women.¹³¹ Mary Astell suggested that this knowledge of French common amongst a certain class of women, should be used by them to read philosophy, saying 'since the *French Tongue* is understood by most Ladies, methinks they may better improve it by the study of Philosophy (as I hear the *French Ladies* do) *Des Cartes*, *Malebranche*, and others, than by reading idle *Novels and Romances*.'¹³² She went on to defend women gaining knowledge, arguing 'as unnecessary as it is thought for Women to have Knowledge, she who is truly good finds very great use of it, not only in the Conduct of her own Soul but in the management of her Family, in the Conversation of her Neighbours and in all the Concerns of Life.'¹³³ Astell implicitly acknowledged the potential dangers of women's learning, but argued that as long as they are morally and spiritually good they will benefit from education; that knowledge acquisition will help them to fulfil their role in life.

¹³⁰ [Judith Drake], *An Essay in Defence of the Female Sex. In which are inserted the Characters of A Pedant, A Squire, A Beau, A Vertuoso, A Poetaster, A City-Critick &c. In a Letter to a Lady, Written by a Lady* (London: Printed for A. Roper and E. Wilkinson at the Black Boy, and R. Clavel at the Peacock, in Fleetstreet, 1696), 37-38.

¹³¹ For more on women's language learning in the early modern period, see Vivian Salmon, "Women and the Study of Language in Sixteenth and Seventeenth-Century England," *Histoire Epistémologie Langage* 16, no. 2 (1994): 95-119.

¹³² Mary Astell, *A Serious Proposal to the Ladies for the Advancement of their True and Greatest Interest* (New York: Source Book Press, 1970), 20.

¹³³ Astell, *A Serious Proposal*, 129.

Astell also made it clear that she wanted to avoid women developing a conceit about their own learning, and to maintain modesty, in line with contemporary norms of femininity. She argued:

If any object against a Learned Education, that it will make Women vain and assuming, and instead of correcting encrease their Pride: I grant that a smattering in Learning may, for it has this effect on the Men, none so Dogmatical and so forward to shew their Parts as your little *Pretenders* to Science. But I wou'd not have the Ladies content themselves with the *shew*, my desire is that they shou'd not rest till they obtain the *Substance*. And then, she who is most knowing will be forward to own with the wise *Socrates* that she knows nothing.¹³⁴

Astell argued that a little education was much more dangerous than an extensive one, in direct opposition to most of the advice book dictates of the early seventeenth century. She pushed the idea of female learning further than du Bosc, Woolley and even Makin did, calling for a comprehensive and in-depth education, but argued that this would in fact increase women's modesty. This kept her proposal within the bounds of feminine behaviour, but suggested a claim to knowledge and authority in a woman's interior life that was not deemed acceptable by earlier writers.

There were areas where these polemical writers echoed the discussion of reading in male-authored conduct literature, however. In the quote above Astell repeated the common representation of romances as connected to misspent leisure, advocating reading philosophy over 'idle *Novels and Romances*.' A similar concern was displayed by Makin, when she argued that 'persons of higher quality ... have nothing to employ themselves in, but are forced to Cards, Dice, Playes, and frothy Romances, meerly to drive away the time.'¹³⁵ She brought a class element to the discussion of reading, and

¹³⁴ Astell, *A Serious Proposal*, 37.

¹³⁵ Makin, *An Essay to Revive the Antient Education of Gentlewomen*, 26.

attributed these pastimes to a lack of proper education for women, but the link between romances reading and leisure was clear. By connecting reading to ‘Cards’ and ‘Dice,’ there was an implicit connection with gambling and other pastimes that were seen as morally corrupt.

This criticism of romance reading by late seventeenth-century women polemicists was not universal. Drake proposed a different view of romance reading, more similar to that of Woolley. She suggested that girls and young women,

not being suffer'd to run about at liberty as Boys, are furnish'd among other toys with Books, such as *Romances*, *Novels*, *Plays* and *Poems*; which though they read carelessly only for Diversion, yet unawares to them, give 'em very early a considerable Command both of Words and Sense ... These I take to be the true Reasons why a Girl of Fifteen is reckon'd as ripe as a Boy of One and Twenty¹³⁶

Drake saw romances as having some practical benefit in teaching women ‘words and sense,’ and indeed suggested that they contributed to women maturing faster than men. There was no trace of the dangerously sexual element to romance fiction that others writers warned about, or a concern about idleness and leisure; instead, she implied that they were a more productive use of time than many young boys’ pastimes. Instead, romances and reading held great educational value for Drake.

Polemics largely concerned with female education, therefore, developed certain ideas that began to emerge in the mid-seventeenth century. They expanded a woman’s recommended literary curriculum and proposed a form of female intellectual authority not seen before in most advice literature. This did not change society’s view of romances overnight – indeed, many conduct books warned against them throughout the

¹³⁶ [Drake], *An Essay on Defence of the Female Sex*, 57.

eighteenth century – but it contributed to and complicated the cultural conversation surrounding gendered reading habits.

Conclusion

The seventeenth century, then, saw several developments in the advice given to women about their reading habits. The antipathy to romance reading displayed in the sixteenth century by Vives remained present throughout the seventeenth century in the works of Baxter and Allestree. However, there were increasing arguments for its potential benefits, and attempts to understand its popularity among consumers. Romance reading came to be seen by some as holding educational value, and there was an increasing appreciation of empathetic reading habits.

The emphasis on the importance of reading devotional literature never disappeared, but this too changed forms. In the early seventeenth century, women were encouraged to read scripture, to the exclusion of almost all other genres. This was, as the works of Gouge and Whately, and the mothers' legacies, make clear, part of their duty as an obedient woman. Reading devotional works was central to a woman assuming the type of idealised femininity so praised by Puritan conduct writers: that of a pious wife and mother, who had to maintain the spiritual wellbeing of her household. Later in the century, prescriptions for women's education broadened their scope. From roughly the middle of the century, there was increasing recognition of women's intellectual capacity, and calls for more rigorous female education. The concern of Brathwaite and Overbury about women being overeducated centred largely on the fear that they would not display appropriate female modesty. However, works by writers such as Du Bosc and the later female polemicists suggested that educated women would not only be better company, but more effective members of the household and society.

These prescriptions were closely tied to a woman's age and social status. Mothers' legacies, exemplifying the advice given to parents of young children, focused almost exclusively on devotional reading. Fears regarding romance reading did not apply to these girls: rather it was adolescence and young adulthood when women were thought to be in most danger of being corrupted by their reading habits. This was a theme that endured throughout the seventeenth century, with both Astell and Makin displaying concern about romance reading in similar (if less vitriolic) terms to those of Baxter and Allestree.

The women envisaged by advice literature writers were, broadly, of the middle or upper classes. There was a different set of prescriptions for women of the lower classes, as was exemplified by Woolley writing *The Compleat Servant-Maid* to accompany *The Gentlewoman's Companion*. However, the prescriptions were not markedly different to those for a gentlewoman. There was still an emphasis on religious reading, as the primary acceptable literary activity for women and in line with idealised femininity. The main difference was that there was no mention of learning, except religious learning.

However, this is not to say that it was necessarily prohibited. The exclusion of certain genres from advice literature cannot be said to be evidence of women not reading, or not being permitted to read these texts; perhaps instead they simply did not fit the writer's purpose, or were not deemed worthy of mention.

Despite the various concerns and prescriptions regarding women's reading habits that were prevalent in conduct literature, it remains to be seen whether this had an influence on what women actually read. Conduct books were popular, as Shoemaker has demonstrated in terms of their print runs. Wendy Wall has explored this idea, focusing on Gervase Markham's *The English Housewife* (which does not mention women's

reading habits, and so has not been considered here).¹³⁷ This text, first published in 1615, went through ten print runs over the course of the seventeenth century, and was still being sold in the 1690s, despite the genre of conduct literature having moved towards, as Wall states, ‘continental cuisine or female-authored guides.’¹³⁸ However, Wall does not explore the gendered readership of the book. Most books dealing with women’s roles in society were dedicated to women, and there might be an assumption that women were the primary consumers of this literature.¹³⁹ Indeed, many scholars have made this assumption, suggesting, implicitly or explicitly, that prescriptions about reading and femininity translated into realities of women’s reading experiences. Kevin Sharpe and Steven Zwicker suggested, in a passage quoted elsewhere in this thesis, that some of the only books available to literate women included ‘household manuals’ and ‘books of housewifery,’ alongside spiritual or devotional genres.¹⁴⁰ This is the picture of women’s reading one might build from prescriptions contemporary conduct literature, but this relies on the rather simplistic assumption that women actually followed those prescriptions.

In my survey so far of women’s reading habits, I have found almost no mentions of the texts discussed above, or of any other literature dealing explicitly with women’s place in society. Women did not discuss reading conduct books, and they were often not present in book lists or inventories.¹⁴¹ While advice literature did enjoy large print runs

¹³⁷ Wendy Wall, “Reading the Home: The Case of *The English Housewife*,” in *Renaissance Paratexts*, ed. Helen Smith and Louise Wilson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 165-184.

¹³⁸ Wall, “Reading the Home,” 165.

¹³⁹ Hilda Smith and Susan Cardinale, in their survey of books ‘for and about women’ in Wing’s short title catalogue, noted the popularity of domestic guides, advice to women’s about behaviour, and religious strictures. See Hilda L. Smith and Susan Cardinale, ed., *Women and the Literature of the Seventeenth Century: An Annotated Bibliography based on Wing’s Short-title Catalogue* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1990).

¹⁴⁰ Kevin Sharpe and Steven N. Zwicker, “Introduction: Discovering the Renaissance Reader,” in *Reading, Society and Politics in Early Modern England*, ed. Kevin Sharpe and Steven N. Zwicker (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 13. My italics.

¹⁴¹ An exception to this is Frances Stanley Egerton, Countess of Bridgewater, whose library catalogue lists two books by Brathwait and ‘Sir Thomas Overbury’s Characters’. See Heidi Brayman Hackel, “The Countess of Bridgewater’s London Library,” in *Books and Readers in Early Modern England: Material*

and often continued to be produced for years after initial publication, there is relatively little clear evidence of women reading these texts.

There are some exceptions to this. A copy of Dorothy Leigh's *The Mothers Blessing* in the Folger Shakespeare Library bears the signature of both Thomas and Elizabeth Bewe on the back page.¹⁴² It is unclear what relation they bore to each other; whether husband and wife, father and daughter, or brother and sister.¹⁴³ However, Elizabeth added two other inscriptions, making her ownership clear. On the verso of the title page she wrote: 'Elizabeth Bewe is my name and with my pen I wrote the Same an if my pen had been better I had write every letter.' Later in the book she wrote: 'Elizabeth Bewe her Booke God Give Grace therin to looke and when the bell for her doth toll Lord Jesus Christ Receve her Soule Amen.'¹⁴⁴ As stated above, while ownership inscriptions are not necessarily concrete evidence of reading, we can at least assume that Bewe owned the book and felt it had enough value for her to inscribe her name, several times. This instance of inscriptions or marginalia on conduct books is relatively rare, however.¹⁴⁵

Some women also left evidence of their reading of advice books in letters. Elizabeth Packer, a friend of John and Mary Evelyn, wrote to Mary about her cousin Elizabeth Berkeley's friendship with Mary Astell, when staying with the Berkeley family in Worcestershire.¹⁴⁶ Packer said of Astell:

Studies, ed. Jennifer Anderson and Elizabeth Sauer (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002), 138-159.

¹⁴² Dorothy Leigh, *The Mother's Blessing. Or, The godly Counsell of a Gentle-woman, not long since deceased, left behinde her for her Children. Containing many good exhortations, and good admonitions profitable for all Parents to leave as a Legacy for their Children* (Printed at London by Tho. Cotes, for Andrew Crooke, 1640). STC 15408, Folger Shakespeare Library, Washington D.C.

¹⁴³ For more examples of this kind of annotation, see chapter two.

¹⁴⁴ A6r, STC 15408, Folger Library, Washington D.C.

¹⁴⁵ See appendix I.

¹⁴⁶ For more on Elizabeth Packer's correspondence, see Francis Harris, "A Revolution Correspondence: Elizabeth Packer Geddes and Elizabeth Burnet," in *Women, Identities and Communities in Early Modern Europe*, ed. Stephanie Tarbin and Susan Broomhall (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008), 165-180.

She is no doubt a Lady of great ingenuity & so young to have made such a progress in learning is truly admirable her proposal to the Ladies if it could answer in practice according to the theory she has fram'd of it woud deserve to be encourag'd but there lays the question.¹⁴⁷

Packer's criticism of Astell was quite nuanced. She did not dismiss her ideas about a female academy, but rather thought that they were more theoretical than practical. If Astell's ideas could be put into practice, Packer clearly would support them. She went on to say that 'the letters between her and M^r Norris I have read but as he was an author I never had skill enough to admire so I find they have advanc'd their speculations so high & given such nice distinctions about the nature of love as to have few agree with them but many fine thoughts she has express'd upon the subject worthy of commendation,' referring to Astell's correspondence with John Norris, which she had published at Norris' request. Packer clearly read Astell's work closely and thoughtfully, even though she found some of it beyond her own comprehension.

Packer's response to Astell is a valuable resource for thinking about women's reading, and their understanding of their own position in the world. Advice literature throughout the seventeenth century tried to define how women should behave, and how they should be educated. While there may be few examples of women's readership and ownership of advice manuals, at least comparable to that of Packer or Bewe, that does not mean that the ideas about women's status and depictions of femininity did not affect individuals. Advice literature contributed to a broad cultural conversation about gender, and women were no doubt aware of and influenced by this debate. The gendering and representation of certain genres was part of the early modern cultural code. However, we should not assume that women simply repeated these ideas in their life-writings.

¹⁴⁷ Letter, Elizabeth Packer to Mary Evelyn, 22nd February 1694/5, Evelyn Papers, Vol. CCLXIX, Add MS 78436, f89r-f89v, British Library.

Instead, women's responses to cultural norms of reading were complex and individual. Records of reading were part of a process of self-fashioning and self-making, of negotiating cultural and gender norms. In the next two chapters, I will explore this process, examining the ways in which women represented both their religious and their romance reading.

‘She much delighted in that holy Book’: Women’s Religious Reading Habits

So far, we have seen how women were enjoined and expected to read pious books. The advice literature surveyed in the last chapter set out a picture of reading that was devout, and allowed women to enact the ideal of a pious wife.¹ According to the biographies contained in funeral sermons of godly women, some took this to heart and pursued energetic courses of religious reading. Such addresses highlight the particular ways in which these women read devotional literature, emphasising the repetitive nature of pious behaviour and the various internal and external effects it was meant to have.

Funeral sermons began to be preached by clergymen following the Reformation.² The inclusion of biographical details, focusing on the piety and good deeds of the individual, became common in the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and was generally regarded within the Church of England as ‘a vehicle of salutary instruction for the living.’³ Ralph Houlbrooke has noted that only a fraction were published, although this became increasingly common over the course of the seventeenth century, peaking in both late Stuart period.⁴ Such sermons most frequently commemorated the lives of the gentry men and women, but often did so in different ways. As Femke Molekamp has noted, ‘while commemorations of deceased men in early modern funeral sermons tended to laud public virtues, it was far more common for the eulogies of women to

¹ For more on the sixteenth- and seventeenth-century godly community, see Patrick Collinson, *Godly People: Essays on English Protestantism and Puritanism* (London: Hambledon Press, 1983).

² Ralph Houlbrooke, *Death, Religion and the Family in England, 1480-1750* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), 295.

³ Houlbrooke, *Death, Religion and the Family*, 297; Joris van Eijnatten, ed., *Preaching, Sermon and Cultural Change in the Long Eighteenth Century* (Leiden: Brill, 2009).

⁴ Houlbrooke, *Death, Religion and the Family*, 298.

index the personal piety and devotional conduct of the woman in the sphere of the home.’⁵

Temporality was crucial to funeral sermons’ portrayal of devotional reading. They often noted the frequency and attention with which women read in order to demonstrate the subject’s piety, thereby making reading an important part of a woman’s duties as a wife and mother. A model for ideal feminine behaviour was created, in which literacy played a crucial part. But when discussing reading, funeral sermons created a generic hierarchy, in which religious reading was the only type that was truly praiseworthy. Admittedly they were intended to highlight the piety of the deceased, but this focus on women’s devotional literacy gives an indication of the behavioural norms attached to femininity, and as such they can be used to further explore representations of gender and religious reading.

In the funeral sermon for Lady Frances Hobart, wife of Sir John Hobart of Chapelfield House in Norfolk, John Collinges gave a detailed description of her daily routine, highlighting the central place of devotion and reading:

[F]rom the time she rose till Seven of the Clock, she spent her time in the private Devotions and retirements of her Closet; then she came out to the more publick duties of the family, which she never missed, and seldom was but first in the room in Prayer, *Reading the Scriptures*, Expounding, one or more of these Exercises (as opportunity served) and some discourses afterward she then usually spent more than an hour, the rest of her time till Noon was spent in her Chamber in dressing, or in her Closet, reading, looking over Accounts, &c. Sometimes for half an hour she walked. Then she came out again to Prayer in

⁵ Femke Molekamp, “Seventeenth-Century Funeral Sermons and Exemplary Female Devotion: Gendered Spaces and Histories,” *Renaissance and Reformation / Renaissance et Réforme* 35, no. 1 Special issue: Gendering Time and Space in Early Modern England (2012): 44.

her Family, in which, and in Dinner, and following Discourses she usually spent two hours, and sometimes exercised her self for half an hour afterward. Her afternoon was spent in *reading*, or making Visits chiefly to such Christians, as she had an Interest in; or sometimes in spinning or sowing with her Maids. About Six she again came to her Family-duties: in which, at Supper, and discourses after it, she ordinarily spent three hours, and then withdrew to her Closet, for many years together there she abode *reading* and praying till Twelve or One of the Clock: till at last with no ordinary difficulty, she was perswaded by her learned Physitian to abate an hour or two of that excess, for her health sake⁶

This passage makes clear the importance of reading in the day of a pious household. Reading is mentioned alongside prayer and discussion as part of the practice of religion. The emphasis on Hobart's devotional habits serves to make her an exemplary figure. She was following the recommendations given for leading a pious life, which emphasised the importance of both private and communal religious observances in the family. She rose early, and took part in devotions both alone and with her family several times a day. Reading was a significant part of her activities, whether alone or in company, or as part of devotion or household management.

Reading was presented as an integral part of a devotional routine, ideally undertaken several times a day. For example, Elizabeth Hoyle, wife of Thomas Hoyle, the alderman of York, was described in her funeral sermon in 1644 as a 'constant dayly reader of

⁶ John Collinges, *Par Nobile. Two Treatises. The one, concerning the Excellent Woman, Evincing a person Fearing the Lord, to be the most Excellent Person: Discoursed more privately upon the Death of the Right Honourable, the Lady Frances Hobart, late of Norwich, from Pro.31.29,30,31. The other, Discovering a Fountain of Comfort and Satisfaction, to persons walking with God, yet living and dying without sensible Consolations: discovered, from Psal. 17. 15. at the Funerals of the Right Honourable, the Lady Katharine Courten, preached at Blicklin, in the County of Norfolk, March 27. 1652. With the Narratives of the holy Lives and Deaths of those two Noble Sisters* (London: Printed in the Year 1669), 25. RB 441734, Henry E. Huntington Library, San Marino. My italics.

Gods Word.’⁷ A year later, Samuel Ainsworth similarly praised Dorothy Hanbury, the Northamptonshire gentlewoman, for being ‘much acquainted with the duties of Religion ... she spent much time every day in reading the Scriptures, and the pious books of godly men.’⁸ This reading was moreover often referred to as a ‘duty,’ and her regularity and consistency of practice were praised. Women were portrayed as reproaching themselves when they were unable to carry out this spiritual task, as in the case of the Warwick gentlewoman Cicely Puckering:

she made conscience of the duties of religion [...] She was frequent in reading the Scriptures, and desirous to heare them read, when she could not reade her selfe, (because of the soreness of her eyes) and yet she thought her selfe too blame, because she read no more⁹

Devotional reading relied on not only daily use of books, but on re-reading. Timothy Rogers said of Elizabeth Dunton that she ‘took a great Delight in reading Mr. *Howes Blessedness of the Righteous*, and she read it six times over,’ referring to the first major work by Presbyterian minister John Howe, published in 1668.¹⁰ This repeated reading

⁷ John Birchall, *The Non-Pareil, Or, the Vertuous Daughter Surmounting all her Sisters: Described, In a Funerall Sermon upon the Death of that vertuous Lady, Elizabeth Hoyle, late wife of the Worshipfull Thomas Hoyle, Alderman of the City of Yorke* (York: Printed by Tho: Bro[...], welling in Stone-gate over against the Starre, 1644), 12.

⁸ Samuel Ainsworth, *A Sermon Preached at the Funerall of that religious Gentle-woman M^{rs} Dorothy Hanbury, Wife to Edward Hanbury Esq. living at Kelmarsh in Northampton-shire: Who dyed the 12. day of June, and was buried at Navesby in Northampton-shire July 13. Anno Dom. 1642* (London: Printed by Richard Cotes, for Stephen Bowtell, and are to be sold at the signe of the Bible in Popes-head Alley, 1645), 28.

⁹ John Bryan, *The Vertuous Daughter. A Sermon Preached at Saint Maries in Warwicke at the Funerall of the most vertuous and truly religious young Gentlewoman, Mistresse Cicely Puckering, Daughter and Co-heire to the right Worshipfull, Sir Thomas Puckering, Knight and Baronet, the fourteenth day of Aprill, 1636* (London: Printed by Thomas Harper, for Lawrence Chapman, and are to be sold at his shop in Holborne, at Chancery lane end, 1636), 16.

¹⁰ Timothy Rogers, *The Character of a Good Woman, Both in a Single and Marry'd State. In a Funeral Discourse on Prov. 31. 10. Who can find a vertuous Woman? For her Price is far above Rubies. Occasion'd by the Decease of Mrs. Elizabeth Dunton, Who Died May 28. 1697. With an Account of Her Life and Death; and part of the Diary writ with her own Hand: With a Preface, containing a Brief History of several Excellent Women* (London: Printed for John Harris, at the Harrow, in Little-Britain, 1697), 130, RB 231012, Huntington Library. Also see John Howe, *The Blessednesse of the Righteous, Discoursed from Psal. 17, 15* (London: Printed by Sarah Griffin, for Samuel Thompson, and are to be sold at the sign of the Bishops-head in Duck-lane, 1668).

could be quite regimented, with women creating timetables for their study of religious texts.

Frances Hobart, according to Collinges,

was rarely to be found alone without her Bible before her, she had drawn up for her self a method for reading the Scripture (to which she was very strict) so as every year she read over the *Psalms* Twelve times, the *New Testament* thrice, and the other parts of the *Old Testament* once [...] Besides this, that she might want no satisfaction to any doubt arising upon her reading the Scripture, she had furnished her self with a large Library of English Divines, which cost her not much less than 100 *l.* of which she made a daily use¹¹

This detailed account, alongside the earlier passage from Collinges sermon, gives us a picture of Hobart's devotional reading as repetitive and habitual; a practice around which her daily *and* yearly routine was structured.

The practice of re-reading was key to the absorption of religious texts, and specifically the Bible, as Isaac Ambrose's sermon for Margaret Houghton, a Lancashire gentlewoman, made clear:

of all books for constant use and practice she preferred the Bible, telling me often that other Books had their use and delight; till with often reading they became more ordinary, and then they seemed to lose of their former lustre, glory, and excellency; but the Bible was in her often-reading ever fresh, and green, and new¹²

¹¹ Collinges, *Par Nobile. Two Treatises*, 26-27.

¹² Isaac Ambrose, *Redeeming the Time. A Sermon Preached at Preston in Lansashire, January 4th 1657, at the Funeral of the Honourable Lady, the Lady Margaret Houghton. Revised, and, somewhat Enlarged; and, at the importunity of some Friends, now published* (London: Printed for Rowland Reynolds, at the Sun and Bible, in the Poultry, 1674), 14.

This reading was presented as something almost natural; the Bible was the only book that could be returned to so frequently, as it was the only one that would be continually enjoyed by the reader.¹³ It was important that the duty of devotion was represented as something that a good woman would undertake gladly, and not resent, thus creating a model for a woman's both outward and inward devotion. This transformative potential of reading was thought to happen through extended study from an early age, as George Savile suggested, much later in the century: 'Few things are well learnt, but by early *Precepts*: Those well infus'd, make them *Natural*; and we are never sure of retaining what is valuable, till by a continued *Habit* we have made it a Piece of us.'¹⁴ John Evelyn echoed this advice in his direction that his daughter Mary should 'reade The holy Bible one Chapter & psal: Morning & Evening, getting some practical texts by heart; which will both furnish you for prayer, and Life.'¹⁵ Repetition was seen as part of learning in early modern Europe. It was an integral part of education, particularly religious education (both Catholic and Protestant) which was based on rote learning, and thought to help develop one's memory.¹⁶ The routine of reading was central to achieving the appropriate spiritual effect; in order to make a person truly godly, the study of devotional texts had to be habitual.

¹³ This was not the only genre that was re-read, however: accounts (as evidenced in the Collingens sermon above, when Hobart is said to often be found 'looking over Accounts'), commonplace books, and even romances were also subjected to repeated readings. See chapters two and three of this thesis for a fuller exploration of this practice.

¹⁴ George Savile, Marquis of Halifax, *The Lady's New-year's Gift: Or, Advice to a Daughter, Under these following Heads: Viz. Religion, Husband, House, Family and Children, Behaviour and Conversation, Friendships, Censure, Vanity and Affectation, Pride, Diversions* (London: Printed for Matth. Gilliflower in Westminster-Hall, and James Partridge at Charing-Cross, 1692), 5, RB 329955, Huntington Library.

¹⁵ John Evelyn, 'Directions for the employment of your time [to Mary Evelyn]', [early 1680s?], Evelyn Papers, Vol. CCLXXIII. F38r, Add MS 78440, British Library.

¹⁶ R. A. Houston, *Literacy in Early Modern Europe: Culture and Education 1500-1800* (London: Routledge, 2002), 61-62. For more on memory in the early modern period, see Andrew Hiscock, *Reading Memory in Early Modern Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011). For more on the concept of repetition in early modern Europe, see Lorna Clymer, ed., *Ritual, Routine, and Regime: Repetition in Early Modern British and European Cultures* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press in association with the UCLA Center for Seventeenth- and Eighteenth-Century Studies and the William Andrews Clark Memorial Library, 2006).

Even Lady Anne Clifford, who was an especially active intellectual and political reader, was commemorated in this way. Edward Rainbowe, the Bishop of Carlisle, in his funeral sermon for Clifford in 1676 declared that she ‘much delighted in that holy Book.’¹⁷ Rainbowe made sure to emphasise that despite Clifford’s wide reading habits, the Bible held a particular importance for her. Having discussed Clifford’s reading habits, emphasising both her exemplary piety and femininity, but also her intellectual and aristocratic identity, the sermon went on to say that, besides reading the Bible herself, ‘she usually heard a large portion of Scripture read every day, as much as one of the Gospels read every week. So that let her Body be fed never so sparingly, her Soul was nourished with *sound words*, the words of Faith, which must needs give her a growth in Grace, and make a sincere heart.’¹⁸ Religious reading was framed as emotionally stimulating, and as sustenance or nourishment, affecting Clifford internally.¹⁹ The repeated and affective practice of reading as a part of devotion was key to the representation of Clifford as a woman. Rainbowe was using her reading to create a certain image of her for his audience and for posterity.

Seventeenth-century women’s printed funeral sermons can be set alongside advice literature in reinforcing and reiterating a set of behaviours and expectations for women, reminding auditors and readers what they had to do if they wanted to be seen as appropriately feminine and pious. The particular concern over *how* women read their religious texts gives an indication of the complexities surrounding the gendering of literary genres in contemporary cultural discourse. While at first glance it appears that

¹⁷ Edward Rainbowe, Lord Bishop of Carlisle, *A Sermon Preached At the Funeral of the Right Honorable Anne Countess of Pembroke, Dorset, and Montgomery, Who died March 22. 1675/6, and was Interred April the 14th following at Appleby in Westmoreland. With Some Remarks on the Life of that Eminent Lady* (London: Printed for R. Royston, Bookseller to his most Excellent-Majesty, and H. Broom at the Gun at the West-end of St. Paul’s, 1677), 61.

¹⁸ Rainbowe, *A Sermon Preached*, 62.

¹⁹ This idea of nourishment is not one that will be considered at length here, but for more on the relationship between food and reading, see Jason Scott-Warren and Andrew Elder Zurcher, ed., *Text, Food and the Early Modern Reader: Eating Words* (Oxon: Routledge, 2019).

there was a binary divide between ‘bad’ and ‘good’ books or genres, as discussed earlier, there were many nuances to this division. The ways in which women read, and how they responded to that reading, were a part of determining the acceptability of a genre. In this chapter I will explore the ideas surrounding religious or devotional reading more specifically, considering how women responded to these cultural expectations.

Not only was devotional literature part of the set of gendered behavioural norms constructed by advice book writers; it was also, from the evidence we have of book ownership and reading habits, the most common kind of book that women consumed in the seventeenth century. Most book lists and inventories include devotional or religious texts, and often they only recorded such books.²⁰ This may be partly an attempt at identity construction, with women making a conscious decision not to include other genres in their inventories (if they were compiled by the woman herself), even if they may have owned those books. However, this does not diminish the popularity of religious texts, and given the clear preponderance of this type of reading, considering how women reacted to and represented these texts allows us to gain a greater understanding of their experience and ideas about identity and gender.

The autobiographical writings I explore here were written by a selection of gentry and noble women from the late sixteenth to the early eighteenth century, namely Margaret Hoby, Grace Mildmay, Katherine Austen, Elizabeth Delaval, Anne Clifford and Sarah

²⁰ As discussed in the introduction, the inventory of Frances Pawley’s goods, for example, only mentions one book, namely ‘one old bible.’ Inventories: Goods of F. Pawley: 1681. Add Ch 44538, British Library. Similarly, the inventory of Katherine Perceval (née Southwell), recorded ‘I ffrench Comon prayer booke’ held in a ‘Black Leather Trunk’, but not other books. Egmont Papers Vol. XXIII, Katherine Perceval, née Southwell; wife of Sir J Perceval, 1st Baronet: Correspondence, etc., with her brother, Sir R. Southwell: 1659-1686, Add MS 46942, f167v, British Library. There is of course a difference between post-mortem inventories such as Pawley’s and book lists made by the women themselves, and there are various factors which might have affected the inclusion or exclusion of certain books. It is possible, for example, that Perceval’s book might have been packed for travelling, given the location of a ‘Black Leather Trunk.’ Nevertheless, devotional literature was prominent in inventories and lists compiled both post-mortem and while alive. For more examples, see chapter one.

Cowper. These women were all members of the godly community, although of course this changed a great deal over the period covered, and their writings give us an insight into how religious reading and piety was treated across the seventeenth century.

Margaret Hoby and Grace Mildmay were writing in the very early seventeenth century, while Sarah Cowper's manuscript used here was written in 1700. These women were all composing slightly different forms of ego-document. Hoby and Clifford wrote diaries; Austen, Delaval and Cowper produced variant forms of meditations; and Grace Mildmay wrote an autobiography. The emergence of women's life-writing in general has been tied to the development of Protestantism. According to Effie Botonaki, 'the emergence, form, and proliferation of diary writing in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries owe a great deal to the popular practice of self-examination advocated by the Protestant faith.'²¹ Raymond Anselment has argued that women's meditations were often of a different nature to those of men; that they were more personal and self-revelatory. He says of women's meditations that their 'emphasis on the detail of daily life and their attempts to accommodate its narrative express a feminine piety and practice distinct from the reflective discourse common among the occasional meditations written by men.'²²

As will be explored below, the different forms of these women's life-writing produced various different kinds of self-fashioning. For the diary writers, particularly Hoby, writing diary entries and recording their daily reading was a form of continual self-making, so that the construction of identity can be seen as a process formed both by reading and writing about reading. Autobiographies, written looking back at a life, function slightly differently. They engage in a process of creating a self retrospectively.

²¹ Effie Botonaki, "Seventeenth-Century Englishwomen's Spiritual Diaries: Self-Examination, Covenanting, and Account Keeping," *The Sixteenth Century Journal* 30, no. 1 (1999): 3.

²² Raymond Anselment, "Feminine Self-Reflection and the Seventeenth-Century Occasional Meditation," *The Seventeenth Century* 26, no. 1 (2011): 71.

Georges Gusdorf has argued that autobiography is not simply the account of a life, but a form of ‘personal justification,’ a ‘kind of apologetics or theodicy of the individual being.’²³ Autobiographies such as Mildmay’s, then, can be seen as constructing an ideal identity, using her life-writing to shape herself into the figure of a pious woman.

Both these form of self-fashioning, however, drew on contemporary norms of godly behaviour. As Tom Webster has argued in relation to spiritual journals, ‘there is a sense in which the godly writer is already written, that the effort of the diarist is to make experience conform to a teleology of grace.’²⁴ Similarly, Micheline White has argued that ‘women’s religious activities always involved a conscious degree of strategic self-positioning and self-representation.’²⁵ Cultural norms affected the ways in which writers constructed their identity within the text, and more specifically the ways in which they discussed devotional reading.

The works of the women collected here suggest that they did indeed spend many hours reading the Bible, and were at least aware of the conventions surrounding devotional reading. They frequently mention the devotional routine, of which reading was a part, that governed their day, and the spiritual delight that reading scripture provoked. This replication of cultural norms surrounding reading and devotion has often been presented by scholars as women internalising constraint, and revealing their limited literary world. Retha Warnicke has argued that funeral sermons, for example, were ‘an integral part of the gender socialisation process’ and that ‘documents written by Stuart women indicate that a number of them had been socialised into accepting the model set before them in

²³ Georges Gusdorf, “Conditions and Limits of Autobiography,” in *Autobiography: Essays Theoretical and Critical*, ed. James Olney (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), 39.

²⁴ Tom Webster, “Writing to Redundancy: Approaches to Spiritual Journals and Early Modern Spirituality,” *The Historical Journal* 39, no. 1 (1996): 43.

²⁵ Micheline White, “Introduction: Women, Religious Communities, Prose Genres, and Textual Production,” in *English Women, Religion, and Textual Production, 1500-1625*, ed. Micheline White (Farnham: Ashgate, 2011), 13.

sermons and treatises.²⁶ This, however, implies a certain amount of passivity on women's part, as if this was a process that happened to them. Nor does it allow for the many political and subversive ways in which women used and represented their religious reading. This chapter will move the discussion away from this concept of limitation and confinement, and instead suggest that women's representation of their devotional reading was much more complex.

There has not been an extended study of women's representation of their own religious reading before. Scholars have looked at how women talked about their reading habits, but this has largely been done through case studies, looking at the relationship between the reading habits and identities of individual women.²⁷ The manner of these women's reading, however, has not been examined in detail. The page-turning patterns, and the emotional registers in which these texts were received, have largely been overlooked. Scholars have examined the history of reading, and female readers, within Protestantism, arguing that the Protestant focus on the word of God encouraged and stimulated early modern literacy.²⁸ Reading has been recognised, by Andrew Cambers among others, as a part of seventeenth-century household devotion, and many contemporary devotional manuals underlined its importance.²⁹ Women were often taught to read specifically in order to read the Bible (or indeed by reading the Bible), which has led Frances Teague to remark that literacy was a skill that 'served a social

²⁶ Retha M. Warnicke, "Eulogies for Women: Public Testimony of Their Godly Example and Leadership," in *Attending to Women in Early Modern England*, ed. Betty S. Travitsky and Adele F. Seeff (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1994), 170-171.

²⁷ See, for example, the work on Anne Clifford, including Mary Ellen Lamb "The Agency of the Split Subject: Lady Anne Clifford and the Uses of Reading," *English Literary Renaissance* 22 (1992): 347-368; Heidi Brayman Hackel, "Turning to her 'Best Companion[s]': Lady Anne Clifford as Reader, Annotator and Book Collector," in *Lady Anne Clifford: Culture, Patronage and Gender in 17th-Century Britain*, ed. Karen Hearn and Lynn Hulse (Leeds: Yorkshire Archaeological Society, 2009), 99-108.

²⁸ Frances Teague, "Judith Shakespeare Reading," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 47, no. 4 (1996): 370.

²⁹ Andrew Cambers and Michelle Wolfe, "Reading, Family Religion, and Evangelical Identity in Late Stuart England," *The Historical Journal* 47, no. 4 (2004): 890. See also Andrew Cambers, "Reading, the Godly, and Self-Writing in England, circa 1580-1720," *Journal of British Studies* 46 no. 4 (2007): 796-825; Andrew Cambers, *Godly Reading: Print, Manuscript and Puritanism in England, 1580-1720* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

function.³⁰ Cambers and Wolfe furthermore discuss the importance of conversation within the family reading experience, outlining the ‘interactive and social character of this communal devotional reading, where passages of scripture and devotional texts were read aloud and then responded to and discussed by those present.’³¹

Much of this work, however, equates the history of women’s religious reading with the history of women’s Bible reading. In fact, women read much more widely, consuming works of biblical exegesis and controversy, and paying close attention to theological debates. These texts were changing the relationship between the laity and the clerical authorities.³² This potential for reading to encourage resistance and religious heterodoxy can be seen in the Civil War and Interregnum, with the proliferation of dissenting religious communities. Literacy, both in terms of reading and writing, was at the heart of the Quaker movement, for example.³³ These communities have often been seen as significant for women’s literacy, as more and more women wrote and published about religion in this period.³⁴

It is increasingly being recognised, then, that women’s religious reading can and should be viewed in the context of wider political conflicts and questions. Sasha Roberts has argued that ‘it is not enough to characterise women’s reading of religious texts as conventionally pious and conformist: the complexities of religious change, sectarianism, and conflict in the early modern period require a much more nuanced approach.’³⁵ My approach is similar to that of Julie Crawford, who discusses the highly political and engaged nature of female religious reading in the seventeenth century.³⁶ The close

³⁰ Teague, “Judith Shakespeare Reading,” 366.

³¹ Cambers and Wolfe, “Reading, Family Religion, and Evangelical Identity,” 894.

³² Kate Narveson, *Bible Readers and Lay Writers in Early Modern England: Gender and Self-Definition in an Emergent Writing Culture* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2012), 28.

³³ Kate Peters, *Print Culture and the Early Quakers* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

³⁴ See, for example, Peters, *Print Culture and the Early Quakers*.

³⁵ Sasha Roberts, “Reading in Early Modern England: Contexts and Problems,” *Critical Survey* 12, no. 2 (2000): 4.

³⁶ Julie Crawford, “Reconsidering Early Modern Women’s Reading, or, how Margaret Hoby Read her de Mornay,” *The Huntington Library Quarterly* 73, no. 2 (2010): 193-223.

intertwining of religion and politics in this period, and the prominent role played by religion in major political conflicts such as the Civil War, negates any easy connection between religious reading and obedient domesticity. Moreover, Crawford has argued that documents such as spiritual diaries were ‘used for public, political purposes’ and often ‘written and circulated as hagiography or in support of a Presbyterian or Nonconformist movement, many of these scribal texts were even meant to be read aloud in other congregations.’³⁷ She concludes, through studying Margaret Hoby’s diary (using the same approach, although the diary was written much earlier, in the 1600s), that ‘recording one’s reading was a way of registering and affirming religious and political alliances.’³⁸ I want to expand on this point. Recording reading was not only a way of indicating religio-political sympathies, but also a way of demonstrating a political and theological identity. The second section this chapter will examine the theological reading of the women mentioned above, and then turn to the letters of Anne Sadleir, the literary patron and staunch Anglican, to examine how women could form a highly politicised religious identity within their personal writings.

Habit and Joy: Women’s Devotional Reading

Two strands emerge when looking at women’s presentation of their devotional reading: the habitual nature of such reading, and the emotion reactions that occurred in response to it. The portrayals surveyed here all replicated the conversation about reading that we saw both in the funeral sermons above, and the godly advice literature surveyed in chapter five. Timothy Rogers outlined the figure of an ideal virtuous woman in *The Character of a Good Woman*, his funeral sermon for Elizabeth Dunton (quoted above). He stated that ‘In her Closet she pleases her self with sweet and serious Meditations, and for these she fetches Matter from the Holy Scriptures; which she diligently reads,

³⁷ Crawford, “Reconsidering Early Modern Women’s Reading,” 223.

³⁸ Crawford, “Reconsidering Early Modern Women’s Reading,” 223.

and which she dearly loves above all other Books.’³⁹ This exemplifies much of the advice directed at women for devotion and reading scripture: it should be done ‘diligently’; she should ‘dearly love’ scripture ‘above all other Books.’⁴⁰ As will be seen below, many women strove to demonstrate these practices in their diaries and autobiographies.

These self-authored documents often reveal a pattern of repeated reading. One of the most common references to reading of any kind in these texts took the form of women noting their daily religious exercises. In these passages, reading was included as one form of devotion, alongside prayer and listening to sermons. This was frequently in list form, in a rote-like expression of religious routine. Margaret Hoby’s diary exemplifies this.⁴¹ It is the earliest surviving example of an Englishwoman’s diary, and is a rich source for scholars of early modern reading. Consequently, Hoby appears frequently in histories of reading. Several scholars have investigated how Hoby’s reading practices reflect the communal and proselytising religious culture in which she lived. In almost every entry, when she recounted her day, it revolved around prayer, reading and household duties. For example, in the entry for the 3rd August 1600, she wrote:

After priuat praers I did read and went about the house, and, after I had broken my fast, I went to the church: when I Came home I praied: after, dined: and then I talked and reed to some good wiffes that was with me: after, I walked with Mr Hoby, and praied, and then I went againe to the church, and, after, I reed of the testement: and then I talked with Mr Rhodes [her private chaplain] and, after,

³⁹ Rogers, *The Character of a Good Woman*, 13, RB 231012, Huntington Library.

⁴⁰ Adrian Johns has argued that habit and routine were seen as central to controlling immoral and unhealthy passions in the early modern period, and that habituation was fundamental to reading. See Adrian Johns, *The Nature of the Book: Print and Knowledge in the Making* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 405-406.

⁴¹ For more on Hoby, see chapter two.

went to priuatt examination and praier, and then to supper: after, to publeck praers, then to priuatt, and lastly to bed.⁴²

This was a Sunday, so her religious activities would have taken precedence, but most days followed this same pattern, although on weekdays Hoby did not attend church so often. Reading in some form or another was a part of her religious observances. Hoby's diary gives an image of her following the recommendations for a good woman practically to the letter, with her descriptions of her daily routine reflecting that advised in godly advice literature and described in funeral sermons.⁴³

The way in which women recorded devotional reading reflects the way in which they read scripture. The method of reading in which texts were read and re-read on a daily basis is echoed in the presentation of reading in diaries as part of a catalogue of daily activities. In Hoby's diary, the entries are repetitive, following a similar written structure each time. As Sharon Cadman Seelig has noted, you could practically pick a date at random, and find evidence of this routine.⁴⁴

For example, the entry from 29th August 1599 was strikingly similar to that of a year later, quoted above. Hoby wrote that

After priuat praier I reed of the bible and wrought till dinner time, before which I praied: and, after dinner, I continewed my ordenarie Course of working, reading, and dispossinge of busenes in the House, till after 5:, at which time I praied, read a sermon, and examened my selfe'⁴⁵

⁴² Margaret Hoby, *The Diary of Lady Margaret Hoby*, ed. Dorothy M. Meads (London: George Routledge & Sons, Ltd, 1930), 136.

⁴³ While Hoby's diary was written before most of the material surveyed in this chapter and chapter five, it is clear that she was part of this conversation about godly reading and women that was developing during the early modern period.

⁴⁴ Sharon Cadman Seelig, *Autobiography and Gender in Early Modern Literature: Reading Women's Lives, 1600-1680* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 16.

⁴⁵ Hoby, *The Diary of Lady Margaret Hoby*, 67.

Many of her entries over the first two years of her surviving diary followed this pattern, with little variation. From about mid-1601 this changed, with Hoby providing less and less information in each entry. On the 9th April 1601 she simply wrote: ‘thes day I Continewed my ordenarie exercises, I praise god, without sicknes or trouble: and so, like wise, the 10 and :11: day.’⁴⁶ These ‘exercises’ were clearly the normal activities she undertook as part of her household routine, as an earlier entry made clear: ‘this day, for prainge, readinge, and workinge, I Continewed my ordenarie exercises.’⁴⁷ She used the phrase ‘my accustomed exercises’ often thereafter, demonstrating the repeated and habitual nature of the activities.

Hoby did not give many details about the specific sections of the Bible she read, or the pattern of her re-reading. Other women’s texts provide a more detailed explanation of what they read and when. Grace Mildmay (1552-1620), the Northamptonshire gentlewoman medical practitioner and memoirist, began her autobiography by declaring

I have found by experience [and] I commend unto my children as approved, this to be the best course to set ourselves in from the beginning unto the end of our lives. That is to say: first to begin with the scriptures to read them with all diligence and humility, as a disciple, continually every day in some measure until we have gone through the whole book of God from the first of Genesis unto the last of the Revelation and then begin again and so over and over without weariness.⁴⁸

Mildmay’s recommendation to her children reflected the ideal that women should try to meet. She very clearly set out a course of reading that ran from Genesis to Revelation

⁴⁶ Hoby, *The Diary of Lady Margaret Hoby*, 168.

⁴⁷ Hoby, *The Diary of Lady Margaret Hoby*, 166.

⁴⁸ Linda Pollock, ed., *With Faith and Physic : the Life of a Tudor Gentlewoman, Lady Grace Mildmay, 1552-1620* (London: Collins & Brown, 1993), 23. Women were not the only ones to practise this ordered, habitual method of reading scripture. Nehemiah Wallington, for example, recorded reading a chapter of the Bible every night. See Nehemiah Wallington, *The Notebooks of Nehemiah Wallington, 1618-1654: A Selection*, ed. David Booy (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007), 267, 272.

and then started again, whereas Hoby never revealed how she read, not specifying the individual passages or whether she read the text continuously from beginning to end. Instead, she wrote, much more vaguely, 'I reed of the bible.'

Sarah Cowper (1644-1720), the diarist and pious Anglican, also noted of her repeated reading practices in one of her religious miscellanies:

In the month of May 1700, I began to read two Chapters a Day in the Holy Bible, one out of the Old, and one out of the New Testament taking Notes and Observations entirely from my own Memory and Meditation, without looking into the interpretation of others, or any comentator whatsoever. This I say because mistakes or Errours there found, may be imputed to my own weakness and Ignorance, to which indeed they will wholly belong.⁴⁹

The structured and habitual nature of her reading was strikingly similar to that of Hoby and Mildmay, despite Cowper writing nearly one hundred years later. However, many of Cowper's specific methods of reading were different. Cowper read the Old and the New Testament simultaneously, taking notes as she went. Hoby and Mildmay both mentioned note-taking as a tool to reading and comprehension, although Cowper was much clearer about the specifics of this practice. Cowper's reading curriculum, however, bears resemblance to Frances Hobart's reading, as described by Collinges, when she set out to read the New Testament, Old Testament and the Psalms a certain number of times a year.

Cowper's record of her reading was not as repetitive as Hoby's, but this reference to the pattern of her reading life reveals the similarities. Godly women diarists and

⁴⁹ Sarah Cowper, *Miscellany*, D/EP F44, 87, Hertfordshire Local Studies and Archives, Hertford.

autobiographers may not always have chosen to outline their routine in the detail Hoby did, but they probably still followed, or aspired to follow, similar devotional patterns.

This sets the practice of devotional reading apart from that of other printed books. It is unlikely that this repeated, extensive method of reading would have been practised with other genres, at least for women.⁵⁰ Repeated use of religious texts was envisioned as a lifetime effort, even if in reality the dedication to this task may have varied over time. Reading was not seen as an activity for its own sake, or even on its own: it was part of a series of habitual devotional behaviours. This complicates our idea of how women read in the early modern period, and suggests that perhaps we should be distinguishing between different types of reading that are practised for different genres, something which is rarely considered in studies of early modern reading habits.

These texts recounting reading were not passive records. To a greater or lesser extent, they were part of process of self-fashioning. By emphasising the central place of devotional reading in their daily routine, women could underline their conformity to the feminine ideal presented by both conduct book writers and the writers of funeral sermons, and make themselves into a godly woman. They engaged in a performance of gender, acting out their femininity through repeated reading and the recording thereof.

This self-fashioning could take different forms, as mentioned in the introduction.

Hoby's diary reveals a process of self-making and self-accounting, which continually created the self as she wrote. As Seelig has argued, 'Hoby's is a spiritual diary, not in the sense of recording the content of her spiritual exercises but rather their very existence. In other words, it was a form of self-monitoring, of record keeping undertaken apparently as a spur to devotional observance.'⁵¹ Hoby was hard on herself

⁵⁰ As mentioned earlier, repetition was often seen as key to education, so for young men undergoing a humanist schooling repetition and re-reading would have been familiar.

⁵¹ Sharon Cadman Seelig, *Autobiography and Gender in Early Modern Literature: Reading Women's Lives, 1600-1680* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 16.

when she did not live up to the task she has set herself. On one occasion she noted her failure to read, and condemned herself for it: ‘nothings reading nor profiting my selfe or any, the Lord pardon my ommitiōnes and Commissions, and giue me his spiritt to be wacthfull to redeme the time.’⁵²

Hoby was participating in a form of self-fashioning whereby the presentation of the self and of identity was continually developing, and was formed by the act of writing about reading on a regular basis. Mildmay’s autobiography, however, reveals a different construction of identity. She wrote it between 1617 and 1620, when she died at age sixty-eight. The document was therefore looking back at her life, and she used reading and writing as a way of crafting a pious identity for herself, shaping the ‘self’ within the text into a certain form.

This self-construction was not a purely private exercise. These texts were also modes of self-presentation in which women crafted an identity for others, and with others.

Reading was often done in company. Anne Clifford, for example wrote in her diary in 1624 that ‘Mr Grasty said Common Prayers and read a Chapter and sung a Psalm in my chamber to mee and my family (as usually is done upon Sundays).’⁵³ Not only was reading tied to the structure of her week here (it is ‘usually’ done on a Sunday), but the importance of communal reading was made clear.⁵⁴ Clifford’s aural reading was aided by ‘Mr Grasty,’ the local parson, and his reading was heard by both Clifford and her family, demonstrating the shared nature of the family’s devotions.

Similarly, Hoby’s diary reveals that reading was an important component of her relationships with local women and members of her household, including her chaplain

⁵² Hoby, *The Diary of Lady Margaret Hoby*, 69-70.

⁵³ Anne Clifford, *The Diaries of Lady Anne Clifford*, ed. D. J. H. Clifford (Stroud: Sutton Publishing Ltd, 1990), 265.

⁵⁴ Clifford’s reading of romances and other texts was similarly communal and often aural – see chapter two.

Richard Rhodes.⁵⁵ Mary Ellen Lamb has characterised Hoby's reading practices as essentially relational.⁵⁶ As Lamb has argued, 'the centrality of her chaplain Mr. Rhodes to her reading, and even to her writing of her diary, breaks down any simple binary between communal and private reading'.⁵⁷ Hoby's diary roughly corresponds with the period of Rhodes' residence in her household, and begins to lose direction after he left, becoming sparser from mid-1601. Scholars have begun to question the 'privileging of the individualistic male self over the relational model more common to women' in the historiography of early modern autobiographical writings.⁵⁸ Hoby's reliance on this communal mode of reading and interpretation was central to her portrayal of her devotion. Hoby's accounting and presentation of herself was not solely for her, but also for Rhodes. The expectation of him as an audience no doubt directly influenced the identity she was fashioning.

Emotional response was a second, highly significant, part of women's devotional reading. The record of godly women's reactions to religious texts reflects a particularly pious form of femininity, which was outlined by writers of godly advice books. An emotional or internal reaction to devotional literature was expected from women.

Dorothy Leigh made the ideal effect on the reader clear, instructing her audience 'euer when you begin to read any part of the scripture, lift vp your harts, soules and mindes vnto God, and pray priuately or publikey.'⁵⁹ Reading the Bible was meant to move people spiritually, and increase their personal piety.

⁵⁵ Lamb, "The Sociality of Margaret Hoby's Reading Practices," 17-32.

⁵⁶ Mary Ellen Lamb, "The Sociality of Margaret Hoby's Reading Practices and the Representation of Reformation Interiority," *Critical Survey* 12, no. 2 (2000): 28.

⁵⁷ Lamb, "The Sociality of Margaret Hoby's Reading Practices," 18.

⁵⁸ Lamb, "The Sociality of Margaret Hoby's Reading Practices," 28.

⁵⁹ Dorothy Leigh, *The Mothers Blessing. Or the Godly Counsaile of a Gentle-woman not long since deceased, left behind for her Children: Containing many good exhortations, and godly admonitions, profitable for all Parents to leaue as a Legacy to their Children, but especially for those, who by reason of their young yeeres stand most in need of Instruction* (Printed at London for Iohn Budge, and are to be sold at the great South-dore of Paules, and at Britaines Burse, 1616), 103-104. For more on Leigh, see chapter five.

Kate Narveson has pointed out that ‘we need to recapture the ways in which readers felt their reading to have tangible effects on their own spiritual condition, and the ways in which writing about that experience allowed them to control their self-understanding and self-representation.’⁶⁰ The emotional and affective practice of reading devotional literature was a central part of women’s presentation of femininity in their autobiographical writings. Emotional responses to reading have not been studied in depth, despite the increasing popularity of the history of emotions.⁶¹ Bernard Capp and Alec Ryrie, however, have done valuable work on the role of tears in early modern Protestantism, and the ways in which displays of emotion could be gendered and performative.⁶²

As Susan Broomhall has noted, ‘states of emotion were vital as a foundation to society, employed as a force of order to structure diplomatic transactions, shape dynastic and familial relationships, and align religious beliefs, practices, and communities.’⁶³ Many authors in her edited collection have explored the role of emotions in governing society or relationships, as ‘shared codes of expression.’⁶⁴ This is a slightly vague proposition, but the overall point is convincing. Communities, whether religious, social, political or gendered, have sets of rules governing the behaviour of individuals and encouraging

⁶⁰ Narveson, *Bible Readers and Lay Writers*, 79.

⁶¹ Exceptions to this include Adrian Johns’ work on the physiology of reading, and Erin Sullivan’s work on sadness and melancholy. See Johns, *The Nature of the Book*; Erin Sullivan, *Beyond Melancholy: Sadness and Selfhood in Renaissance England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016). There have, however, been several recent studies on the role of emotion (or specific emotional acts or signifiers) within early modern religion, and I will draw on these here. See, for example, Susan Karant-Nunn, *The Reformation of Feeling: Shaping the Religious Emotions in Early Modern Germany* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010); Alec Ryrie, *Being Protestant in Reformation Britain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013). The word emotion is itself a slight anachronism; for most of the Renaissance period words such as ‘passion’ or ‘affection’ were used in a way that is similar to the modern understanding of ‘emotion’. (See Gail Kern Paster, Katherine Rowe and Mary Floyd-Wilson, ed., *Reading the Early Modern Passions: Essays in the Cultural History of Emotion* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004).) However, it is a useful term for the range of behaviours and feelings signified here.

⁶² See, for example, Bernard Capp, “‘Jesus Wept’ But Did the Englishman? Masculinity and Emotion in Early Modern England,” *Past & Present* 224, no. 1 (2014): 75-108; Jennifer C. Vaught, *Masculinity and Emotion in Early Modern English Literature* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008); Ryrie, *Being Protestant*.

⁶³ Susan Broomhall, “Destroying Order, Structuring Disorder: Gender and Emotions,” in *Gender and Emotions in Medieval and Early Modern Europe: Destroying Order, Structuring Disorder*, ed. Susan Broomhall (Abingdon: Routledge, 2015), 1.

⁶⁴ Broomhall, “Introduction,” 6.

conformity to the norm. As Broomhall states, ‘implicit in the rules of these communities or styles are acceptable forms of emotional control and expression for particular individuals.’⁶⁵ Moreover, recent theory has posited that emotions are enacted; that they are something that is done with the body, rather than just experienced in the brain.⁶⁶ Emotions therefore are performed, often physically, in order to demonstrate conformity with, or subversion of, social orders.⁶⁷ They are therefore governed by contemporary social norms, including gender.

Stephanie Shields has examined how essentialist cultural beliefs about gender effect how we interpret emotions among different people, for ‘our beliefs about emotion play a central role in defining the differences between male/masculine and female/feminine, and through their cultural representation these beliefs provide the framework for the individual’s acquisition and practice of a gendered identity.’⁶⁸ As part of this performance, she has noted, ‘the representation of emotion in language immediately reveals culturally shared beliefs about gender.’⁶⁹ Shields emphasises, however, that ‘neither “doing” emotion nor “doing” gender is a deliberate or even self-conscious act.’⁷⁰ Shields work is not historicised, but the theory she posits about the ways in which gender shapes emotional behaviour is useful for scholars of the early modern period. When women wrote about their emotional reactions to their reading material, they were enacting their gender. Therefore their expressions of joy, or their tears, were a physical manifestation of their feminised piety.

⁶⁵ Broomhall, “Introduction,” 5.

⁶⁶ Monique Scheer, “Are Emotions a Kind of Practice (And Is That What Makes Them Have a History)? A Bourdieuan Approach to Understanding Emotion,” *History and Theory* 51, no. 2 (2012): 196.

⁶⁷ Barbara Rosenwein similarly argued for the existence of ‘emotional communities,’ which she defines as ‘groups in which people adhere to the same norms of emotional expression and value – or devalue – the same or related emotions.’ Barbara H. Rosenwein, *Emotional Communities in the Early Middle Ages* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2006), 2.

⁶⁸ Stephanie A. Shields, *Speaking from the Heart: Gender and the Social Meaning of Emotion* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 44.

⁶⁹ Stephanie A. Shields, “Gender and Emotion: What We Think We Know, What We Need to Know, and Why it Matters,” *Psychology of Women Quarterly* 37, no. 4 (2013): 430.

⁷⁰ Shields, *Speaking from the Heart*, 56.

Many women replicated the refrains common in advice literature, speaking of devotion moving them deeply. This could be about devotion in general, but, as has been shown, reading was often an important part of a range of devotional activities undertaken by the pious early modern woman. Elizabeth Hastings, the Countess of Huntingdon, echoed Leigh's language in her meditations, writing 'Let my heart burne within mee when I heare thee speaking unto mee, & let not the wicked one take away the seed of thy word when it is sowed in my heart, but by thy holy spirit lighten my darke and blind understanding,' and demonstrating the way in which she felt piety should manifest itself internally in her devotional habits, of which reading would have been a key component.⁷¹ She asked for her heart to 'burne within [her],' and describes her spirituality as embodied and physical. This was a prayer, and is therefore aspirational; Hastings was projecting an image of the self that she wanted to become.

There were different ways of manifesting this internal reaction, however, and some contention about how emotions should be expressed, particularly in public. Later in the seventeenth century, with the reaction against enthusiasm, the expression of extreme emotions was condemned.⁷² George Savile, the writer and member of the House of Lords, for example, suggested

Religion doth as little consist in loud Answers and devout Convulsions at Church, or Praying in an extraordinary manner. Some Ladies are so extreme stirring in at *Church*, that one would swear the *Worm* in their *Conscience* made them so unquiet. Others will have such a Divided Face between a *Devout Goggle* and an *Inviting Glance*, that the unnatural Mixture maketh even the *best Looks* to be at that time *ridiculous*. These affected *Appearances* are ever

⁷¹ Elizabeth Hastings, Countess of Huntingdon, *Certaine Collections of the right Hon. Elizabeth late Countess of Huntingdon for her own private use*, 1633, mssHM 15369, f4r, Huntingdon Library.

⁷² Michael Heyd, "Be Sober and Reasonable": *The Critique of Enthusiasm in the Seventeenth and Early Eighteenth Centuries* (Leiden: Brill, 1995).

suspected, like very strong Perfumes, which are generally thought no very good Symptoms in those that make use of them. Let your earnestness therefore be reserv'd for your *Closet*, where you may have God Almighty to your self: In *Publick* be still and calm, neither undecently *Careless*, nor *Affected* in the other Extream⁷³

While this deals broadly with religious behaviour, it would have been applied to reading, as one among several devotional activities central to seventeenth-century Protestantism. Modesty was clearly a priority in the expression of religious devotion, and the importance of space is made clear.

Joy or delight was an important component of appropriate devotional feeling.⁷⁴ Alec Ryrie has noted the central place of 'joy' in Protestantism, suggesting that it almost became a duty.⁷⁵ This was not a worldly joy – Ryrie has argued that early modern Protestantism 'was not *fun*' – but rather a spiritual feeling.⁷⁶ It was important that a woman not only performed her religious duties by reading the word every day, but that she also find joy in the activity, often described by commentators as her 'loving' or 'delighting in' the Bible. Anne Clifford, for example, was said her in funeral sermon to have 'much delighted in that holy Book.'⁷⁷ Elizabeth Isham frequently used 'delight' to describe her reading; in one passage using it four times.⁷⁸ Ryrie has argued that 'occasional joy is more widely and vividly documented' than happiness or

⁷³ Savile, *The Lady's New-year's Gift*, 9-10.

⁷⁴ Ryrie, *Being Protestant*, 77.

⁷⁵ Ryrie, *Being Protestant*, 78-79.

⁷⁶ Ryrie, *Being Protestant*, 78-79.

⁷⁷ Rainbowe, *A Sermon Preached*, 61.

⁷⁸ Anne Cotterill, "Fit Words at the "pitts brinke": The Achievement of Elizabeth Isham," *Huntington Library Quarterly* 73, no. 2 (2010): 234. For more on Isham's reading, see Isaac Stephens, *The Gentlewoman's Remembrance: Patriarchy, Piety, and Singlehood in Early Stuart England* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2016).

contentedness: religious joy or delight was not something that lasted, but was provoked by devotional actions.⁷⁹

Recounting her daily devotional reading in her autobiography, Mildmay wrote ‘the continual exercise in the word of God made a deep impression in my stony heart, with an aptness to incline unto the will of God and to delight in the meditation thereof upon every occasion of thought arising in my mind.’⁸⁰ She went on to say that this course of devotion ‘was the only stability of my mind and my stay and comfort in all the troubles and calamities of my whole life.’ Enacting piety, therefore, often through reading, was the key to feeling appropriate religious delight, whether in the reading itself or the meditation on it thereafter. Moreover this programme or ‘exercise’ of devotion and reading could provide ‘comfort’ for life’s travails, perhaps with the routine nature of reading, as discussed above, providing a sense of stability.

Women frequently referenced this ‘comfort’ that devotional reading could provide.

Katherine Austen, the Middlesex poet, emphasised the solace that she found in reading the word of God, writing ‘O this day in the multitude of thinges I am a weary. Yet then I cast my eyes on this 68 salme [...] Thy God hath sent forth strength for thee.’⁸¹ For Austen, reading this specific psalm was a restorative act, something she could turn to when she felt tired or down. This curative function of the spiritual genre makes clear the transformative affect of reading, and in some cases it was presented almost as a medical remedy.⁸² Cambers has noted how reading functioned as a method of healing or comfort for Margaret Hoby; if she felt in either spiritual or medical danger, reading was the primary recourse. In one entry she wrote ‘I did read a whill for beinge not well.’⁸³

⁷⁹ Ryrie, *Being Protestant*, 83.

⁸⁰ Pollock, *With Faith and Physic*, 35.

⁸¹ Katherine Austen, *Collectanea*, 1664-1668, Add MS 4454, f53r, British Library.

⁸² Helen Smith, “Metaphor, Cure, and Conversion in Early Modern England,” *Renaissance Quarterly* 67, no. 2 (2014): 473-502.

⁸³ Hoby, *The Diary of Lady Margaret Hoby*, 80.

Several years later, she declared ‘the peace of my mind, w^{ch}, throwe vaine affections before, was vnquiatt : at Night I went to priuatt readinge and praier, the best helpes in such Cases.’⁸⁴ Devotional reading therefore was presented as an important remedy, particularly for an unsettled mind.

The emotions tied to this reading acted as an inducement to undertake the repeated and habitual practices discussed earlier. Women should take joy in their reading; therefore they should not tire of scripture, despite many re-readings. In her *Meditations*, Lady Elizabeth Delaval, who had a complicated relationship to devotional reading in her youth (see chapter seven), asserted this repeated enjoyment, writing ‘methink’s there is in the word of God something so inviteing and so certen to warme our heart’s that we shou’d not faile to make them our study, though it were not a part of our duty to do so.’⁸⁵ She acknowledged that devotional reading is a duty, but suggested that she would undertake this habitual practice even if it were not, as she found the word of God so comforting.

Sarah Cowper also noted how she could never get bored of scripture, writing

That I have here sett down these Meditations I do not Repent, tho’ shou’d I read y^e Bible a thousand times over I find it might ever afford ffresh matter of observation and variety of pious thoughts wou’d spring from that ever flowing fountain of Divine Truths. So that what I have here said signifys nothing more than to shew with what Application of Mind the Holy Scripture ought to be read⁸⁶

⁸⁴ Hoby, *The Diary of Lady Margaret Hoby*, 222.

⁸⁵ Elizabeth Delaval, *The Meditations of Lady Elizabeth Delaval, Written Between 1662 and 1671*, ed. Douglas G. Greene (Gateshead: Printed for the Surtees Society by Northumberland Press Ltd, 1978), 117.

⁸⁶ D/EP F44, 87, Hertfordshire Archives and Local Studies Library. This lack of repentance surrounding devotional reading contrasts with the reading of romances, described in chapter seven, which was often framed as a sin or transgression to be repented.

Cowper, in a very similar way to Delaval, stated that she could never tire of the Bible, even if she read it ‘a thousand times over’: there would be more to gain and learn from it on every reading. She also acknowledged that there was a correct method for how one ‘ought’ to read the Bible and emphasised that in writing down her meditations she was demonstrating her adherence to this practice. Devotional reading was something that an ideal woman would delight in and want to do every day, regardless of duty or convention. Whether women actually felt this way or not we cannot tell, but the fact that so many made a point to emphasise their methods of reading and their responses to it, often using strikingly similar language to that the rhetoric present in genres such as godly advice literature and funeral sermons, indicates the extent to which they were in conversation with these cultural norms. The record of this kind of personal response to religious reading serves to emphasise the writer’s exemplary femininity, and partially construct a textual character for themselves, drawing on contemporary gender norms.

Beyond the Bible: Women Reading Theology

So far we have focused on women writing about devotional reading, usually the reading of scripture. This could be presented firmly within the private sphere, divorced from the world of politics and sectarian conflict. Rainbowe created this distinction in Clifford’s funeral sermon, separating devotion or spiritual reading, from controversial religious polemic. He did, however, acknowledge that ‘Authors of several kinds of Learning, some of *Controversies* very abstruse, were not unknown unto her [Clifford]. She much commended one Book, *William Barklay’s Dispute* with *Bellarmino*, both, as she knew, of the *Popish perswasion*, but the former less *Papal*.’⁸⁷ This refers to the dispute between the Italian Jesuit Cardinal Robert Bellarmine and Scottish Catholic William

⁸⁷ Rainbowe, *A Sermon Preached*, 39.

Barclay, concerning the Oath of Allegiance and the temporal power of the papacy.⁸⁸

There was a distinction made between the two texts, suggesting that Barclay was ‘less Papal’ than Bellarmine. Clifford read several Catholic texts, including François de Sales’ *Introduction to a Devout Life*.⁸⁹ Leah Knight has argued that this was evidence of her critical reading, and ‘her willingness to read works infused with risk and challenge might confirm the untroubled state of her faith.’⁹⁰ In the sermon Rainbowe ended with Clifford’s pious devotional reading, and made it clear that this is the most praiseworthy aspect of her conduct. However, despite the rhetorical privileging of devotional literature, there is in fact plenty of evidence of gentry women reading these other types of religious texts, usually theological or polemical. They were used by women to engage with the important debates of their day, and to understand the intense and at times violent political climate.⁹¹

Not all women read against the grain of their faith, as Clifford did, but there is evidence of them using their reading very deliberately in order to engage in theological debate. There is evidence of Hoby reading Philippe du Plessis-Mornay, the French Huguenot writer and politician.⁹² We know that she owned *A Treatise of the Church* and *Fowre Bookes, of the Institution, Use and Doctrine of the Holy Sacrament*, both of which were

⁸⁸ Bernard Bourdin, *The Theological-Political Origins of the Modern State: The Controversy between James I of England and Cardinal Bellarmine*, trans. Susan Pickford (Washington D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2010), 135. William Barclay was the father of John Barclay, author of *Argenis*, which Clifford read and annotated – see chapter two.

⁸⁹ Leah Knight, “Reading Across Borders: Anne Clifford’s ‘Popish’ Books,” *Journal of the Canadian Historical Association* 25, no. 2 (2014): 27-56.

⁹⁰ Knight, “Reading Across Borders,” 46.

⁹¹ Lucy Hutchinson is well-known for her religio-political writings in the mid-seventeenth century, and demonstrates the political nature of religious reading very well. Elizabeth Scott-Baumann has argued that Hutchinson’s *Order and Disorder* encourages a ‘kind of politicised reading of the Bible’. See Elizabeth Scott-Baumann, “Lucy Hutchinson, the Bible and *Order and Disorder*,” in *The Intellectual Culture of Puritan Women, 1558-1680*, ed. Johanna Harris and Elizabeth Scott-Baumann (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 176-189.

⁹² Philip of Mornai, *A Treatise of the Church, Wherein are Handled the Principall Questions Mooued in our Time Concerning that Matter* (Imprinted at London by L.S. for George Potter, dwelling in Paules Church-yard at the signe of the Bible, 1606), Hackness 66, York Minster Library; Philip of Mornai, *Fowre Bookes, of the Institution, Use and Doctrine of the Holy Sacrament of the Eucharist in the Old Church. As Likewise, How, When, And by what Degrees the Masse is Brought in, in place thereof* (London: Printed by Iohn Windet, for I. B. T. M. and W. P., 1600), Hackness 47, York Minster Library, York.

attacks on the absolute power of the papacy and discussions of Catholic doctrine.

Various annotations in these books, discussed at length in chapter two, and passages in her diary, indicate that Hoby used her reading of theology in debates with her neighbours in the largely Catholic area of North Yorkshire where she lived. Crawford has argued that Hoby's reading was 'deeply imbricated with her religio-political activism,' and that she often read in order to debate with her Catholic neighbours.⁹³ This was made clear by one passage in her diary, where she writes that she 'reed and talked with a yonge papest maide,' implying that she was trying to convert her.⁹⁴ It is unclear whether Hoby meant that she read and then spoke with the maid, or whether they read together. The close connection between the reading and the discussion make Hoby's use of her books clear.

Many books mentioned in the diary underlined the nature of Hoby's religious persuasion, and demonstrated Hoby's connection with the religio-political culture of the Elizabethan period. She both used books, particularly records of books in her diary, to demonstrate her allegiances; and read in order to form and support her ideas. In one passage she recorded: 'I kept Companie with Mr Hoby who reed a whill of Cartwrights book to me.'⁹⁵ According to Hoby's editor, this was likely to be Thomas Cartwright, the religious controversialist who was involved in the Presbyterian attack on the Elizabethan church in the 1570s, and advocated a parliamentarist mixed constitution.⁹⁶ While this conflict occurred several years before Hoby's diary was written, it nevertheless demonstrates the intertwining of religion and politics in the period.

Crawford has discussed the tendency to see women's spiritual reading as conforming to

⁹³ Crawford, "Reconsidering Early Modern Women's Reading," 194.

⁹⁴ Hoby, *The Diary of Lady Margaret Hoby*, 105.

⁹⁵ Hoby, *The Diary of Lady Margaret Hoby*, 97.

⁹⁶ Hoby, *The Diary of Lady Margaret Hoby*, 260 (note 284); Patrick Collinson, "Cartwright, Thomas," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, 2004, accessed Feb 23, 2016, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/4820?docPos=1>. For more on Thomas Cartwright, see Stephen A. Chavura, "Mixed Constitutionalism and Parliamentarianism in Elizabethan England: The Case of Thomas Cartwright," *History of European Ideas* 41, no. 3 (2015): 318-337.

female subordination and the domestic sphere, and argues that this is a ‘mischaracterisation of the nature of such reading.’⁹⁷ As she suggests, early modern religion could be deeply political and controversial, and cannot be seen as ‘confined’ to the domestic world.⁹⁸ Through her reading, therefore, Hoby carefully constructed her religious position as a devout Protestant in Catholic Yorkshire, as well as emphasising her devotion and piety, and used her books as tools in theological debate.

It is worth noting that Hoby’s main source of theological discussions and biblical exegesis likely came from Rhodes, her chaplain. The role of men in women’s religious lives becomes clear when they discussed theology. Debates around theology were almost always presented as an exchange with a male figure. Clifford, for example, related an instance when ‘My Lord found me reading with Mr Ran & told me it would hinder his Study, so as I must leave off reading the Old Testament till I can get somebody to read it with me. This day I made an end of reading Deuteronomy.’⁹⁹ This passage not only made it clear that her husband’s reading takes precedence over hers, but that she needed help to read certain sections of the Bible, but not others. Barbara Lewalski has pointed out that we cannot tell who decided that, as a woman, Clifford should not read unaided; or whether indeed it was Clifford herself who wanted the benefit of an expert.¹⁰⁰ However it does indicate the culture of biblical exegesis that was a significant part of religious reading and that this often relied on a male figure of authority.

Elizabeth Delaval also made this point, when discussing how and when she read scripture:

⁹⁷ Crawford, “Reconsidering Early Modern Women’s Reading,” 205.

⁹⁸ Crawford, “Reconsidering Early Modern Women’s Reading,” 206.

⁹⁹ Clifford, *The Diaries of Lady Anne Clifford*, 52.

¹⁰⁰ Barbara Kiefer Lewalski, *Writing Women in Jacobean England* (Cambridge, MA.: Harvard University Press, 1993), 150.

I will also when I have an opportunity of doing it ever read along with the scripture the paraphrase of that learned good man Doctor Hamond, or some other learn'd pious man of our church, rather than trust to my own interpretations¹⁰¹

Delaval was referring to Henry Hammond's *A Paraphrase and Annotation upon All the Books of the New Testament* and *A Paraphrase and Annotation upon the Books of the Psalms*, published in the 1650s.¹⁰² Hammond, the clergyman and Anglican divine, was a leading figure in the Anglican Moralism that developed during the mid-seventeenth century and set out to define a Church of English theology.¹⁰³ This movement emphasised human responsibility and moral duty, was staunchly royalist and dedicated to the Book of Common Prayer.¹⁰⁴ Delaval clearly valued his interpretation above her own, and implied that to truly understand scripture it is necessary to read one of the many paraphrases or works of Biblical exegesis being published in the seventeenth century. She created a hierarchy of readers, with the 'learn'd pious m[e]n of our church' at the top. This is a contrast to the later example of Cowper who, in the previous section, declared that she would follow only her own interpretation of scripture, although she did suggest that the absence of exegesis might lead her to make interpretative errors.

The practice of discussion between men and women becomes even clearer in some women's correspondence. Anne Sadleir (1585-1671/2) provides a particularly good example of this. She was the daughter of Sir Edward Coke, a jurist and law writer, and

¹⁰¹ Delaval, *The Meditations of Lady Elizabeth Delaval*, 117.

¹⁰² Henry Hammond, *A Paraphrase, and Annotations Upon all the Books of the New Testament: Briefly explaining all the difficult places thereof* (London: Printed by J. Flesher for Richard Royston at the Angel in Ivy-Lane, 1653); Henry Hammond, *A Paraphrase and Annotations Upon the Books of the Psalms: Briefly Explaining the Difficulties thereof* (London: Printed by R. Norton, for Richard Royston, at the Angel in Ivy-Lane, 1659).

¹⁰³ Michael McGiffert, "Henry Hammond and Covenant Theology," *Church History* 74, no. 2 (2005): 255-285.

¹⁰⁴ Neil Lettinga, "Covenant Theory Turned Upside Down: Henry Hammond and Caroline Anglican Moralism: 1643-1660," *Sixteenth-Century Journal* 24, no.3 (1993): 653-669. For more on Moralism, see C. FitzSimons Allison, *The Rise of Moralism: The Proclamation of the Gospel from Hooker to Baxter* (London: S.P.C.K, 1966).

was very close to him. This father-daughter relationship that encouraged reading and writing about reading was often seen amongst learned women in the early modern period, with several similar examples discussed above, including that of Thomas Browne and his daughter Elizabeth Lyttelton, or John and Mary Evelyn. Sadleir corresponded at length with male intellectuals and relatives about thorny theological issues, but showed none of the hesitancy about expressing her own opinion and position that we see in diaries and remembrances. Whereas godly women's diaries and autobiographies highlighted certain qualities, women such as Sadleir used very different textual techniques in debating theology. She used her reading, both of letters and of printed texts, to form and back up her own ideas, often in opposition to her male correspondents. This was a different form of self-fashioning, not accounting to God or another reader, but instead forming an identity in opposition to others.

This willingness to participate in theological debate, mediated through reading, may have been a product of the Civil War era. While there is evidence of women engaging in these issues pre-1640, for example with Hoby entering into disputes with her neighbours, the range of topics and intensity of debate was probably a product of the 1640s, and would continue into the 1690s with the Rage of Party (see chapter four). Dorothy Moore, the Dublin-born letter writer connected to the Hartlib circle, often discussed issues of church and state with male correspondents, who clearly valued her opinion.¹⁰⁵ In reading the letters they sent her, she was able to participate in theological and political debate. She entered into a discussion in 1643 with André Rivet, the French Huguenot theologian, concerning the place of women in the church.¹⁰⁶ Similarly, her

¹⁰⁵ Lynette Hunter, ed., *The Letters of Dorothy Moore, 1612-64: The Friendships, Marriage and Intellectual Life of a Seventeenth-Century Woman* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004). Carol Pal has examined how the writings of Moore and other contemporary female intellectuals was influenced by the Civil War period, and the influx of radical Protestant ideas from the Netherlands. See Carol Pal, *Republic of Women: Rethinking the Republic of Letters in the Seventeenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

¹⁰⁶ Hunter, *The Letters of Dorothy Moore*, 21.

letters with John Dury, the Scottish Calvinist minister and prolific intellectual of the Civil War period whom Moore married in 1645, discussed the contemporary political and religious situation.¹⁰⁷ Dury outlined a plan for the state to establish a Presbyterian church government and deal with the Independents, concluding that ‘By this meanes I suppose an end may bee put to the groweing animosityes & diuisions which I feare will rent both Church & state to pieces.’¹⁰⁸ At this time, there was conflict between the Presbyterian desire for a negotiated peace with Charles I, or the continuation of the war, in the hope that the King would grant their demands, as the Independents favoured. In 1647, Dury proposed a treaty between the two parties, and suggested they send representatives to negotiate a compromise between the two positions.¹⁰⁹ This was clearly a deeply political issue, and Dury discussed his plan at length with Moore.

The relationship between Puritan clergy and lay women was common in seventeenth-century England. Diane Willen has argued that women ‘were much more likely than men to develop strong, perhaps intense, and long-lasting relationships with their clergy.’¹¹⁰ She goes on to suggest that ‘emotionally or intellectually satisfying relationships with clergy were one of the few legitimate male-female friendships open to respectable married women.’¹¹¹ Willen has noted that the relationship between the clergy and these godly women was reciprocal, and that the women did not always defer to male clerical authority, using the examples of Joan Barrington, Brilliana Harley and

¹⁰⁷ For more on Dury’s sectarian position, see Kenneth Gibson, “John Dury’s Apocalyptic Thought: A Reassessment,” *The Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 61, no. 2 (2010): 299-313.

¹⁰⁸ Hunter, *The Letters of Dorothy Moore*, 41.

¹⁰⁹ George R. Abernathy, *The English Presbyterians and the Stuart Restoration, 1648-1663* (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1965), 8. For more on the conflict, see Christopher Hill, *The Collected Essays of Christopher Hill, Volume Two: Religion and Politics in Seventeenth-Century England* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1986).

¹¹⁰ Diane Willen, “Godly Women in Early Modern England: Puritanism and Gender,” *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 43, no. 4 (1992): 570. Willen builds on the work of scholars such as Patrick Collinson, who studied the place of women in early modern Protestantism, but convincingly argues that they did not pay enough attention to the ways in which gender operated in (female) lay and (male) clerical relationships. See Patrick Collinson, “The Role of Women in the English Reformation illustrated by the Life and Friendships of Anne Locke,” *Studies in Church History* 2 (1965): 258-272.

¹¹¹ Willen, “Godly Women in Early Modern England,” 570-571.

Mary Vere.¹¹² Similarly, Peter Lake has examined the relationship between Jane Ratcliffe and John Ley, the Chester widow and cleric who engaged in what Lake calls a ‘genuinely reciprocal’ intellectual exchange.¹¹³ Sadleir was therefore by no means the only woman to participate in these relationships, but she is relatively understudied, and very clearly illustrates the relationship between reading and identity in her letters.

Sadleir’s letters show her negotiating complex religious issues. She was not using her religious reading as evidence of her personal, feminine piety, but rather to support her theological position. This becomes clear in an exchange with her Catholic nephew, Herbert Aston, in which she engaged in a debate with him partially through reference to her reading:

this advantage I must tell you our Religion have over yours [...] wee have the liberty to read all bookes as well as yours thou you must read none of ours, but you must confess it as a sinn, and I have read most of all yours that I could git, and I thank allmighty god they have bin soe far from converting me, that they have more confermed me in my owne sum I have read that I must tell you I stand Amased at, one of them is called the flowers of the English saints, which I take to be but the Romances of those times¹¹⁴

Sadleir’s conception of Protestantism as a religion of reading was clearly key to her religious identity, and is a remarkable insight into her relationship to her faith. The letter was part of an ongoing debate between Sadleir and her nephew. Aston wrote to Sadleir, presumably in response to the above (although the letter is undated, and is placed earlier in the letterbook):

¹¹² Willen, “Godly Women in Early Modern England.” For more on Barrington and Harley, see chapter four of this thesis.

¹¹³ Peter Lake, “Feminine Piety and Personal Potency: The ‘Emancipation’ of Mrs Jane Ratcliffe,” *The Seventeenth Century* 2, no. 2 (1987): 154.

¹¹⁴ Anne Sadleir to Herbert Aston, 20th March 1663, R.5.5. f10, Trinity College, Cambridge.

the Protestants liberty of reading all bookes & further freedome of being their owne carvers & directors in spirituall matters & our restraint I confess, but y^e advantage by it I cannot yeald to, y^e effects of it in our litle kingdome are sad proofes of the contrary¹¹⁵

This discussion is reminiscent of Hoby's attempts to convert her Catholic neighbours. Sadleir emphasised that she had done her research on Catholicism, as was permitted by her religion (in direct contrast to Aston's religion, which by implication was portrayed as strict and confining). The literate culture of Protestantism was made clear, and Sadleir stated that despite reading so many Catholic texts ('most of all yours that I could git'), she found it only served to confirm her own beliefs. It is particularly interesting that she used the term 'Romances' when describing Jerome Porter's 'the flowers of the English saints.'¹¹⁶ Considering the cultural condemnation of romances, this was at best dismissive, and portrayed the Catholic culture of saints as fanciful and a fiction, implying that Aston was foolish to have been taken in by it. Sadleir's efforts to read Catholic texts shows her intellectual and theological curiosity, but she used the books as a way of criticising Aston and his religion, as well as affirming her own beliefs. Aston's response, however, made the political nature of the discussion clear. His reference to the Civil War, and the apportioning of blame to Protestant 'liberty of reading [...] and further freedome' was a sharp rebuke to Sadleir's claims, and demonstrates the political underpinning of their theological discussion. Both used reading as a way of framing their dialogue and supporting their views, and Sadleir showed no reticence to debate such thorny issues.

¹¹⁵ Herbert Aston to Anne Sadleir, March 31st [no year], R.5.5. f6, Trinity College.

¹¹⁶ This is almost certainly the 1632 book on English saints by Father Jerome Porter, a Benedictine monk. See Jerome Porter, *The Flowers of the Lienes of the Most Renowned Saincts of the Three Kingdoms England Scotland, and Ireland Written and collected out of the best authours and manuscripts of our nation, and distributed according to their feasts in the calendar* (Printed at Doway with licence, and approbation of the Ordinary, 1632).

Sadleir clearly read biblical exegesis and theological texts widely. She listed some of her preferred religious texts in another, undated letter, saying

I have given over reading many bookes [...] those that I now read, besides the Bible, are first the late Kings Booke: Hookers Ecclesiasticall Politie: Reverend Bish: Andrews sermons, with his other devine meditations: D^r Jer: Taylors works, and D^r: Tho: Jacksone upon the creed: sum of these my dear father was a great admirer of and would often call them the glorious lights of the church of England¹¹⁷

She was writing here to Roger Williams, the founder of the colony of Rhode Island. Williams had been a protégé of Sadleir's father before leaving for the New World in 1631. He was respected for his godliness in New World Puritan circles, but was controversial for his support for separation from the Church of England.¹¹⁸

The writers that Sadleir mentioned, which she called 'the glorious lights of the church of England,' demonstrate her Royalist Anglicanism.¹¹⁹ The 'late Kings Booke' was *Eikon Basilike*, supposedly Charles I's spiritual autobiography, which perpetuated the cult of Charles as a martyr.¹²⁰ Richard Hooker was considered to be one of the 'founding fathers' of Anglicanism after the 1660, and his *Ecclesiastical Polity* was seen by many as a statement of reformed orthodoxy in England.¹²¹ Thomas Jackson's commentary on the Apostle's creed, in Sarah Hutton's words, 'amounts to a learned

¹¹⁷ Anne Sadleir to Roger Williams, undated, R.5.5. f35, Trinity College.

¹¹⁸ Timothy L. Hall, *Separating Church and State: Roger Williams and Religious Liberty* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1998).

¹¹⁹ Many other women, including Elizabeth Delaval and Anne Halkett recorded reading some or all of these texts. See Julie A. Eckerle, *Romancing the Self in Early Modern Englishwomen's Life Writing* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2013), 28-29.

¹²⁰ Robert Wilcher, "What Was the King's Book for?: The Evolution of *Eikon Basilike*," *The Yearbook of English Studies* 21 (1991): 218-228.

¹²¹ Peter Lake, "Business as Usual? The Immediate Reception of Hooker's *Ecclesiastical Polity*," *The Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 52, no. 3 (2001): 456-486.

defence of the Church of England.’¹²² Lancelot Andrewes, the Jacobean Bishop of Winchester moreover, was an affirmed anti-puritan and a proponent of the divine right of kings, which no doubt clashed with Williams’ ideas for the separation of church and state.¹²³ Sadleir’s letter, then, did not shy away from their theological differences. Indeed, she ends this passage by saying that ‘these lights shall be my guide, I wish they may be yours.’ Many of the books mentioned here and later in their letters were published in the late 1640s, making it probable that the correspondence dates from the late 1640s or early 1650s.

In the two letters examined here Sadleir entered into a lively and sometimes playful debate with Williams about religion. This was often enacted, as it was in the passage above, through the recommendation or discussion of books she read. Williams evidently sent her suggestions for reading material, which she did usually engage with, but rarely liked. In one instance Williams recommended Jeremy Taylor’s *A Discourse on the Liberty of Prophesying*, published in 1647, to which Sadleir cuttingly responded:

I have also read Taylors book of the liberty of protesting though it please not me yet I am sure it does you or els I you not have wrot to me to have read it, I say it and you would make a good fire¹²⁴

Taylor was an Anglican writer, but the *Liberty of Prophesying* was a call for religious toleration, something for which Williams was known.¹²⁵ Sadleir made it clear that she did not object to all of Taylor’s works, who was included in her list of the ‘glorious

¹²² Sarah Hutton, “Thomas Jackson, Oxford Platonist, and William Twisse, Aristotelian,” *Journal of the History of Ideas* 39, no. 4 (1978): 637.

¹²³ Jonathan McGovern, “The Political Sermons of Lancelot Andrewes,” *The Seventeenth Century* 34, no. 1 (2019): 3-25.

¹²⁴ Anne Sadleir to Roger Williams, undated, R.5.5. f36, Trinity College.

¹²⁵ John D. Schaeffer, “Tropical Latitude: Prophecy, Orality, and the Rhetoric of Tolerance in Jeremy Taylor’s *The Liberty of Prophesying*,” *Studies in Philology* 101, no. 4 (2004): 454-470. See Jeremy Taylor, *Theologia eklektike. A Discourse of the Liberty of Prophesying. Shewing the unreasonableness of prescribing to other mens faith, and the iniquity of persecuting differing opinions* (London: Printed for R. Royston, at the Angel in Ivie-Lane, 1647).

lights of the church of England,' quoted above. She suggested that Williams consider Taylor's other books, writing 'have you sene his devine institution of the office ministeriall, I assure you that is both worth your reading and practice.'¹²⁶ She read critically and selectively, although her suggestion that Taylor's call for toleration should be burnt was an extreme (and possibly witty) dismissal.

They also discussed Milton, with whom Williams was friends. Sadleir gave opinion of Milton in no uncertain terms:

for meltons [Milton's] book that you desire I should read if I be not mistakn, that is he that has wrot a book of the lawfulness of devorce, and if report sais true he had at that time two or thre wives living, this perhaps were good Doctrine in new England, but it is most abominable in old England, for his book that he wrot against the late King that you would have me read, you should have taken notice of gods judgment upon him who stroke him with blindnes, and as I have heard he was faine to have the helpe of one Andrew Marvell or els he could not have finished that most accursed Libell, god has begun his judgment upon him here, his punishment will be here after in hell¹²⁷

In taking such a hard line on Milton, apparently without having read the book suggested to her (it is unclear which text Sadleir was referencing), Sadleir was aligning herself with one side of the cultural debate surrounding Milton's tracts on divorce, which had been condemned by the Church establishment and Parliament.¹²⁸ Sadleir also mentioned Milton's *Eikonoklastes*, his defence of regicide written in response to *Eikon Basilike*,

¹²⁶ Anne Sadleir to Roger Williams, undated, R.5.5. f36, Trinity College.

¹²⁷ Anne Sadleir to Roger Williams, undated, R.5.5. f36, Trinity College.

¹²⁸ Diane K. McColley, "Milton and the Sexes," in *The Cambridge Companion to Milton*, ed. Dennis Danielson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 181. It is likely from the wording that Sadleir was referring to Milton's *Doctrine and the Discipline of Divorce*, first published in 1643.

which she listed as one of her guiding ‘lights.’¹²⁹ She implied that he was struck blind by God in punishment for his writings, and suggested that he was not even capable of finishing the text without Marvell’s help. Her criticism of Milton was damning and unforgiving, writing that he would be punished for his ‘Libell’ in hell as well as by blindness during his life. By responding in this way, she underlined both her religious and social sensibilities, a significant part of her identity construction, and affirmed her own knowledge and authority.

Sadleir also kept Williams up to date with interpretations of political events, again largely through reading recommendations. This appears to have been a part of their religious debates, as was implied in this same letter:

for the bloud you mention, which has bin shed in these times which you would father upon the late king, there is a booke called the Historie of independencie, a booke worth your reading, that will tell you by whom all this Christian bloud has bin shed, if you cannot git that there is a sermon in print of one Paul Knells the text the first of amos verse that 2 that will informe you¹³⁰

Here Sadleir was referring to Clement Walker’s *History of Independency*, first published in 1648, which attacked the New Model Army and their parliamentary allies for obstructing a settlement with the King.¹³¹ Walker, though by no means a staunch Royalist, was heavily critical of the increasing divisions between the Presbyterians and the Independents, and wrote numerous pamphlets attacking parliamentary radicals.¹³² Some of his works were reprinted during the Restoration, as part of his *The Compleat*

¹²⁹ John Milton, *Eikonoklastes. In answer to a book intitl’d Eikon basilike, the portrature of His Sacred Majesty in his solitudes and sufferings* (London: Printed by T. N. and are to be sold by Tho. Brewster and G. Moule at the three Bibles in Pauls Church-Yard near the West-end, 1650).

¹³⁰ Anne Sadleir to Roger Williams, undated, R.5.5. f36, Trinity College.

¹³¹ Clement Walker, *Anarchia Anglicana: Or, the History of Independency. With observations historicall and politicque upon this present Parliament, begun Anno 16. Caroli Primi* ([London, s.n.], 1648).

¹³² David Underdown, “Walker, Clement,” *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, 2004, accessed 10 May 2018. <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-28473?rskey=nCQKGq&result=1>

History of Independency.¹³³ Paul Knell, whose sermon she recommended, was a Church of England minister and a Royalist. The connection between religion and politics is inescapable here. Sadleir's religious and political reading were used in tandem, in order to understand the Civil Wars. Although the letter is undated, it is clear that the conflict was, if not ongoing, then still a hugely pertinent issue, again making it likely that they were corresponding sometime around 1650. Sadleir represented both her political and religious position to Williams through the books she recommended.

Sadleir's references to her reading, then, did not serve to indicate traditional femininity. Instead, she linked her piety to a more intellectual endeavour, demonstrating her broad literary education as a way to justify her position in the debate with her nephew and with Williams. While not constructing a character in the same way as one would when writing a memoir, nevertheless Sadleir was creating a persona for herself, one which was linked to her devotion and religious affiliation, but not necessarily her femininity. She, moreover, used her reading, still often religious in nature, to engage in debates about the political state of affairs. Sadleir's letters demonstrate the close intertwining of these complex issues in the mid-seventeenth century, and the ways in which women negotiated contemporary debates through reading and letter-writing.

Conclusion

Religious writings, whether devotional or theological, were used and represented in a number of different ways in early modern women's letters, meditations and spiritual diaries. Women could choose to echo the language of advice literature and funeral sermons, emphasising their practices of re-reading scripture and the ways in which it moved them. This created an image of exemplary feminine piety, and helped to situate the woman in her role within the devout protestant household. That is not to say,

¹³³ Royce MacGillivray, *Restoration Historians and the English Civil War* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1974).

however, that this reading was indeed ‘confining’ women to a world of conventional spirituality and domesticity. Instead, that was merely how they represented themselves. They made a choice to use devotional literature and their recorded responses to it to demonstrate their feminine identity.

This is often seen in their personal devotional writings, and is partly due to the nature of that form of autobiography. Spiritual diaries, like that of Margaret Hoby, were used as a record of piety. The idea of recording one’s life and devotions for future use by the writer, or for posterity, had a clear effect on the ways in which these women presented themselves. They conformed to the conventions of the genre, and this was central to their portrayal of their identity. This was still a choice, however, and makes clear the ways in which women negotiated and constructed their own gender identity within the text.

Some women’s letters, however, particularly from the mid-seventeenth century, give the lie to the idea of devotion and religious reading being ‘confining’ to the domestic sphere. Here, women were fully engaged with the socio-political consequences of their religion. Sadleir was not afraid to enter into complex theological debates with her male friends and relatives, and used her reading to support her position. Her religio-political reading became a marker of her identity, intellectually, politically or religiously. It was not, however, a mark of her conformity to traditional, pious femininity. While Sadleir clearly was deeply religious, she did not feel the need to emphasise her adherence to contemporary constructions surrounding gendered reading and behaviour. While this is, of course, partly due to the nature of epistolary exchange and the subjects about which she was writing, it demonstrates the multiplicity of ways in which women could use their religious reading. Women did not only conform to the duties and prescriptions laid out in advice literature, but chose for themselves how to present their identity, dependent on the context in which they were writing.

'Reading unprofitable romances': Gender, Identity and the Romance Genre

Despite the cultural opprobrium surrounding the genre, some women in the seventeenth century frequently did read and enjoy romances. Much of the evidence we have for this comes from records of ownership, particularly the book inventories and library catalogues of noble women. Frances Stanley Egerton, the Countess of Bridgewater, had several romances and works of literary fiction in her library.¹ The catalogue was compiled in 1627, with additions into the early 1630s, and attests to the range of genres enjoyed by the Countess. Works such as folios of Mary Wroth's *Urania*; John Barclay's *Argenis*; *Les Amours de Clidamant et Marilinde* by Nicolas des Escuteaux (1570-1628); and *L'Astrée* by Honoré d'Urfé (a hugely popular work both in France and abroad²), all well-known seventeenth-century romances, are present in the library.³ The book list of the Countess of Carlisle, Lady Anne Howard (née de Vere Capell) also included several romances and poems, such as *Le Grand Cyrus* by Madeleine de Scudéry and an unidentified 'Comical Romance.'⁴ Similarly, David McKitterick has noted the presence of contemporary romances in Elizabeth Puckering's library, arguing that her tastes in the romance genre 'ran true to what was widely considered female taste.'⁵ Women such as Anne Clifford and Frances Wolfreston also inscribed romances with their names, or annotated the margins.⁶ While most of these examples can only ever give hard evidence

¹ Heidi Brayman Hackel has reproduced the Countess' library catalogue, which is held in the Huntington Library. See Hackel, "The Countess of Bridgewater's London Library," in *Books and Readers in Early Modern England: Material Studies*, ed. Jennifer Anderson and Elizabeth Sauer (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002), 138-159.

² Louise K. Horowitz, "Pastoral Fiction," in *A New History of French Literature*, ed. Denis Hollier (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1994), 261-262.

³ Hackel, "The Countess of Bridgewater's London Library," 147-154.

⁴ Hannah Jane DeGross, "Textual Networks and the Country House: the 3rd Earl of Carlisle at Castle Howard," (PhD thesis, University of York, 2012). DeGross has very usefully transcribed the book list, entitled 'My Laydes Books at Noward August 31: 1693' – see pages 206-209.

⁵ David McKitterick, "Women and their Books in Seventeenth-Century England: The Case of Elizabeth Puckering," *The Library* 1, Seventh Series (2000): 376.

⁶ For more examples, see chapter two of this thesis.

of ownership, Clifford's annotations in particular make it clear that she read and enjoyed romances.⁷

There are, however, fewer examples of women discussing these books. As Julie Eckerle has noted, women's 'life-writing' (by which she terms diaries, memoirs, meditations, letters, and other autobiographical texts) give us a good insight into women's reading of romances, but few explained their thoughts about the genre in detail.⁸ In this chapter, I will explore these ideas of gender and identity, and the relationship between reading and women's textual constructions of femininity, through the lens of four seventeenth-century women who wrote about their experiences of reading romantic fiction. These women, Elizabeth Delaval, Dorothy Osborne, Elizabeth Isham and Mary Hatton Helsby, all recorded different responses to the genre, but all used romances to signify some aspect of their identity or specifically their femininity as articulated in their personal writings.

The women discussed here by no means amount to a complete list of every woman who registered reading a romance. Julie Eckerle, for example, has demonstrated how tropes of the romance genre infused women's life-writing, even if the texts themselves were not always specifically mentioned.⁹ However, these four can be set apart from their contemporaries due to the detail they gave about their romance reading habits. Their discussions of romance all appeared in different forms of life-writing: Elizabeth Delaval and Elizabeth Isham wrote spiritual autobiographies, while Dorothy Osborne and Mary Hatton Helsby left evidence of romance reading in letters. Their works largely date from

⁷ Hackel speculates about the question of readership in her study of Frances Stanley Egerton's books, noting that they do not contain marginalia or other signs of reading. She asks 'What are we to make of this absence? Did Lady Bridgewater merely possess her books as objects of status? Were they read aloud to her? Did she read them without marking in them? If so, another series of questions arises about why she did not mark her books as an active reader: did she not consider herself a serious reader? Did she not re-read her books? Or did she, like her daughter-in-law, read them and make notes elsewhere?' Hackel, "The Countess of Bridgewater's London Library," 145-6.

⁸ Julie A. Eckerle, *Romancing the Self in Early Modern Englishwomen's Life Writing* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2013), 51-52.

⁹ Eckerle, *Romancing the Self*, 51-52.

the mid-seventeenth century: Isham was writing in the 1630s, and Delaval in the 1670s, but Osborne and Hatton's letters both date from the 1650s. Unfortunately, there is little comparable evidence from either the beginning or the end of the century. The timespan of this study does reflect the increasing popularity of the romance genre from the mid-seventeenth century onwards, but also the continuing influence of the rhetorical framing of romances from early seventeenth-century puritan advice books, which emphasised the dangers of the genre. Taken together, the texts surveyed here demonstrate the range of reactions women could have to the romance genre, and reflect the influence (or lack thereof) of advice literature on the construction of feminine identity.

The romances that were available in the seventeenth century were only one incarnation of a continually changing genre. Medieval chivalric romances gave way to the prose romance of the Renaissance.¹⁰ It was during this period that the romance became particularly associated with women, both as readers and writers.¹¹ Romances remained popular in the eighteenth century, particularly as literacy rates rose. Some have seen the early modern romance as the precursor of the eighteenth-century novel, but David Richter has argued that they were two distinct genres, in competition with one another.¹² Steve Mentz has outlined the developing culture of prose fiction from which the eighteenth-century novel was born, suggesting that 'Elizabethan prose romances are not, and should not be read as, "failed novels" or even embryonic novels. Their prominence and sophistication, however, gives the lie to the nominal vacuum out of which the

¹⁰ Corinne Saunders, "Introduction," in *A Companion to Romance: From Classical to Contemporary*, ed. Corinne Saunders (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2004), 1-9. For more on Elizabethan prose fiction, see Paul Salzman, ed., *An Anthology of Elizabethan Prose Fiction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987).

¹¹ Lori Humphrey Newcomb, "Gendering Prose Romance in Renaissance England," in *A Companion to Romance: From Classical to Contemporary*, ed. Corinne Saunders (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2004), 121-139.

¹² David H. Richter, *Reading the Eighteenth-Century Novel* (Oxford: Wiley, 2017), 2. For claims that the romance and the novel are the same genre, see Margaret Anne Doody, *The True Story of the Novel* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1997). Jane Spencer has argued that the focus on the novel as romance has often come from the fact that novels, particularly those written by women, centred women's lives and concerns. See Jane Spencer, "Women Writers and the Eighteenth-Century Novel," in *The Cambridge Companion to the Eighteenth-Century Novel*, ed. John Richetti (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 212-235.

eighteenth-century novel rose. Before the eighteenth century, print had already become a major mode of literary transmission, and narrative prose fiction was becoming a major genre.¹³ In the early modern period, the genre became increasingly connected with women and femininity, a connection that has remained influential to this day. This gendering of the genre, and the ways in which historians have discussed romance reading in relation to women, can challenge our notions of the reader as a category, and question where gender lies, whether in the reader or text. The concluding part of this chapter, therefore, reflects on the relationship between gender, genre, and the reader, providing an alternative approach to the category of the ‘woman reader.’

The binary between women’s devotional and recreational reading habits that was common in seventeenth-century advice literature (which was examined extensively in chapter five) became a mainstay of contemporary discussions about gender. However, it was not unique to the seventeenth century. These conversations surrounding women and reading, particularly romance literature and fiction, have continued to this day. The rhetoric surrounding seventeenth-century prose romances, eighteenth-century novels, and even modern ‘chick lit,’ whose covers are adorned with pictures of handbags and shoes, attest to the endurance of the tropes of dangerous or frivolous women’s reading.¹⁴ This language has also been reproduced in historiography about seventeenth-century literature, in various ways and with varying levels of intent. As this chapter will show, underlying a lot of scholarly studies of women’s reading is the assumption that romances constituted frivolous reading, and were intrinsically connected to a woman’s desire for romantic love.

¹³ Steve Mentz, *Romance for Sale in Early Modern England: The Rise of Prose Fiction* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006), 9.

¹⁴ For more on the genre of chick lit, see Suzanne Ferriss and Mallory Young, ed., *Chick Lit: The New Woman’s Fiction* (London: Routledge, 2006); Lynne Pearce, “Popular Romance and its Readers,” in *A Companion to Romance: From Classical to Contemporary*, ed. Corinne Saunders (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2004), 521-538.

Women reading romance fiction are rarely considered under the ‘active reading’ paradigm discussed earlier in this thesis, and the emotionality supposedly provoked by such literature is figured in opposition to more ‘intellectual’ pursuits. In a survey of gentlemen’s private libraries in the seventeenth century, T. A. Birrell identifies many that held books he characterises as ‘light reading,’ which included romances, plays, and erotica. When discussing the library of Sir Robert Gordon (1580-1656), Birrell argues that ‘Gordon was too busy to have much time for serious literature: romances and *facetiae* were for him not really ‘time wasting’ but true recreation, an essential part of his concept of civility.’¹⁵ It is difficult to imagine these words being written of a woman reader. When women read romances they are portrayed in both contemporary literature and modern historiography, as will be seen below, as engaging in a frivolous pastime; for men, reading non-serious literature is a sign of their active lives.

The connection between passivity and recreational reading is reinforced by many of the longer term narratives in the history of reading. As discussed in the introduction, many scholars have identified a move from intensive reading to extensive reading in the long eighteenth century and often connected it to the rising popularity of prose fiction. This model was first put forward by Rolf Engelsing, and has been repeated so often as to become a scholarly commonplace.¹⁶ Intensive reading involved memorisation, repetition, and in-depth focus on a particular text, often the Bible. Extensive reading, by contrast, was a practice that is much more identifiably modern, involving the reading of multiple different genres and books with little re-reading or close attention paid to the text. This is commonly discussed with reference to the practice of reading novels, and deeply embedded with ideas of gender and class, with the implicit (or sometimes

¹⁵ T. A. Birrell, “Reading as a Pastime: the Place of Light Literature in some Gentlemen’s Libraries of the 17th Century,” in *Property of a Gentleman: The formation, Organisation and Dispersal of the Private Library 1620-1920*, ed. Robin Myers and Michael Harris (Winchester: St Paul’s Bibliographies, 1991), 123.

¹⁶ Dorinda Outram, *The Enlightenment* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 16.

explicit) non-intellectualism of the practice. Similarly, Steven Zwicker's claim (quoted in the introduction) that the 'site' and 'gender' of reading changed in the early modern period from the 'masculine world of the humanist schoolroom' to the 'leisured boudoir of the novel reader' underlines this narrative.¹⁷ Zwicker argues that the latter was 'intent less on the production of learning than on the generation of feeling and opinion,' making the contrast between masculine intellectualism and feminine emotion explicit.¹⁸ Women readers have not usually been seen as participants in the reading practices of the male intellectual elite, apart from in very exceptional cases (see chapter two).

However, the idea that women did not read romances in a way that could be considered intellectual or active is not borne out by the evidence. John Evelyn's description of his daughter Mary's commonplace book containing 'descriptions out of Romances' was discussed in chapter three.¹⁹ Similarly, Josephine A. Roberts has described Lady Katherine Manners' (1603-49) notebook, in which she copied out several passages from Sidney's *Arcadia*, narrating significant parts of the romance, alongside excerpts from historical and religious sources.²⁰ Roberts suggests that Manners 'copied the passages probably for writing practice, since she occasionally re-copied the excerpts two or more times.'²¹ This may well be true, but it does show that women used romances not solely as pleasurable pastimes. Manners may have felt a particular connection to those passages, or had other, less functional reasons for excerpting them. Whatever her motivation, the fact that Manners has chosen to include a work of romance in a

¹⁷ Steven N. Zwicker, "The Constitution of Opinion and the Pacification of Reading," in *Reading, Society and Politics in Early Modern England*, ed. Kevin Sharpe and Steven N. Zwicker (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 311.

¹⁸ Zwicker, "The Constitution of Opinion," 311.

¹⁹ Mary Evelyn, daughter of John Evelyn the diarist: Correspondence and papers: [1675]-1685, Evelyn Papers, Vol. CCLXXIII, Add MS 78440, f46r. British Library, London.

²⁰ Josephine A. Roberts, "Extracts from *Arcadia* in the Manuscript Notebook of Lady Katherine Manners," *Notes and Queries* 28, no. 1 (1981): 35-36.

²¹ Roberts, "Extracts from *Arcadia*," 35.

commonplace book is significant, as such manuscripts are often held up as clear evidence of intensive reading practices.

The emotional aspect of reading is important in this active/passive narrative. In exploring the transition, Rebecca Tierney-Hynes has examined the implications of the concepts of intensive and extensive. She argued that ‘when we examine theories, rather than practices, of reading, we find that in fact seventeenth- and eighteenth-century theorists aligned ‘intensive’ with critical, distant reading, and ‘extensive’ with absorptive, seductive and unreflective reading.’²² The alignment of ‘absorptive’ and ‘unreflective,’ in opposition to ‘critical’ is key to the gendered distinctions between types of reading. As seen in chapter five, fears about novel reading often centred on the emotional response readers may have had, with that response being framed as at best unthinking, and at worst an incitement of base urges.

There is an unspoken assumption that reading that elicits an emotional response cannot also be critical. However, as Frances Teague has pointed out, ‘some early modern readers found delight in books, but their pleasure was never frivolous enjoyment. Even when indulging in a romance, a woman was unlikely to read quickly or mindlessly.’²³ This is problematic itself, however, still aligning enjoyment with frivolity and an implied lack of intellectual rationality. As many feminist theorists have pointed out, western epistemology positions rationality and emotion as binary opposites. Writers such as Alison Jaggar have challenged the concept of male rationality, arguing for a more feminist epistemology. Jaggar noted how ‘within western philosophical tradition, emotions usually have been considered as potentially or actually subversive of

²² Rebecca Tierney-Hynes, *Novel Minds: Philosophers and Romance Readers, 1680-1740* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 4.

²³ Frances Teague, “Judith Shakespeare Reading,” *Shakespeare Quarterly* 47, no. 4 (1996): 366.

knowledge.’²⁴ She posits that emotions function as a way of actively engaging with or constructing the world, rather than uncontrollable impulses that are a passive response to events or objects around us. Thus an emotional reaction can be just as ‘active’ as an intellectual one, allowing the reader to develop their understanding and knowledge of the world through their reading.

Lynne Pearce has applied this feminist theory more closely to the practice of reading. She argued that the reader is often figured as an interpreter, engaging in a rational act and a search for knowledge. She claimed, quote ‘the reader’s role *appears* to be less subjective in this context because, as we are all aware, in the history of Western thought the discourse of rationality is diametrically opposed to that of emotionality: a binarism which is also profoundly gendered.’²⁵ She suggests that ‘there is a need to move away from the polarisation of texts and readers as ‘active’ and ‘passive’ within a narrowly hermeneutic model of text-reader relations, and to recognise instead an alternative model of reading, which goes ‘beyond interpretation’ and characterises the text-reader relationship as non-instrumental and *implicated*.’²⁶

Questions of *how* people read, therefore, have been almost inextricably tied to gender. Moreover, the genre itself of romance was imbued in the early modern period with a range of gendered ideas, focusing on the dangers of the supposed passivity and emotionality of its readers. As in the last chapter, then, the ways in which women represented the act of reading romantic fiction becomes particularly pertinent to our understanding of how individuals negotiated and constructed their own gender identity in life-writings. Using these sources does not, of course, reveal a lived experience of gender and identity, one that we might call ‘real,’ while cognisant of the many problems

²⁴ Alison M. Jaggar, “Love and Knowledge: Emotion in Feminist Epistemology,” in *Gender/Body/Knowledge: Feminist Reconstructions of Being and Knowing*, ed. Alison M. Jaggar and Susan Bordo (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1990), 145.

²⁵ Lynne Pearce, *Feminism and the Politics of Reading* (London: Arnold, 1997), 7.

²⁶ Pearce, *Feminism and the Politics of Reading*, 14.

associated with such a term. Instead, they provide a resource for looking at how women perceived themselves and wanted to be perceived by others. Scholars of seventeenth-century women's autobiography have argued that 'it is necessary to make choices and therefore exclusions in writing a life, so the act of writing involves a patterning and thus an interpretation.'²⁷ Therefore, when writing any form of autobiographical text, the author makes a choice to include certain aspects of their lived experience. Writing about reading romances reveals a particularly deliberate choice, given the contemporary controversy around the genre. Women, in recording their reading of and reaction to romantic fiction, were engaged in an explicit effort of textual self-construction, one which reveals their negotiation of early modern gender norms.

The uses to which women put romance reading in their own writings has been acknowledged in the last decade or so by some scholars, notably Ramona Wray and Julie Eckerle. Wray, examining Mary Rich's autobiography and diary, has demonstrated the extent to which contemporary women's reading of romances can be seen in their writings, even if they did not explicitly record it. She argues that 'Rich's personal experience is transformed, through the writing act, into a romantic paradigm ... [her] indebtedness to romantic motifs and structures is everywhere apparent.'²⁸ Wray suggests that this use of romance motifs was done in order to give Rich power over her situation, and to reset a reality in which her husband was violent and abusive, to one in which she enjoyed a happy marriage and over which she had some control.²⁹ Similarly, Eckerle has argued that that 'despite a critical assumption that early modern Englishwomen's life writing was predominantly spiritual in nature, the romance genre exerted a powerful and pervasive pressure on women's life writing – and self-formation

²⁷ Elspeth Graham, Hilary Hinds, Elaine Hobby and Helen Wilcox, "Introduction," in *Her Own Life: Autobiographical Writings by Seventeenth-Century Englishwomen*, ed. Elspeth Graham, Hilary Hinds, Elaine Hobby and Helen Wilcox (London: Routledge, 1989), 17.

²⁸ Ramona Wray, "Recovering the Reading of Renaissance Englishwomen: Deployments of Autobiography," *Critical Survey* 12, no. 2 (2000): 36.

²⁹ Wray, "Recovering the Reading of Renaissance Englishwomen," 40.

– during this time.³⁰ The spiritual motivations and methods behind women’s life-writing have been well explored in modern scholarship, but the secular influences less so. Eckerle has found evidence of women strategically repurposing the romantic genre, and argues that romantic fiction gave women ‘an imaginative and narrative landscape within which to explore and represent personal experience.’³¹

The gap between conduct literature and reality has been discussed by historians many times, and I do not plan to cover the same ground here. However, the ideas put forward by conduct literature, even if not followed in practice, did have an effect on the wider cultural conversation surrounding gender. It is therefore useful to look at how women both replicated and rejected those ideals, and used them in the construction of their own character. Writing about reading romances has the potential to be quite a subversive act, challenging the norms of femininity and appropriate literary activity. However, some women used the acknowledgement of their romance reading to demonstrate their conforming or more traditionally feminine behaviour, by showing that they understood the error of their ways and had reformed.

Romances and Femininity in Women’s Life-Writing

Lady Elizabeth Delaval (née Livingston) was an English noblewoman, who is known both for her memoirs and meditations, and her involvement in the Pewter Pot plot of 1689, when a warrant was issued for her arrest for carrying correspondence from the exiled court of James II.³² She married Sir Robert Delaval, heir of Sir Ralph Delaval, in 1670, although the marriage was not a happy one and they had no children.³³ Her *Meditations*, written between 1662 and 1671, record her early life, and give an insight

³⁰ Eckerle, *Romancing the Self*, 4.

³¹ Eckerle, *Romancing the Self*, 20.

³² Margaret J. M. Ezell, “Delaval, Elizabeth,” *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, 2004, accessed March 7, 2016, <http://www.oxforddnb.com.ezproxy.york.ac.uk/view/article/68215>.

³³ Elizabeth Delaval, *The Meditations of Lady Elizabeth Delaval, Written Between 1662 and 1671*, ed. Douglas G. Greene (Gateshead: The Surtees Society, Northumberland Press Limited, 1978), 11-12.

into her reading habits. According to Delaval, she wrote the meditations between the ages of fourteen and twenty, and collected them together at twenty.³⁴ She used the memoir form to reflect on her youth, and ultimately to affirm her devotion and piety. The text is set out in the form of meditations, but largely contains autobiographical reflections on her life, returning repeatedly to repent her actions as a young girl. Margaret Ezell has explored the ways in which Delaval's manuscript exposes the difficulty of defining genre in the early modern period; she argues that Delaval used conventions of romance fiction rather than spiritual meditations, and that, as Delaval did not title her work, the classification of 'meditation' has been imposed by later editors.³⁵ However, Ezell does not specifically consider Delaval's reading habits, but rather how contemporary prose fiction influenced her writing style and her presentation of personal relationships within the manuscript. Indeed, despite Delaval's manuscript providing extensive evidence, she has been given very little critical attention by scholars of early modern reading.

Reading was important for Delaval's personal story. She replicated common tropes of advice literature, such as the moral and highly gendered distinction between romance reading and religious reading. She charted her transition from the former to the latter in terms of the development of her spiritual wellbeing and increased piety. This is strikingly similar to the conversion trope used in some seventeenth-century advice literature, such as that of Richard Baxter or Richard Allestree, discussed in chapter five. It is also reminiscent of Catholic conversion tales such as that of Teresa of Avila, who framed her life before her conversion as a series of failings, saved only by God's grace.³⁶ Avila recorded reading chivalric romances with her mother as a girl. She

³⁴ Delaval, *The Meditations of Lady Elizabeth Delaval*, 26.

³⁵ Margaret J. M. Ezell, "Elizabeth Delaval's Spiritual Heroine: Thoughts on Redefining Manuscript Texts by Early Women Writers," in *English Manuscript Studies, Volume 3*, ed. Peter Beal and Jeremy Griffiths (London: The British Library, 1992), 223.

³⁶ Joseph F. Chorprenning, "Santa Teresa's *Libro de la Vida* as Romance: Narrative Movements and Heroic Quest," *Revista Canadiense de Estudios Hispánicos* 14, no. 1 (1989): 52.

portrayed this pastime as dangerous for her younger self, impeding her piety. However, she did not condemn her mother for her reading choices, instead suggesting that it was a necessary escape from her difficult life.³⁷ This fits with the impression given in advice literature, discussed in chapter five, that romances were most harmful when read by young women, often teenagers, who were at their most impressionable.

Delaval recorded reading celebrated seventeenth-century French romances when she was about ten years old, including Madeleine de Scudéry's *Artamènes, ou, Le Grand Cyrus*, and *Cassandra* by Gautier de Costes, seigneur de la Calprenède.³⁸ Scudéry's text was first translated into English in 1653, and Calprenède's in 1652, so Delaval was reading them several years after the translation (she was born in 1649). She wrote 'I was but some few month's past ten year's old before I had red severall great volum's of [romances]: all Cassander, the Grand Cyrus, Cleopatra and Astrea.'³⁹ Both de Scudéry and Calprenède were very popular in mid-seventeenth-century England. Alice Eardley has argued that the publication of these aforementioned works, alongside de Scudéry's *Ibrahim* and *Clélie*, were part of an attempt by the publisher Humphrey Moseley to foster a market for heroic romances in the 1650s.⁴⁰ Delaval's record of them situates her within the mid-century romance market, demonstrating her interest in the staples of the genre.

She blamed her literary habits on a family servant, Mistress Carter, who looked after Delaval as a young girl. Delaval accused Carter of encouraging a taste for romantic

³⁷ Jennifer R. Goodman, "'That wommen holde in ful greet reverence': Mothers and Daughters Reading Chivalric Romances," in *Women, The Book and The Worldly: Selected Proceedings of the St Hilda's Conference, 1993, Volume II* ed. Lesley Smith and Jane H. M. Taylor (Cambridge: DS Brewer, 1995), 28-29.

³⁸ These books are also mentioned by Dorothy Osborne – see below.

³⁹ Delaval, *The Meditations of Lady Elizabeth Delaval*, 32.

⁴⁰ Eardley has also argued that these novels had a broad middle class readership, contrary to some modern scholarship that has claimed they had a mainly aristocratic audience in England. See Alice Eardley, "Marketing Aspiration: Fact, Fiction, and the Publication of French Romance in Mid-Seventeenth-Century England," in *Seventeenth-Century Fiction: Text and Transmission*, ed. Jacqueline Gomski and Isabelle Moreau (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 130-142.

fiction, and persuading her to neglect her religious devotions, saying that she ‘had so fill’d my head with folly’s that ... what I read was alltogether romances.’⁴¹ She connected this to Carter’s Presbyterianism, claiming

I was not quite 6 month’s past 10 yeare old when Mrs. Carter begun most pernicesouly to insinuate Presbyterian principles into me, in some interval’s of time when she did not talke to me of love and fary tales; so that had I not been deliver’d soon out of her hand’s without doubt I shou’d have had the great misfortune of being bred up a Presbyterian.⁴²

This provides a connection between Delaval’s reading of romances and religious dissent, adding another dimension to the idea of the conversion narrative and the religious rhetoric surrounding romance literature. Outlining Carter’s Presbyterianism allowed Delaval (an Anglican) to attribute her youthful behaviour to indoctrination, and emphasises the connection between romantic fiction and immorality. If taken as similar sins, then the implication is that reading romances is going against God, rather than simply an enjoyable leisure pursuit. This is, moreover, a very interesting image of Presbyterianism, considering the general godly attitude towards romances. Perhaps Delaval was insuating that Carter was undisciplined, unbiblical and lower class, as part of a general criticism of her religion.

These early reading habits were presented as dangerous or foolish pastimes in comparison to the religious education she should have been developing: at one point she said ‘thus vainely pass’d the blosome time of my life, which shou’d have been spent in laying a good foundation of what is to be learnt in such book’s as teach’s us heavenly wisdom.’⁴³ Once again, books and reading were the key to her character, as they could

⁴¹ Delaval, *The Meditations of Lady Elizabeth Delaval*, 32.

⁴² Delaval, *The Meditations of Lady Elizabeth Delaval*, 33. This would have been in 1659, during the Interregnum, when her Royalist parents were still in exile on the continent.

⁴³ Delaval, *The Meditations of Lady Elizabeth Delaval*, 32.

either provide spirituality and morality, or lead one into temptation and sin; they were used to represent the two possible paths for Delaval to take.

She went on to emphasise this link between romance reading and an avoidance of devotion saying:

nothing seem'd to me so grievous as to spend time in the learning of my duty in reading thy holy word and in praying to thee, nothing so pleasant as the waisting of my houer's in foleish devertisment's and in reading unprofitable romances.⁴⁴

Significant in this passage is the term 'unprofitable'; romantic fiction was seen as carrying no lessons for spiritual, intellectual or moral improvement, and thus was not a productive use of women's time. This replicates common narratives in advice literature, discussed in chapter five, which castigated women for passing time reading romances rather than scripture. However, Delaval realised her errors and much of the rest of the first half of the *Meditations* is concerned with repudiating her early sins and reading habits. She wrote:

When we are past our childish age and can attend to what we do without a perpetuall wandering fancy tis folly to spend our time any longer in reading ill chosen boock's, such as romances are, which serve onely to please our fancy not to guide our judgement, and to make our minutes passe away (tis said by some) less tediously then they wou'd do, were we otherwise employ'd⁴⁵

Romances therefore were simply pleasurable, used to 'please out fancy not to guide our judgement.' Although she admitted the attraction of this, as it made time pass quickly, she argued that it was 'folly' to spend time reading the genre. Delaval became a devout woman, stressing that 'When some other duty dos not take up my time, I will not only

⁴⁴ Delaval, *The Meditations of Lady Elizabeth Delaval*, 62.

⁴⁵ Delaval, *The Meditations of Lady Elizabeth Delaval*, 45.

read every day in my closet alone or to my servants in the gospels, but also in the Psalms.⁴⁶ This meditation was written several years after the two quoted above, demonstrating Delaval's continuing preoccupation with her reformation. It is worth noting that Delaval made it clear that religious reading is not simply an adherence to her duty; but rather she charted her emotional development and reaction, coming to actively prefer devotional texts – at one point in the text she mentioned how she now 'delights' in 'holy books.'⁴⁷ Her 'conversion' was now complete, and was evidenced through her reading habits.

In Delaval's dichotomy between romance reading and religious reading; she did not see them as genres that can be read in tandem, but condemned romance reading completely. Her reformation and later preference for devotional literature thus affirms her pious character the more by constructing it in opposition to her youthful transgressions. Through this representation of her reading habits, Delaval aligned herself with a certain kind of ideal femininity, and situated herself firmly within the domestic sphere of adulthood and proper devotion. She portrayed herself as taking on the role of the pious wife, as outlined by Gouge and Whately, in reading scripture to her servants and spending her days in spiritual reflection. The fact that her religious leanings were very different to the Puritanism of Gouge and Whately indicates the extent to which this idea of a gendered asceticism permeated throughout early modern society. The attitudes displayed by Gouge, Whately, Baxter and Allestree, and replicated by Delaval, attest to the strength of the concern surrounding female reading, from all religious groups. However, Delaval has also made a choice to use reading as a way of constructing her femininity within the text. This is not evidence of her submissiveness to contemporary

⁴⁶ Delaval, *The Meditations of Lady Elizabeth Delaval*, 117.

⁴⁷ This is the same phrase as Rainbowe used regarding Anne Clifford, in her funeral sermon – see chapter six.

gender prescriptions, but rather of the agency she had in taking those prescriptions and conventions and using them to present her character in a certain way.

This replication of the cultural controversy surrounding romance reading, however, was not employed in all women's life-writing. Instead, many women openly enjoyed or at least engaged with romances. Even godly women discussed reading romances, demonstrating the extent to which the stereotype of Puritan culture needs to be complicated. Elizabeth Isham (1608-1654), the Northamptonshire diarist, recorded romance reading in her *Booke of Rememberance*, an autobiography written in about 1639. As Julie Eckerle has noted, Isham's text is 'one of the earliest female-authored prose narratives about the self,' and 'provides extraordinary insight into her own reading and writing habits.'⁴⁸ In her autobiography, Isham took a very different position to that of Delaval regarding romantic fiction. Although the manuscript was primarily concerned with demonstrating her spirituality, she also revealed a wide range of reading habits, and took a much more nuanced view than Delaval of non-devotional genres.⁴⁹ In one section of her autobiography, she wrote

my friends thinking that the Booke of Marters made me mallancoly though I found no hearm it did my brother lent me Sir phillips sidnes Booke (and after Spencer) which I hard much comended by some. and others againe discomended the reading of such Bookes of love. but I found no such hurt.⁵⁰

Isham's construction of romantic fiction here, particularly in relation to religious reading, demonstrates the complexity of the cultural reaction to romances. She noted

⁴⁸ Julie A. Eckerle, "Coming to Knowledge: Elizabeth Isham's Autobiography and the Self-Construction of an Intellectual Woman," *a/b: Auto/Biography Studies* 25, no. 1 (2010): 97.

⁴⁹ Isaac Stephens has pointed out Isham's apparent rejection of some strictures for women's reading, noting that she also read Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. See Isaac Stephens, *The Gentlewoman's Remembrance: Patriarchy, Piety, and Singlehood in Early Stuart England* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2016), 156.

⁵⁰ Elizabeth Isham, *Book of Rememberance*, f26r. Accessed 19 March 2018. http://web.warwick.ac.uk/english/perdita/Isham/bor_p26r.htm

that her friends and brother recommended reading romances and poetry – in this case Sidney’s *Arcadia* and Spenser’s *The Fairy Queene* – as an antidote to the melancholy they thought the Book of Martyrs provoked in her.⁵¹ This is an inverse of the usual contemporary narrative of religious reading being an antidote to melancholy or other ills brought on by reading. She even repeatedly emphasised that she found no ‘hearm’ or ‘hurt’ in reading romances, distancing herself from the critiques of the genre.

Isham struggled with her mental health, and books often provided a comfort for her, as well as provoking melancholy. Anne Cotterill has noted that books were generally brought into the household by men (and indeed were usually written by men), and argues that they ‘came to represent a prop of masculine strength of mind and body, a calming and clarifying power that Isham found women so often required.’⁵² She frequently used scripture for comfort, and was deeply religious; Isaac Stephens has described her text as an ‘intense form of puritan life-writing.’⁵³ However, it is interesting that she recorded romances possibly having a similarly salutary effect (although she did not confirm that *Arcadia* helped her, rather that her friends believed it might). In using them for comfort, and openly admitting to reading them, she clearly defied the binary constructed by godly advice literature between romance and religious literature.

In the passage above, Isham acknowledged the divisions within the rhetoric surrounding romantic fiction, but affirmed that she did not find it damaging or problematic.⁵⁴ Indeed,

⁵¹ For more on Isham’s mental health, see Erin Sullivan, *Beyond Melancholy: Sadness and Selfhood in Renaissance England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 133-139.

⁵² Anne Cotterill, “Fit Words at the ‘pitts brinke’: The Achievement of Elizabeth Isham,” *Huntington Library Quarterly* 73, no. 2 (2010): 229.

⁵³ Isaac Stephens, “‘My Cheefest Work’: The Making of the Spiritual Autobiography of Elizabeth Isham,” *Midland History* 34, no. 2 (2009): 195.

⁵⁴ Erica Longfellow has argued that Isham ‘displayed little awareness of gendered restrictions on women’s intellectual activity,’ attributing this partly to the fact that she did not record reading any advice literature aimed at women (although, this not only underestimates the pervasiveness of gender norms, but also assumes that Isham recorded every item she read). See Erica Longfellow, “‘Take unto ye words’: Elizabeth Isham’s ‘Booke of Remembrance’ and Puritan Cultural Forms,” in *The Intellectual Culture of*

she recorded in a note in the margins that she continued to read Sidney's book 'for the most part on evenings.'⁵⁵ Reading the romance clearly became part of her everyday routine, as she read it repeatedly at a specific point during the day, and Isham's acceptance of the genre, and rejection of the fears surrounding romantic fiction is particularly notable when situated in the wider field of autobiographical writings, which rarely discussed romances.⁵⁶ Isham treated romances like other books, and clearly did not accept the warnings of godly advice writings.

The generic expectations of godly or spiritual autobiography meant that romance reading was not always recorded, even if it may have occurred. In letters, however, audience and conventions were different, and as such they sometimes contained extensive discussions of romance reading. Although there has been plenty of work demonstrating that early modern letters were not private, and that there was an assumption that the audience would extend beyond the recipient, there was still an arguably different readership; one which was more fleeting and less intergenerational.⁵⁷ Letters often function as more of a conversation, rather than a record of events, so the construction of character occurs in a different way.

When gentry women did mention their reading of romance novels in letters, therefore, they rarely condemned the genre in the way that Delaval did. Women's analyses of their reading were not always aligned so clearly to contemporary moralistic mores, and

Puritan Women, 1558-1680, ed. Johanna Harris and Elizabeth Scott-Baumann (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 125.

⁵⁵ Isham, *Book of Remembrance*, f26r. Accessed 19 March 2018.

http://web.warwick.ac.uk/english/perdita/Isham/bor_p26r.htm

⁵⁶ Memoirists and diarists such as Margaret Hoby, Grace Mildmay, Ann Fanshawe and Anne Halkett all discussed their reading habits, but did not make mention of romantic fiction. See Margaret Hoby, *The Diary of Lady Margaret Hoby*, edited by Dorothy M. Meads (London: Routledge, 1930); Linda Pollock, ed., *With Faith and Physic: the Life of a Tudor Gentlewoman, Lady Grace Mildmay, 1552-1620* (London: Collins & Brown, 1993); John Loftis, ed., *The Memoirs of Anne, Lady Halkett and Ann, Lady Fanshawe* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979). Eckerle has argued that both Anne Halkett and Ann Fanshawe draw heavily on the themes of romances in their autobiographies, demonstrating their influence even if they do not necessarily record reading them. See Eckerle, *Romancing the Self*.

⁵⁷ See, for example, James Daybell, *The Material Letter in Early Modern England: Manuscript Letters and the Cultures and Practices of Letter-Writing, 1512-1635* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012).

cannot be so easily divided into either finding pleasure in romances or finding them corrupting and immoral. Women (perhaps less pious women than Delaval) recorded complex critiques or praise of romantic fiction, reflecting highly individual and personal responses. As Eckerle has noted, ‘although references to romance reading frequently acknowledge pleasure, they not surprisingly emphasise moral, emotional, and intellectual engagement even more.’⁵⁸ Women in the seventeenth century clearly read their romances carefully, and with a critical eye. They assessed the plots, characters and themes, and discussed their reading with others.

This discussion, certainly in epistolary form, appears to have largely been a heterosocial interaction. I have found no letters between women that contain extensive discussion of romances.⁵⁹ There is some evidence, such as those of Dorothy Osborne explored below, of women sharing books with other women. However, most of the evidence of in-depth discussion appears between men and women, often those either engaged or married. Elizabeth Pepys, the wife of the diarist Samuel Pepys, for example, is known to have enjoyed Madeleine de Scudéry’s *Le Grand Cyrus*, and wanted to talk about it with her husband.⁶⁰ Kate Loveman has argued that ‘discussing the ideas in a heroic romance was a means for men and women to establish shared understandings on a variety of issues related to conduct (especially conduct in love), to advertise them as discerning, sensitive readers, and to exchange tacit compliments.’⁶¹ While, as I argue here, I think we need to be wary of attributing romantic endeavour as a motive for women’s engagement with romances, it is true that many of the discussions of the genre come from letters between

⁵⁸ Eckerle, *Romancing the Self*, 51.

⁵⁹ Although, as has been explored elsewhere in this thesis, women did discuss other books in their letters – see the example of Elizabeth Packer in chapter five.

⁶⁰ Eckerle, *Romancing the Self*, 52. Samuel Pepys also bought Elizabeth a copy of de Scudéry’s *Ibrahim, ou L’illustre Bassa* in 1668. See Gesa Stedman, *Cultural Exchange in Seventeenth-Century France and England* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2016), 94.

⁶¹ Kate Loveman, *Samuel Pepys and His Books: Reading, Newsgathering, and Sociability, 1660-1703* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 151.

suitors or spouses. Two of the best known examples of women discussing romances with their fiancés are the letters of Mary Hatton (later Helsby) and Dorothy Osborne.

Mary Hatton, whose letters are held in the Folger Shakespeare Library, demonstrated a critical reading of romantic fiction, and did not conceal the fact that she has read them.

Little is known about Hatton but her letters to her fiancé, Randolph Helsby (of the Helsby family based in Cheshire), in the early 1650s, have survived. They show the pair exchanging books frequently, including romances.⁶² In one letter, Hatton wrote this commentary:

I do not methinks approve of stories of romance all so alike that they seem as if I had read y^e same one hundred times, besides that how vain it was (for him which writt it) to make ye yong gentle woman run awaie wth a sweet hearte (her younger of manie years) when all were agreed upon ye matche save only his more sober unkle. Tis as olde as Helsby towre but this, and this is in deede some thing very freshe & newe as such a youthe could make itt. If you have not read itt I would advise you sadly if by my commendations you would waste a candell over itt. I had rather do some thing of more use than he that writ it by turning my wheel without a stop till some other had read throu itt in my stead. But it hath little bits in itt that shewe he could not with carefulness & practise be without much commendation. I do scorne & disdaine these scribling pass times & nought else can I learne from manie of them⁶³

As Emily Griffiths Jones suggests, this could seem like a commonplace indictment of romantic fiction, with Hatton even asserting her femininity by saying that she would

⁶² Sara Heller Mendelson, "The Weightiest Business: Marriage in an Upper-Gentry Family in Seventeenth-Century England," *Past & Present* 85 (1979): 130 (note 26).

⁶³ Mary Hatton Helsby, *Autograph letters signed from Mary Hatton Helsby to various recipients [manuscript], 1651-1668*, X.d.493, (6), Folger Shakespeare Library, Washington D.C.

prefer to be spinning then reading the book in question.⁶⁴ However, this is a more complex critique. Hatton here was engaging with the characters, and contending with the authority of the writer and their motivations. She did criticise romances, and drew on some of the rhetoric dismissing them as a misuse of leisure time, but her letters did not reflect the moral condemnation of conduct book writers. Her criticism stemmed from what she personally finds lacking in romantic fiction; she was reading in order to learn something, but her expectations were thwarted. She called the texts ‘scribbling pass times’ and declared ‘nought else can I learne from manie of them,’ quite clearly setting up an active/passive divide. This suggests that, even if she was not ultimately rewarded for her pains, she read romances in a way that we consider active or intensive – with the aim of reading providing some sort of transformative experience, with the absorption of a lesson.

As Paul Trolander has suggested, Hatton was using books and reading to find common ground with Randolph Helsby, solidifying social bonds through shared experiences or views. He has claimed that her ‘strong condemnation of the entire genre’ was a way of testing her future husband. Trolander argues that Hatton ‘suggested that such texts took away from time that might be used to cultivate more socially appropriate beliefs and practices. To differ with such views might be possible, but in the context of courtship, such censure was a line drawn in the sand. If Helsby was morally challenged, uncritical, and a time-waster, he was surely not the man for Mary.’⁶⁵

In fact, Hatton did not roundly condemn all romantic fiction, nor did she suggest that there was nothing worthy of praise to be found in the stories. She seems to argue that it was the unnamed author’s failings that are the problem, not the genre of romance. If he

⁶⁴ Emily Griffiths Jones, “Romance, Narrative Vision, and Elect Community in Seventeenth-Century England,” (PhD thesis, Boston University, 2014), 22.

⁶⁵ Paul Trolander, *Literary Sociability in Early Modern England: The Epistolary Record* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2014), 165.

had more ‘carefulness and practise,’ she wrote, then he would be commendable as a writer, and she can already discern hints of this in the text. Unfortunately, it is unclear to which author or text she was referring specifically. Her letters demonstrate a familiarity with the genre as whole, implying that she did generally enjoy reading such books. In an earlier letter she wrote ‘I am reading of your newe booke of Mr Spenser w^{ch} I like well. I do believe his poetry for excellency is as abundantly great & in as handsome & pretty language as many of the beste in the worlde.’⁶⁶ She clearly enjoyed Spenser, admiring his use of language, although it is difficult to tell which of Spenser’s works she read. The phrase ‘newe booke’ may mean that it was new to Helsby, but it may also mean that it was newly published. If this is the case, it was likely the edition of Spenser’s *Shepherds Calendar*, written in both Latin and English and printed in 1653.⁶⁷ Poetry was often condemned alongside romances in seventeenth-century advice literature, but Hatton clearly had no qualms about reading either genre. Her letters reveal her discerning taste; she did not see the poetry and romances as irretrievably bad or immoral, but was critical of stories that did not have much literary merit.

In Dorothy Osborne’s letters to her suitor, William Temple, she provided a similarly nuanced, although much more positive, critique of romances. Osborne (1627-1695) was a Royalist, daughter of the lieutenant-governor of Jersey, who played a part in arranging the marriage of William of Orange and Mary, the daughter of James, Duke of York. She is best known today as a letter-writer, particularly her letters to Temple that survive for

⁶⁶ Mary Hatton to Randolph Helsby, 27th March 1654 X.d.493 (4).

⁶⁷ Edmund Spenser, *Calendarium pastorale, sive Æglogæ duodecim, totidem anni mensibus accommodatæ. Anglicè olim scriptæ ab Edmundo Spensero anglorum poetarum principe: nunc autem elegantè Latino carmine donatæ a Theodoro Bathurst, aulæ Pembrokianæ apud Cantabrigienses aliquando socio* (Londini : impensis M[ercy]. M[eighen]. T[homas]. C[ollins]. & G. Bedell, ad portam Medii-Templi in vico vulgò vocato Fleetstreet, anno Dom. 1653).

the period 1652-1654.⁶⁸ Her letters are a valuable resource for examining the complexity of women's responses to the romance genre.

Osborne read many of the same texts as Delaval; including various works by French author Madeleine de Scudéry, but, unlike Delaval, did not openly repent her reading. She frequently recommended romances that she read to Temple, and discussed her opinions of the stories and their authors with him, just as Mary Hatton and Randolph Hellsby shared their impressions and recommendations of reading. In one instance, she sent him several volumes of the novel *Cleopatra*, by French romance author Gautier de Costes:

since you are at Leisure to consider the moone you may bee enough to reade Cleopatra, therefore I have sent you three Tomes. When you have done with those you shall have the rest, and I beleeve they will please, there is a story of Artemise that I will recomende to you, her disposition I like extreamly, it has a great deal of Gratitude int, and if you meet with one Brittomart pray send mee word how you like him.⁶⁹

Contrary to many conceptions about the genre, there is little evidence in Osborne's letters that women were the primary readers of romance. At one point Osborne suggested that Temple won't have time for reading, writing 'what an asse I am to think you can bee idle enough at London to reade Romances.'⁷⁰ However, the implication here is that a lack of free time is the only thing preventing him: not a dislike or

⁶⁸ Osborne has often been commended for her writing style, with scholars such as Sheila Otway suggesting that they, when taken in sequence, read like an epistolary novel. See Sheila Ottway, "Dorothy Osborne's Love Letters: Novelistic Glimmerings and the Ovidian Self," *Prose Studies* 19, no.2 (1996): 149-159. Otway recognises that 'Osborne clearly would never have thought that her own letters constituted literature, but considered as a whole, the sequence of her love letters to Temple form a coherent narrative with its own momentum and sense of direction' (p151).

⁶⁹ Letter 10, March 1653. Dorothy Osborne, *Dorothy Osborne: Letters to Sir William Temple*, ed. Kenneth Parker (London: Penguin Books, 1987), 59-60.

⁷⁰ Letter 9, February 1653. Osborne, *Dorothy Osborne: Letters to Sir William Temple*, 57.

disapproval of the genre. Instead, she exchanged novels with him frequently, and they discussed what they both read in detail.

Apart from the exchange of romances between the couple, the habit of sharing books with a wider circle of friends and acquaintances is made clear in the letters, with Osborne often asking Temple to send novels back to her so she could pass them on to others. She wrote at one point:

If you have done with the first Part of Cyrus I should bee glad Mr Hollingsworth had it, because I mentioned some such thing in my Last to my Lady, but there is noe hast of restoreing the other unlesse she should send to mee for it which I beleeve she will not. I have a third Tome heer against you have done with the second, and to Encourage you let mee assure you that the more you read of them you will like them still better⁷¹

Mr Hollingsworth appears to have been a retainer of the Lady mentioned, rather than a reader himself. It is likely that he was going to pass the book on to Lady Diana Rich, with whom Osborne often exchanged books.

When discussing *Artamène, ou Le Grand Cyrus*, the ten-part historical novel by Madeleine de Scudéry telling the story of the lovers Cyrus and Mandane, who were repeatedly kept apart, Osborne wrote of one character ‘i’le swear I cryed for her when I read it first tough shee were an imaginary person.’⁷² She clearly felt a deep connection to the characters in novels; as Trolander has pointed out, she ‘referred to [prose romances’] characters as real individuals [...] Indeed, her vouching for such friends as Lady Diana Rich was often done in terms similar to vouching for characters in Le Caprenède’s *Cléopâtre*.’⁷³ He suggests that this was born of a desire to see Temple

⁷¹ Letter 27, June 1653. Osborne, *Dorothy Osborne: Letters to Sir William Temple*, 97.

⁷² Letter 39, September 1653. Osborne, *Dorothy Osborne: Letters to Sir William Temple*, 125.

⁷³ Trolander, *Literary Sociability*, 164.

‘come to know and like them as people,’ and part of Osborne’s effort to strengthen the affective bonds with her intended.⁷⁴

It is possible to glean many details about Osborne’s reading habits and preferences from her letters, often connecting to wider developments within the prose romance genre. She enjoyed de Scudéry’s novels, which were the most popular romantic texts of the mid-seventeenth century.⁷⁵ De Scudéry published under her brother’s name throughout her life, and Osborne clearly believed that Georges was the author, although she does note certain rumours about Madeleine’s role in the novels (and her apparently unfortunate appearance):

They say the Gentelman that writes this Romance has a Sister that lives with him as Mayde and she furnishes him with all the litle Story’s that come between soe that hee only Contrives the maine designe and when hee wants something to Entertaine his company withal hee call’s to her for it. Shee has an Exelent fancy sure, and a great deal of witt, but I am sorry to tell it you, they say tis the most ilfavoured Creatur that ever was borne, and it is often soe, how seldome doe wee see a person Exelent in any thing but they have some great deffect with it that pulls them low enough to make them Equall with Other People, and there is Justice in’t⁷⁶

Osborne has often been known for her criticism of Margaret Cavendish, of whom she commented that ‘there are many soberer People in Bedlam,’ and wrote ‘the poore

⁷⁴ Trolander, *Literary Sociability*, 164.

⁷⁵ Jane Donawerth, ed., *Rhetorical Theory by Women before 1900: An Anthology* (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 2002), 82. De Scudéry also published various essays, and drew on classical authors to develop a theory of rhetoric and composition. She hosted a weekly salon at her house, and was connected to women such as Mme. de Sévigné and Mme. de Lafayette. According to Nathalie Grande, she departed from the heroic romances of Calprenède and Gomberville, instead employing a classical aesthetic, aiming to both instruct and please her readers. See Nathalie Grande, “Quand le Roman Oeuvre en Moraliste : Madeleine de Scudéry et Clélie,” *Dalhousie French Studies* vol. 27 : Réflexions sur le genre moraliste au dix-septième siècle (1994) : 31-49.

⁷⁶ Letter 40, September 1653. Osborne, *Dorothy Osborne: Letters to Sir William Temple*, 128.

woman is a little distracted, she could never be so ridiculous else as to venture at writing books.’⁷⁷ This criticism of women writers has been discussed many times, and, as Carrie Hintz has noted, ‘cast within the study of seventeenth-century women writers as the conservative counterpart to the daring polymath Cavendish, Osborne has been viewed by feminist scholars primarily as the voice of repression and of scorn.’⁷⁸ However, her assessment of de Scudéry tempers this; she did not seem to condemn her for writing, although she did imply that it has caused her to become an ‘illfavoured Creatur.’ There is, however, a clear recognition of de Scudéry’s literary talents. Again, Osborne was able to assess the literary merit of a text despite potential controversy surrounding its publication, genre or author, displaying her critical reading faculties. Osborne had a preference for French romances, and as Kenneth Parker has pointed out, her letters ‘corroborate the opinion, developed in our time, that the chief fictive prose form was that of the French romance.’⁷⁹ Osborne usually read the texts in the original language, but when she did read in English, often provided acerbic critiques of the translators and translations.

I have noe Patience neither for these Translatours of Romances. I mett with Poxandre and L’Illustre Bassa, both soe disguised that I who am their old acquaintance hardly knew them, besydes that they were still soe much french in words and Phrases that twas imposible for one that understood not french to make any thing of them.⁸⁰

She went on to take further issue with the translation of *L’Illustre Bassa*, another work of de Scudéry, criticising the writing style and speech

⁷⁷ Letter 20, May 1653; Letter 19, April 1653. Osborne, *Dorothy Osborne: Letters to Sir William Temple*, 75-79.

⁷⁸ Carrie Hintz, *An Audience of One: Dorothy Osborne’s Letters to Sir William Temple, 1652-1654* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005), 3.

⁷⁹ Osborne, *Dorothy Osborne: letters to Sir William Temple*, 37.

⁸⁰ Letter 41, September 1653. Osborne, *Dorothy Osborne: Letters to Sir William Temple*, 131.

Another fault I finde too in the stile, tis affected. Ambition'd is a great word with him, and ignore; my concerne, or of great concern, is it seem's properer then concernment; and though hee makes his People say fine handsome things to one another yet they are not Easy and Naïve like the french, and there is a little harshnesse in most of the discourses that one would take to bee the fault of the Translatour rather then of an Author.⁸¹

This was likely referring to the translation undertaken by Henry Cogan, which was first printed in 1652.⁸² This was two years before the letter was written, indicating that Osborne kept up-to-date with new publications. She clearly read with a very sharp critical eye, focusing on details of the text, such as the specific language and phrasing used in the translation.

It has become commonplace for scholars looking at Osborne to attribute her feelings for the characters and her enjoyment of romances to her frustrated courtship with Temple. Their families would not allow them to marry for various political and financial reasons. According to James How, Osborne's letters 'become a sustained attempt to open up a new form of imaginary social space in which she could be alone with Temple.'⁸³ Similarly, Femke Molekamp has argued that 'Osborne weaves her reading of romances into her letters to engage an affective reading process serving as an outlet for the sorrows of the romantic trials which she and Temple endure, and to associate their courtship with the turn from anguish to regeneration usual to the structure of romance.'⁸⁴ Hintz sees the exchange about romantic between Osborne and Temple as an

⁸¹ Letter 59, February 1654. Osborne, *Dorothy Osborne: Letters to Sir William Temple*, 180.

⁸² Madeleine de Scudéry, *Ibrahim, or, the Illustrious Bassa. An Excellent New Romance. The Whole Work, In Foure Parts. Written in French by Monsieur de Scudery, and Now Englished by Henry Cogan, Gent* (London: Printed for Humphry Moseley, at the Princes Armes in St. Pauls Church-yard; William Bentley, and Thomas Heath, in Cavent-Garden, 1652).

⁸³ James How, *Epistolary Spaces: English Letter Writing from the Foundation of the Post Office to Richardson's Clarissa* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003), 41.

⁸⁴ Femke Molekamp, "Therapies for Melancholy and Inordinate Passion in the Letters of Dorothy Osborne to Sir William Temple (1652-1654)," *The Seventeenth Century* 29, no. 3 (2014): 262.

attempt on her part to mould their future relationship, arguing that ‘romances were another venue for Osborne to exert control over Temple’s opinions, but also to inculcate him into the process of openly discussing relationships and comportment with her.’⁸⁵

This focus on the relationship between Osborne and Temple has led scholars to argue that Osborne saw herself in romances. Helen Wilcox and Otway have argued that Osborne’s imaginative world, informed by the romance genre, allowed her an alternative to reality, and that ‘she envisages Temple and herself as the archetypal star-crossed lovers of fictional romance.’⁸⁶ This presumes that Osborne is using reading as a form of escapism, rather than to understand the world around her. This is buying into the rhetoric linking romantic fiction, pleasure and women. Suggesting that romances provided Osborne with the opportunity to escape the world detaches her reading from any real-world or potentially useful (itself a loaded term) implications. Moreover, it connotes a certain kind of reading, which only results in personal pleasure, rather than improved understanding.

There is some evidence of this, for example when Osborne compared herself and Temple to Baucis and Philemon, a charitable old married couple who appear in Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*:

Doe you remember Arme and the little house there [?] shall we goe thither [?]
that’s next to being out of the worlde[.] there wee might live like Baucis and
Philemon, grow old together in our litle Cottage and for our Charrity to some
shipwraakt stranger obtaine the blessing of dyeing both at the same time. How
idly I talk tis because the Storry pleases mee, none in Ovide soe much. I
remember I cryed when I read it, mee thought they were the perfectest

⁸⁵ Hintz, *An Audience of One*, 64.

⁸⁶ Helen Wilcox and Sheila Ottway, “Women’s Histories,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Writing of the English Revolution*, ed. N. H. Keeble (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 157.

Characters of a con[ten]ted marriage where Piety and Live were all their wealth
and in their poverty feasted the Gods where rich men shutt them out⁸⁷

She clearly was attracted to this romantic vision of married life, and it is hard to dispute that she was using this story to outline a future for herself and Temple. However, the causal link scholars have found between Osborne's romance reading and her own romantic life is problematic. It echoes the fears that many conduct book writers had about women admiring and imitating the behaviour of romantic heroines. Moreover, perhaps the clearest problem with this approach is the way that it centres on Osborne and Temple's courtship as the most important facet of her epistolary self-presentation. Seeing Osborne's literary motivations and preferences as being solely due to her desire to create an imaginary world where she could live out a successful courtship is reductive, not allowing her an identity outside of her romantic relationship. Furthermore, it is not borne out by Osborne's writings. In one passage, she described a story in *Parthenissa*, the serially-published 1650s prose romance by Roger Boyle, first Earl of Orrery, saying of the female protagonist:

She was in a besieged Towne, and perswaded all those of her Sexe to goe out with her to the Enemy (which were a barbarous People) and dye by their swords, that the provision of the Towne might last the longer for such as were able to doe service in deffending it. But how angry I was to see him spoile this againe, by bringing out a letter this woman left behind her for the Governour of the Towne, where she discovers a passion for him and makes that the reason why she did it. I confesse I have noe patience for our faiseurs de Romance, when they make women court.⁸⁸

⁸⁷ Letter 54, January 1654. Osborne, *Dorothy Osborne: Letters to Sir William Temple*, 164-165.

⁸⁸ Letter 59, Feb 1654. Osborne, *Dorothy Osborne: Letters to Sir William Temple*, 179-180.

Often overlooked by scholars, this is a remarkable proto-feminist critique of Boyle's work and of common tropes in romantic fiction, reminiscent of discussions that continue today about female characters in popular culture. Perhaps, instead of using romances to live out her fantasy of a courtship with Temple, Osborne found models for female behaviour within them. Her annoyance at Boyle's character motivations reflects her frustration in trying to find roles in fiction that she could empathise with and emulate. Her display of these emotions in her letters to Temple shows a complex character construction, one which did not necessarily conform to contemporary feminine ideals, but which was nevertheless engaged with concepts of femininity.

This link between women writing about romance and their own romantic lives is apparent in other scholarly works examining the early modern period. Raymond Anselment made a similar suggestion about writing choices being motivated by personal romantic relationships when he said of Elizabeth Delaval: '[her] meditations become more specifically personal as she responds to the frustrations of romance and the disillusionment of marriage.'⁸⁹ This is not to suggest that personal tribulations and romantic feelings would not have had any effect on women's reading and interpretation, but rather that we do women in the past a disservice by considering romance, courtship and relationships with the men in their lives as the sole motivation behind their reading and writing. Instead, they had much more complex, individual responses to texts, born of various personal circumstances and preferences, which informed both what they read and how they wrote about their reading habits.

In their records of romance reading, then, the women surveyed here reveal a range of reading practices. They were not simply reading for fun, or in a way that implies seduction or addiction to the genre, with little regard for intellectualism. Instead, they

⁸⁹ Raymond Anselment, "Feminine Self-Reflection and the Seventeenth-Century Occasional Meditation," *The Seventeenth Century* 26, no. 1 (2011): 72.

read carefully and critically, analysing language and character construction. Some were also looking to find lessons in romances, concerning their behaviour in society. This prefigures the suggestions of advice writers such as Hannah Woolley and Judith Drake, discussed in chapter five, who believed that romances could be beneficial in teaching women proper behaviour and conversation. While they may have been frustrated in this aim, as Mary Hatton Helsby was, they nevertheless were approaching the genre with a critical and intellectual eye. This, however, did not lessen the enjoyment they often record taking from the books. To create a distinction between emotional and rational reading, as both contemporary and scholarly accounts often do, does not take into account the complexity of the reading experience.

The differing approaches to romance reading of the women surveyed here exemplify the complexity of the relationship between gender and genre in the early modern period. On the one hand, we have Elizabeth Delaval, following strict gender conventions about proper feminine behaviour and reading habits. She also replicated the anxiety felt about the adverse effects of romances on young female readers. On the other, Dorothy Osborne openly enjoyed reading romances, and appeared to feel no inhibitions about admitting this. Osborne may have felt freer to express her literary preferences, in writing letters to personal acquaintances – although there is, of course, no guarantee that she envisaged her letters as private between her and Temple; indeed it is likely she knew that they would be read more widely, as letters were often shared between family members and friends. She clearly made a very different choice to Delaval with regards to representing her reading habits, and thus aligned herself with a different manifestation of early modern femininity, more complex than the dichotomous idealised or sexually transgressive female readers constructed by contemporary gender norms.

This way of using romantic fiction appears to have emerged in the middle of the century. Osborne and Hatton were writing in the early 1650s; Delaval in the 1670s. This

ties in with the increasing popularity of the prose romance in the mid-seventeenth century, when the genre proliferated, largely due to an influx of French texts. However, that is not to say that women were not reading romances before the 1650s; evidence from Elizabeth Isham, writing in the 1630s, and Anne Clifford (see chapter two), demonstrates the presence of romances on women's bookshelves throughout the seventeenth century. Perhaps it is simply that by the middle of the century women were more able to talk about a wide range of reading practices, and more likely to use romances in their efforts at textual self-construction.

Whatever the prescriptive conventions and moralistic conversation surrounding romance reading in the seventeenth-century, put forward mainly in advice literature, it is clear that it was not unusual for women to read romances. As Eckerle has suggested, 'romance had a firm place in early modern aristocratic life, offering an entertaining and pleasant way to pass the time, providing fodder for conversation, stimulating women's intellect and creativity, and – perhaps most importantly, if somewhat paradoxically – contributing to the impression of good breeding among elite women, for whom the genre had powerful courtly associations.'⁹⁰ While we can make such suppositions about the popularity of romantic fiction, however, it remains clear that this was an area of debate for many early modern men and women, and therefore the ways in which women choose to represent their romance reading becomes highly significant. This agency should not be forgotten in modern discussions of seventeenth-century women romance readers. It is simplistic to portray them as engaging in a frivolous pastime, or assume that their reading choices and opinions were governed by their relationships with the men in their lives.

⁹⁰ Eckerle, *Romancing the Self*, 53.

Instead, they responded in highly individual ways, and used romance reading in their construction of their own identity. Some, such as Delaval, chose to replicate tropes and narratives found in advice literature, emphasising their exemplary pious femininity and engaging in an act of self-justification. Some engaged in literary critiques, but this clearly came from familiarity with the genre. Others, such as Dorothy Osborne, Anne Clifford and Elizabeth Isham, took pleasure in their reading. Osborne in particular was keen to discuss it with others, and felt a deep, personal connection to the characters. Reading romantic fiction, and discussing it with others, provided a way for women to explore their lives and themselves, they used and adapted the genre to their own ends, through interpretation and discussion.

Gender, Genre and the 'Woman Reader'

This thesis generally has treated sex and gender as relatively stable concepts, residing in the body of the reader. However, there has been a debate in the literature surrounding romantic fiction, discussing the relationship between gender and genre, and the location of gender. This revolves around how we define the reader, and how we use gender or sex as a category. Is the response of the reader formed by their biological sex, their gender, or the genre of the book? As a concluding section, I want to question the relationship between gender, genre and the reader, and offer an alternative approach to the history of the woman reader.

The idea that socio-cultural experience informed the experience of reading was common in feminist reader-response theories of the 1980s. Caroline Lucas, writing specifically about Elizabethan romances, argued that early modern women read as women.

However, she has suggested that 'the most privileged interpretive communities have been androcentric, and this androcentricity has been absorbed in strategies and modes of

thought by all readers, women as well as men.’⁹¹ Thus women absorbed various cultural norms that informed their interpretation of and response to books, and these norms were produced in a culture primarily created by men. Lucas has pointed out that ‘reading is a learned activity, and it is inevitably shaped by gender.’ Thus the interpretive atmosphere in which women learn to read is shaped by cultural conventions which also dictate gendered behaviour.

Janice Radway, in the introduction to the 1987 British edition of *Reading the Romance*, argued that ‘similarly located readers learn a similar set of reading strategies and interpretive codes which they bring to bear upon the texts they encounter.’⁹² Her work looks at contemporary women romance readers, in an effort to blend ethnographic and literary theories of reading. Radway acknowledges shortcomings of her work in the introduction to the 1991 edition, and links it to various contemporary works of British sociology. She discusses David Morley’s suggestion that a ‘genre-based theory of interpretation ... might more adequately theorise the process of reading as a complex and interrelated series of actions which involves questions of relevance/irrelevance and comprehension/incomprehension in addition to that of ideological agreement.’⁹³ Under this interpretive model, one could explore ‘the kinds of cultural competencies that are learned as a consequence of certain social formulations and how those are activated and perpetuated within and through multiple, related genres or discourses.’⁹⁴ Thus women in certain social groupings are prepared to enjoy romances and recognise them as relevant to their own experience.

⁹¹ Caroline Lucas, *Writing for Women: The Example of Woman as Reader in Elizabethan Romance* (Milton Keynes: Open University Press, 1989), 31.

⁹² Janice A. Radway, *Reading the Romance: Women, Patriarchy, and Popular Literature* (London: Verso, 1987), 8.

⁹³ Radway, *Reading the Romance*, 10.

⁹⁴ Radway, *Reading the Romance*, 10.

An alternative view of romance reading shifts femininity to the text itself, rather than the reader. Ros Ballaster has associated femininity with the genre of amatory fiction, arguing that ‘romantic fiction can only flourish in an intellectual environment in which women’s needs and desires are perceived as different from men’s,’ and suggests that the defining features of late seventeenth-century amatory fiction are often centred around femininity.⁹⁵ Ballaster traces what she calls the ‘feminocentrism’ of writers such as Delarivier Manley, Aphra Behn and Eliza Haywood to their French predecessors such as Madeleine de Scudéry, arguing that ‘femininity in Scudéry’s romances is nothing more nor less than the organising principle of the text.’⁹⁶ The text focuses on femininity because its primary audience is women, who read differently to men.

The implications of this highly gendered nature of the genre become complicated when looking at real, rather than assumed readership. Helen Hackett has argued against the common presumption that women were the primary consumers of the romantic form for most of its history, and the idea that this was down to some sort of connection women felt with the female protagonists. She suggests that ‘the assertion that romances foreground positive female characterisations and must therefore have appealed to women depends upon highly subjective, and possibly anachronistic, definitions of what is ‘positive’.’⁹⁷ According to Hackett, there is little evidence for women reading romances in any great number before the mid-seventeenth century, apart from portrayals in conduct books, and that in the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries the main consumers of romantic fiction were actually men. However, Elizabethan and Jacobean romance writers still addressed a female readership, in Hackett’s view because they

⁹⁵ Ros Ballaster, *Seductive Forms: Women’s Amatory Fiction from 1684 to 1740* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), 35. Ballaster complicates her discussion by examining the differences within the genre, such as between ‘female-authored pious and didactic love fiction’ and erotic fiction written by women, a gap which she attributes to the early eighteenth century.

⁹⁶ Ballaster, *Seductive Forms*, 45.

⁹⁷ Helen Hackett, *Women and Romance Fiction in the English Renaissance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 6.

wanted their work to be seen as being consumed by a female audience. She argues that ‘for an author to declare that his book was designed for the pleasure of women was in effect for him to advertise his wares to readers of both sexes as racy, lightweight and fun,’ and could provide a kind of voyeuristic pleasure for his male readers.⁹⁸

Lori Humphrey Newcomb has similarly suggested that in the Elizabethan and Jacobean periods ‘men’s displacement of reading pleasures onto women’s bodies made their own reading pleasure into a kind of ‘transvestite’ experience.’⁹⁹ Followed to its logical conclusion, this argument opposes the feminist reader-response theory, in which gender is located in the body of the reader (thus women read as women and men as men, due to their socio-cultural experience). In Newcomb and Hackett’s theses, gender is instead located in the genre, and in the act of reading the reader’s gender is revealed to be fluid. If gender is taken to be experiential, then the act of reading is what determines the gender of the reading subject. This follows the argument put forward by Judith Butler, that ‘*Gender* is not a noun, but neither is it a set of free-floating attributes, for we have seen that the substantive effect of gender is performatively produced and compelled by the regulatory practices of gender coherence ... in this sense, gender is always a doing.’¹⁰⁰ Reading, as a verb, is therefore one action in which people can perform gender. This is not to put the agency of the experience on to the text; rather the reaction to and use of the culturally constructed gender of the text by the reader in any given moment is what constitutes the experience of gender. Gender is thus located in the gap in between the reader and the text: in the act or event of reading itself.

If we take this approach, the reader becomes more of an imaginative construct, detached from the sex of the individual. Gender could be determined by cultural norms, with the

⁹⁸ Hackett, *Women and Romance Fiction*, 11.

⁹⁹ Newcomb, “Gendering Prose Romance,” 129.

¹⁰⁰ Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (London: Routledge, 1990), 34.

‘feminine’ embodying a specific set of characteristics and behaviours, but this would be separate from the actions of women. The ‘woman reader’ as a category is destabilised. As has been shown throughout this thesis, the ‘woman reader’ cannot be seen as a single entity, but instead should be nuanced by intersections with other categories such as wealth, social status, religion, and political position. However, if we frame gender as lying in the *act* of reading, then this fragments the category even further. Figures such as Anne Clifford, who has been prominent in this thesis, can be looked at in a very different light.

If reading is performative in this way, then reading texts which lay outside the bounds of ‘acceptable’ genres for women would alter gender significantly. Clifford’s politically-driven reading of romances such as *Arcadia*, or Margaret Hoby and Sadleir’s use of their religious reading for disputation rather than (or alongside) devotion, allowed them to enact a more masculine practice. Sadleir’s ongoing debates with her nephew and with Roger Williams, in particular, could be seen as her using reading to perform a masculine role, allowing her to enter into complex theological debates. Her identity is separated from her body, and instead exists in the actions she takes within the epistolary relationship. Turning to the case studies surveyed in this chapter, Delaval could be seen as using genre and the act of reading to switch between performing different versions of femininity. When reading romances, therefore, her gender could be seen as the light, trivial but transgressively sexual type of femininity outlined in contemporary conduct literature, which can be seen acting as an interpretive community. Her reformation and move to reading devotional literature then allows her gender to change, to become a reflection of an ideal, godly femininity.

Similarly, the actions that constituted the active reading examined in the first section of this thesis could also be considered performative. In this way, the process of annotation a book or compiling a commonplace could be framed as assuming gender. This is a

complex and multifaceted process. In annotating her Bible, Susanna Beckwith may have assumed a largely feminine gender, although the presence of the political notes, and indeed the annotation itself, makes this a more complicated classification. Ultimately, this works if one considers gender as being a spectrum rather than two distinct sets of behaviour.¹⁰¹ If this is the case, then all readers, both male and female, assumed complex gender identities when creating reading notes.

This approach, of course, also allows (or indeed forces) us to break down the boundaries between male and female readers. If gender is a performance, this is true for men as much as it is for women. It would allow us to re-evaluate men and women's reading habits, exploring the ways in which they both crossed the boundaries of gendered behaviour, and consider men reading as women and women reading as men. This may allow scholars to broaden the history of reading, including those who do not fit the norm, and include consider a much wider range of reading practices.

Ultimately, approaching readers and reading in this way demonstrates the multifaceted nature of the 'woman reader', and the gap between sex and gender that is too often elided. It is not to suggest that the use of the category of woman reader is redundant, but rather that we need to be more aware of the complexity of that category. As argued in this section of the thesis, women readers were not necessarily 'feminine' ones, choosing and responding to their reading material in the ways outlined by advice literature as appropriate. Instead, gender was one in a range of competing identities that women could choose to highlight, alongside their social rank and religio-political beliefs.

¹⁰¹ Claire Gheeraert-Graffeulle has argued this, writing that 'le masculin et le féminin ne constituent pas deux poles séparés ... mais se situent encore sur un continuum' (the masculine and the feminine do not constitute two separate poles ... but situate themselves on a continuum'. See Claire Gheeraert-Graffeulle, "Genre et Histoire: le Cas des Mémoires Féminins de la Révolution Anglaise," *Dix-Septième Siècle* 257, no. 4 (2012): 654.

Conclusion

The passage from Lucy Hutchinson's autobiography which opened this thesis highlighted that educated women of the gentry and aristocracy could and did read widely and passionately, despite contemporary fears about the effects this might have on their health and wellbeing. As has been demonstrated, women readers in the seventeenth century engaged with many texts and genres, read in various ways, and in different spaces and places.

This thesis has argued that in developing a history of women's reading habits, we need to move away from long-accepted narratives of reading and ask different questions of the past. The idea that it is possible to trace a 'reading revolution' in the early modern period has long held sway in historiography. This, however, relied on a normatively masculine narrative, universalising the figure of the male elite intellectual. Women, and many other non-elite groups, did not necessarily fit into that narrative.

There is a strong sense of continuity when looking at the annotating and note-taking practices discussed in chapters two and three. The ways in which women make notes on their books, or created manuscript compilations of reading experiences and excerpts did not change in any significant way over the century. The move from humanist active reading to contestatory annotation described in the historiography of male readers is not evident when looking at their female peers.

On the other hand, there were some changes in the ways in which women read the news, religious texts, and romances. Romance reading did become more acceptable over the course of the century, although there is no concrete evidence that women's responses to the genre changed. In the early seventeenth century it is rare to find mentions of romance reading, which may reflect a reluctance to admit to reading (if not

necessarily a reluctance to read) the genre. In the mid-seventeenth century women such as Dorothy Osborne and Mary Hatton Helsby largely disregarded prescriptions against the romance genre, representing it in a more complex, thoughtful way than was common in contemporary rhetoric. However, Elizabeth Delaval's portrayal of romances as corrupting and transgressive in the 1670s very clearly echoed the anti-romance invective that was seen in early and mid-century advice literature.

Religious reading evidently remained popular, and was surrounded by similar rhetoric about how it should be read and the proper response throughout the seventeenth century. However, from the 1640s onwards there is increasing evidence of women reading religious controversy and reading to dispute than previously. Anne Sadleir's epistolary exchange with Roger Williams seems like a marked departure from the examples of religious reading and discussion in the early seventeenth century.

Moreover, news reading changed, even if women's interest in the news did not decrease. News reading became more common, with the increase of available print media, and there are no collections of newsletters sent to women in the 1590s that were comparable to those addressed to Anne Pole in the 1690s.

The story of seventeenth-century women's reading therefore is one of both change and continuity, and the nuances of this development are often overlooked when focusing on elite male readers from the period.

Reading Habits

In the first section of this thesis, I examined women's participation in various reading practices and cultures, which are mainstays of the grand narrative of seventeenth-century reading. What has become clear over the course of my research is that some women's reading was not 'confined,' as has been suggested by some historians, either in the sense of how they read or what they read. They used many of the practices

common to humanist and scholarly reading, but adapted them to their own ends. They may have read domestic genres such as recipe books and devotional literature, but they did so actively, appropriating the methods of annotation and note-taking to aid their comprehension and reading experience.

Moreover, gentry women read widely, engaging with developing genres such as the news. The general absence of women from historiographical discussions of seventeenth-century news, and the assumption that women simply did not read the news, is clearly disproven by the evidence of figures such as Anne Pole, Joan Barrington and Barbara Clopton. Women did read the news widely, engaging with a variety of different media. Through this reading, they were able to take part in contemporary politics, despite often being at a physical remove from the capital. However, it is also evident that our definition of 'the news' is deeply gendered. News about friends and family, or about society, is often figured as 'gossip' in modern scholarship. This thesis has touched on this issue, but not explored the idea at length. However, it is clear that if we expanded our definition of news, early modern women would become a lot more visible.

All three chapters in this section have demonstrated that women read in ways that were relevant to their everyday lives. In discounting them, as Sharpe and Zwicker do, as being 'confined' to reading household manuals, cookery books, herbals and spiritual genres, an implicit hierarchy is placed on men and women's roles in life.¹ The domestic sphere is seen as lesser than the public one, despite the fact that it could be a place in which women could wield a large amount of power and authority.² The herbals and cookery books that Sharpe and Zwicker mention were in fact often full of medical recipes, highlighting the role gentry women played as the main source of medicine

¹ Kevin Sharpe and Steven N. Zwicker, "Introduction: Discovering the Renaissance Reader," in *Reading, Society and Politics in Early Modern England*, ed. Kevin Sharpe and Steven N. Zwicker (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 13.

² See Elaine Chalus, *Elite Women in English Political Life, c.1754-1790* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).

within the household and neighbourhood. The 'spiritual genres' could be highly sectarian, and prepare women for religio-political debates within their social circles. This reading should not be discounted for not fitting the masculine norm of political or intellectual engagement.

Gendered Genres

Women also used their reading as a signifier of their gender. In recording or describing their reading in letters and diaries, women entered into a discourse with contemporary gender norms. The prevailing cultural conversation about reading and gender, at least in the early seventeenth century, declared that devotional reading was key to ideal femininity, demonstrating piety and modesty. Romance reading, however, was largely seen as transgressive, encouraging the threateningly sexual side of female nature. This binary did of course change across the course of the century, and had variations according to age and social status, but it was broadly influential on both early modern and modern discourses about genre and gender.

In writing about their reading of these two genres, then, women revealed their reactions to these gender norms. They could utilise contemporary discourse, drawing on advice literature tropes to present themselves as ideal feminine figures, reading devotional literature and eschewing romances. However, they also moved far beyond this gendered binary. They read about theology and religious controversy, using texts to support and form their religious identity. They also critically analysed romances and looked for role models within the genre. Their representations of reading in diaries, memoirs and letters, and in annotations and notebooks, allowed them to negotiate their identity in a number of ways. This could be a continual process of self-fashioning, with identity being formed in the process of both reading and writing about reading.³ Or it could be

³ This follows Kate Flint's suggestion, mentioned in the introduction. See Kate Flint, *The Woman Reader 1837-1914* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 40-41.

an effort to construct an identity for oneself in a text retrospectively; to manipulate the self into a certain figure, informed by contemporary gender norms.

This identity, however, should not be solely reduced to their gender. It is possible to question the category of 'the woman reader' itself. While this thesis has used sex as a primary method of selection, there are many other issues at play. The women in this thesis were all from wealthy families, largely classed as gentry or, in some cases, nobility. They had the ability to read and, perhaps more importantly, to write about their reading. They also had the financial resources to buy books and paper, and the time in which to read and write. They certainly would have all considered themselves women, but this does not mean that they can be taken as representative of all women readers in the seventeenth century.

Throughout this thesis, the multiplicity of ways in which women responded to cultural norms has been demonstrated. They adopted and adapted humanist reading practices based on their own personal needs and circumstances. They read the news in a variety of forms, using it as a way of engaging with events, people and places from which they were physically removed. Moreover, they used reading as a way of constructing a character for themselves in text, often influenced by, but not necessarily directly based on, contemporary gender norms. Class identity, politics and sectarianism all played significant roles in the identity construction seen in early modern women's personal writing. Anne Clifford is perhaps the most obvious example of this, using her reading to signify her aristocratic position, influenced by her long battle to reclaim her inheritance. However, she was not the only one. Even the women who made an effort to conform to a particular idealised image of early modern womanhood did so in a way that influenced their religious identity alongside their femininity.

Further studies in the history of women's reading could draw on feminist, postcolonial and queer historiography to complicate our analytical categories of gender and sex. It has been demonstrated by many scholars, particularly from postcolonial and queer studies, that the tendency to see 'women' as a uniform group (often united in being subject to patriarchal oppression) obscures the many and varied other forms of oppression that operated along class and race lines.⁴ As demonstrated, albeit briefly, in the chapter seven, framing the discussion around gender instead of sex can have markedly different conclusions. Similarly, if another cross-section of source material had been used, perhaps highlighting the reading experiences of lower class women, or that of Catholic women either within Britain or on the continent, the results would be different again.

This is not to render the category of woman irrelevant, but to argue that we need to recognise the many, multifaceted aspects of identity. Moreover, when we talk about narratives of reading, we need to be aware of the many social and cultural factors that influenced the practice of reading. The history of women's reading needs to be more nuanced, and move beyond the chronologies and questions that have held sway for so long. In doing so, we can better understand the experience of reading in early modern England, and open up our studies to groups that have so often been overlooked.

⁴ Ania Loomba and Melissa E. Sanchez, "Introduction: Why 'Feminism'? Why Now?" in *Rethinking Feminism in Early Modern Studies: Gender, Race, and Sexuality*, ed. Ania Loomba and Melissa E. Sanchez (London: Routledge, 2016), 2.

Appendix I: List of Annotated Books Consulted

Annotator(s)	Annotation date	Title	Author	Publication Date	Repository	Call Number	Inscription (I) or Marginalia (M)
Ann Avery	1678	<i>Cosmography Or, A Description of the Whole World, Rpresented (by a more exact and certain Discovery) in the Excellencies of its Scituation, Commodities, Inhabitants, and History: Of Their Particular and Distinct Governments, Religions, Arms, and Degrees of Honour used amongst Them</i>	Robert Fage	1667	Beinecke Library	2005 316	I
Lady Bacon	n.d.	<i>The Method of Phisicke, Containing the causes, signes, and cures of inward diseases in mans body from the head to the foote. Whereunto is added, the forme and rule of making remedies and medicines, which our Physitions commonly use at this day, with the proportion, quantitie, and names of each medicine</i>	Philip Barrough	1596	Huntington Library	RB 28188	I
Elizabeth Bantoft	1668	<i>Hodder's Arithemetick: Or, that necessary Art made most easie. Being explained in a way familiar to the capacity of any that desire to learn it in a little time</i>	James Hodder	1667	Beinecke Library	.Z90 14	I

Susanna Beckwith	1610s - 1620s	<i>The Bible</i>		1597	British Library	464.c.5.(1.)	M
Elizabeth Bewe; Thomas Bewe	n.d.	<i>The Mother's Blessing. Or, The godly Counsell of a Gentle-woman, not long since deceased, left behinde her for her Children. Containing many good exhortations, and good admonitions profitable for all Parents to leave as a Legacy for their Children</i>	Dorothy Leigh	1640	Folger Library	STC 15408	I
Margaret Carpenter; Elizabeth Carpenter	Both n.d.	<i>Ariana. In Two Parts. As it was translated out of the French, and presented to my Lord Chamberlaine</i>	Jean Desmarets de Saint-Sorlin	1641	Beinecke Library	Hfc31 010	I
Elizabeth Cary (translator)	n.d. [likely c.1630]	<i>The Reply of the Most Illustrious Cardinall of Perron, to the Ansvveare of the most excellent King of Great Britaine. The First Tome. Translated into English</i>	Jacques Davy du Perron	1630	Beinecke Library	Me65 D925 +R4G 1630	M [translation notes and corrections]
Rachel Cary, Viscountess of Falkland; Lucy [Cary?]	1664	<i>The Fruitlesse Precaution. The Hypocrites. The Innocent Adultery. Paraphras'd out of the Spanish into French, by Mounsieur Scarron: Into English, By J.D.,</i>	Paul Scarron	1659	Beinecke Library	2005 233	I
Anne Clifford	1625	<i>Barclay his Argenis: Or, The Loves of Poliarchus and Argenis: Faithfully translated out of Latine into English, By Kingesmill Long, Gent.</i>	John Barclay	1625	Huntington Library	RB 97024	M
Anne Clifford	1669	<i>The Court and Character of King James. Whereunto is now added the Court of King Charles: Continued Unto</i>	Anthony Weldon	1651	Cumbria Record Office	WD/Hoth/A988/22	M

		<i>the beginning of these unhappy Times. With some Observations upon Him instead of a Character. Collected and perfected by Sir A. W.</i>					
Penelope Compton; Ann Compton	1652; n.d.	<i>The History of Don Fenise. A New Romance, Written in Spanish by Francisco de las-Coveras. And now Englished by a Person of Honour,</i>	Francisco de Quintana	1651	Beinecke Library	He67 82	I
Margaret Corbyn; Elizabeth Farmer	n.d.; 1685	<i>A Tragi-Comicall History of Our Times, Under the Borrowed Names of Lisander and Calista</i>	Vital d'Audiguier	1635	Folger Library	STC 907 (copy 1)	I
Mary Courtenay	1670	<i>The First Part of a Treatise Concerning Policy, and Religion. Wherein the infirmitie of humane wit is amply declared, with the necessitie of Gods grace, and true Religion for the perfection of policy; And by the way some political matters are treated; Divers principles of Macchiavel confuted; And many advises geven, tending no lesse to religious piety, then to true policy; With a confutation of the arguments of Atheists, against the providence of God, which is clearly proved throughout the whole</i>	Thomas Fitzherbert	1606	Folger Library	STC 11017 (copy 2)	I
Frances Egerton, Countess of Bridgewater;	1623	<i>The Historie, and Lives, of the Kings of England; from William the Conqueror, unto the end of the Reigne of King Henrie the Eight</i>	William Martyn	1615	Huntington Library	RB 645687	M

Elizabeth [Egerton]							
Elizabeth Gell	1679	<i>England's Remembrancer: Being a Collection of Farewel-Sermons, Preached by divers Non-Conformists in the Country</i>	Anon.	1663	Beinecke Library	Mhc7 En34	I
Elisa Gregor	1696	<i>Travels Thro' Germany, Swisserland, Bohemia, Holland; and other Parts of Europe: Describing the most Considerable Citys, and the Palaces of Princes: Together, with Historical Relations, and Critical Observations upon Ancient Medals and Incriptions</i>	Charles Patin	1697	Clark Library	D915 .P29E 1697 *	I
Jane Hanley	n.d.	<i>The Seaman's Spiritual Companion: Or, Navigation Spiritualised. Being a New Compass for Seamen. Consisting of Thirty-two Points; Directing every Christian how to Stear the Course of his Life, through all Storms and Tempests; Fit to be Read, and seriously Perused by all such as desire their Eternal Welfare</i>	William Balmford	1678	Huntington Library	RB 633421	I
Eleanor Hatcher; Rachel Dando; Rachel Wilson; Sarah Baylie	1666; n.d.; n.d.; n.d.	<i>Delights for the Ladies, to adorne their Persons, Tables, Closets, and Distillatories: With Beauties, Banquets, Perfumes, and Waters, bound with A Closet for Ladies and Gentlewomen, or The Art of preserving, Conserving, and Candyng. With the manner how to make diverse kindes of Syrupes: and all</i>	Hugh Plat, Hannah Woolley	1617, 1618	Beinecke Library	2005 970	M

		<i>kinde of banquetting stuffles. Also divers souveraigne Medicines and Salves for sundry Diseases.</i>					
Elizabeth Hathway	1694	<i>Certaine Comfortable Sermons upon the 124. Psalme: tending to stirre up to thankfulnessse for our deliverance from the late Gunpowder-treason: preached before the Lady Elizabeth her Grace, at Combe: by Daniel Dike preacher of the word of God</i>	Daniel Dyke	1616	Huntington Library	RB 434271	I
Elizabeth Herbert; Nathaniel Herbert	1679	<i>Publick Employment and an Active Life with all it Appanages, Such as Fame, Command, Riches, Conversation, &c. Prefer'd to Solitude. In Reply to a late Ingenious Essay of a contrary Title</i>	John Evelyn	1667	Folger Library	E3511a	I
Margaret Hoby	n.d.	<i>A Treatise of the Church, Wherein are Handled the Principall Questions Mooued in our Time Concerning that Matter</i>	Philip of Mornai	1606	York Minster Library	Hackness 66	I
Margaret Hoby	n.d.	<i>Pseudo-Martyr. Wherein Out of Certaine Propositions and Gradations, This Conclusion is Evicted. That Those Which Are of the Romane Religion in This Kingdome, May and Ought to Take the Oath of Allegiance</i>	John Donne	1610	York Minster Library	Hackness 57	M
Margaret Hoby	1600	<i>Fowre Bookes, of the Institution, Use and Doctrine of the Holy Sacrament of the Eucharist in the Old Church. As Likewise, How, When, And by what</i>	Philip of Mornai	1600	York Minster Library	Hackness 47	M

		<i>Degrees the Masse if Brought in, in place thereof</i>					
Philadelphia Hutchins	1694	<i>Counsel to the Afflicted: Or, Instruction and Consolation for such as have suffered Loss by Fire. With Advice to such as have escaped that sore Judgement. Contained in the Resolution of three Questions, occasioned by the Dreadful Fire in the City of London, in the Year 1666</i>	Owen Stockton	1667	Huntington Library	RB 316321	I
Elizabeth Jolyff	1663	<i>The Infallible True and Assured Witch: Or, the Second Edition of the Tryall of Witchcraft. Shewing the Right and True Method of the Discoverie: With a Confutation of Erroneous Waies, Carefully Reviewed and more fully cleared and Augmented</i>	John Cotta	1625	Folger Library	STC 5838	I
Mary Kemp; Robert Kemp	n.d.	<i>Admirable Events: Selected out of Foure Bookes, Written in French by the Right Reverend, John Peter Camus, Bishop of Belley. Together with morall Relations, written by the same Author, and translated into English by S. Du Verger</i>	Jean-Pierre Camus	1639	Clark Library	PQ1735 C3 E9E *	I
Ruth Marsh	1696/7	<i>The Excellent Woman Described by her True Characters and their Opposites</i>	Jacques du Bosc	1692	Huntington Library	RB 344780	I
Anne Paule	1660	<i>Certaine select prayers gathered out of S. Augustines meditations, : whiche he calleth his selfe talke with God</i>	Saint Augustine	1574	Bodleian Library	Don. f.328	I

Sarah Pinchbeck	1693	<i>A Thousand Notable Things of Sundry sorts, enlarged. Whereof some are Wonderful, some Strange, some Pleasant, divers Necessary, a great sort Profitable, and many very Precious. Whereunto is now added, many Excellent New Conceits never before Printed, very Witty, Useful and Delightful</i>	Thomas Lupton	1686	Clark Library	AG104 .L96 1686 *	I
Maria Rosaea	1658	<i>Argalus and Parthenia: the Argument of ye History</i>	Francis Quarles	1635	Huntington Library	RB 645646	I
Anne Sadleir	1649	<i>The Trinity Apocalypse</i>	Anon.	13 th century	Wren Library, Trinity College	R.16.2	I
Joanna Soame	1700	<i>A New Family-Book; Or, the True Interest of Families. Being Directions to Parents and Children, and to those who are instead of Parents; shewing them their several Duties, and how they may be Happy in one another. Together with several Prayers for Families and Children, and Graces before and after Meat. To which is annexed a Discourse about the Right Way of Improving our Time</i>	James Kirkwood	1693	Huntington Library	RB 373915	I
Mary Spencer	1656	<i>The History of this Iron Age: Wherein is set down the true state of Europe, as it was in the year 1500. Also, the Original, and Causes of all the Warres,</i>	Jean-Nicholas de Parival	1656	Clark Library	D246 .P23E *	I

		<i>and Commotions, that have happened: Together with a Description of the most memorable Battels, Sieges, Actions and Transactions, both in Court and in Camp, form that time till this present year 1656</i>					
Anne Townshend	n.d.	<i>The History of Poleanxander: in Five Bookes. Done into English by William Browne, Gent. For the Right Honourable Philip, Earle of Pembroke and Montgomery, &c.</i>	M. Le Roy Gomberville	1647	Huntington Library	RB 113855	I
Elizabeth Verney	n.d.	<i>A perfect Pathway to Felicitie, Containing godlie Meditations, and Prayers, fit for all times, and necessarie to be practiced of all good Christians</i>	Philip Stubbes	1610	Huntington Library	RB 42269	I
Frances Wolfreston	n.d.	<i>The Travels of Persiles and Sigismunda. A Northern History. Wherein, amongst the variable Fortunes of the Prince of Thule, and this Princesse of Frisland, are interlaced many Witty Discourses, Morall, Politicall, and Delightfull. The first Copie, beeing written in Spanish; translated afterward into French; and now, last, into English</i>	Miguel de Cervantes	1619	Clark Library	<u>PQ6329 .T77 1619</u> * -	I
Frances Wolfreston	n.d.	<i>The mothers blessing: or, The godly counsaile of a gentle-woman, not long since deceased, : left behind her for her children: contayning many good</i>	Dorothy Leigh	1622	Bodleian Library	Vet. A2 f.408	I

		<i>exhortations, and godly admonitions profitable for all parents, to leaue as a legacy to their children,</i>					
Frances Wolfreton	n.d.	<i>Certaine select prayers gathered out of S. Augustines meditations, : whiche he calleth his selfe talke with God</i>	Saint Augustine	1575	Bodleian Library	Vet. A1 f.290	I
Frances Wolfreton; various	1666-1677	Bound collection of Poor Robin and Dade almanacks		1666-1679, 1690, 1693, 1702-1705	Bodleian Library	MS. Don. e. 246	M
Frances Wolfreton	n.d.	<i>Fortunes Lottery: Or, A Book of News worth the hearing. Containing many pretty passages concerning the times which will prove to be delightfull to the Readers, pleasant to the Hearer, comfortable to the Buyer, profitable to the Seller, and hurtfull to no man. Whereunto is added a most excellent Song, shewing how a noble Ship of Bristoll, called the Angel Gabriell, fought against three of Spains great Ships, and overmastered them all, to the honour ad credit of England</i>	Laurence Price	1657	Huntington Library	RB 51804	I
Frances Wolfreton	n.d.	<i>The Witts. A Comedie, Presented at the Private House in Blacke Fryers, by his Majesties Servants</i>	William D'Avenant	1636	Huntington Library	RB 60154	I
Frances Wolfreton	n.d.	<i>Wit in A Constable. A Comedy written 1639</i>	Henry Glapthorne	1640	Huntington Library	RB 59942	I
Frances Wolfreton	n.d.	<i>Solomons Recantation, Entitled Ecclesiastes, Paraphrased. With a Soliloquie or Meditation upon every</i>	Francis Quarles	1648	Huntington Library	RB 147373	I

		<i>Chapter. Very Seasonable and Usefull for these times. By Francis Quarles. With a Short Relation of His Life and Death</i>					
Frances Wolfreston	n.d.	<i>Englands Complaint: Against Her adjoining neighbours the Scots. Occasioned by the factious Covenanters, in their disloyalty to his Sacred Majesty, this present yeare, 1640</i>	Wye Saltonstall	1640	Huntington Library	RB 31854	I
Frances Wolfreston	n.d.	<i>A Fine Companion. Acted before the King and Queene at White-Hall, and sundrie times with great applause at the private House in Salisbury Court, By the Prince his Servants</i>	Shakerley Marmion	1633	Huntington Library	RB 62472	I
Frances Wolfreston	n.d.	<i>A Treatise of the Immortalitie of the Soule: Wherein is declared the Origine, Nature, and Powers of the same, together with the state and condition thereof, both as it is conioyned and dissolved from the body</i>	John Woolton	1576	Huntington Library	RB 449194	I
Frances Wolfreston	n.d.	<i>A Subpaena from the high Imperiall Court of Heaven, to bee served upon all men: upon an Information preferred by Justice against Man-kinde. With the Answer, and Reply from Mercie, and her directions how to come to Heaven, if we avoyd Sinne</i>	John Andrewes	1620	Huntington Library	RB 48298	I
Frances Wolfreston	n.d.	<i>The Number and Names of all the Kings of England and Scotland, From</i>	John Taylor	1649	Huntington Library	RB 148050	I

		<i>the beginning of their Governments to this Present. As also how long each of them Reigned, how many of them came to untimely Ends, either by Imprisonments, Banishments, Faine, Killing of themselves, Poyson, Drowning, Beheading, falling from Horses, Slaine in Battells, Murthered, or otherwise</i>					
Frances Wolfreston	n.d.	Collection of 16 pamphlets, largely theological	Various, including John Andrewes, William Knowles, Charles Hammond	Various, c.1642-1668	British Library	Cup.408.d.8(2)	I + M
Frances Wolfreston	n.d.	<i>The Workes of Geffray Chaucer: newly printed with dyuers workes whiche were neuer in print before, as in the table more playnly dothe appere</i>	Geoffrey Chaucer	1550?	Folger Library	STC 5074 (copy 2)	I

Appendix II: List of Manuscript Compilations and Notebooks Consulted

Author(s)/Compiler(s)	Manuscript category	Date	Repository	Call Number	Notes
Anon	Commonplace book	c.1682	Beinecke Library	Osborn b216	Gift inscription to 'Maddam Baker', alongside several pen trials of male and female names. Notes on sermons and collection of poems and play extracts
Anon	Commonplace book	17 th and 18 th century	Brotherton Library	BC MS Lt 102	Legal warrants, culinary and medical recipes, mathematical notes, verse
Katherine Austen	Collectanea	1664-1668	British Library	Add MS 4454	Meditations, memoranda, and verse, along with family notes
Margaret Baker	Recipe book	c.1675	Folger Library	V.a.619	Medical and culinary recipes
Elizabeth Beere	Recipe book	17 th century	British Library	Sloane MS 2488	Medical and culinary recipes
Elizabeth Bertie	Recipe book	c.1632	Bodleian Library	MSS Eng. misc. d. 436	Recipe collection
Hannah Bisaker	Recipe book	1692	Wellcome Library	MS.1176	Largely culinary recipes

Mary Carey	Meditations	1649-1658	Folger Library	V.a.628	Collection of meditations and poems, dedicated to her husband, George Payler
Frances Catchmay	Recipe book	1625	Wellcome Library	MS.184a	Culinary and medical recipes, gift inscription to her
Mariabella Charles	Recipe book	c.1678	Clark Library	MS.1950.009	Culinary recipes and home remedies
Francis Cholmondeley	Commonplace book	c.1652	Beinecke Library	Osborn b103	Singed by Elizabeth Cholmondeley
Anne Clifford	Great Books of Record	c.1649	Cumbria Record Office	WD/HOTH/1/10	3 volumes, detailing family's lineage and family accounts
Sarah Cowper	Miscellany	c.1670-1706	Hertfordshire archives and local studies	D/EP F36	Collection of poems and prose, largely covering history, politics and travel
Sarah Cowper	Commonplace book	c.1673-1710	Hertfordshire archives and local studies	D/EP F37	Alphabetical collection of commonplaces
Sarah Cowper	Miscellany	c.1675-1684	Hertfordshire archives and local studies	D/EP F38	Religious writings and prayers
Sarah Cowper	Miscellany	c.1683	Hertfordshire archives and local studies	D/EP F40A	Excerpts from Plutarch and other miscellaneous items

Sarah Cowper	Miscellany	c.1690-1698	Hertfordshire archives and local studies	D/EP F43	Prose excerpts, largely religious
Sarah Cowper	Miscellany	c.1700	Hertfordshire archives and local studies	D/EP F44	Prose excerpts, largely religious, and personal meditations on the Bible
Elizabeth Cavendish Egerton	Meditations	1663	British Library	Egerton MS 607	Prayers, meditations and devotional pieces collected posthumously
Elizabeth Cavendish Egerton	Meditations on the Old Testament	c.1620	Huntington Library	RB 297343	Meditations on chapters of the Old Testament, bears a Bridgewater bookplate
Ann Fanshawe	Recipe book	1651-1707	Wellcome Library	MS7113	Signed by Fanshawe's amanuensis, Joseph Averie, and her daughter (1678)
Frances Fitzherbert	Manuscript miscellany	c.1693-1703	Beinecke Library	Osborn b435	Dedicated to Lady Elizabeth Cromwell
Elizabeth Fowler	Recipe book	1684	Folger Library	V.a.468	Mostly culinary recipes, some sermons in a different hand
Elizabeth Freke	Commonplace book	1684-1714	British Library	Add MS 45718	Accounts, recipes, diary entries
Anne Mary Fust	Religious miscellany	1683-1710	Folger Library	V.a.448	Sermons, prayers and a poem, signed by several women

Mary Grosvenor	Recipe book	1649	British Library	Sloane MS 3235	Medical recipes
Elizabeth Hastings	Meditations	1633	Huntington Library	mssHM 15369	Collection of prayers, some notes from biblical exegesis
Hornyold family	Recipe book	1662-1722	Clark Library	MS.2012.011	Culinary and medical recipes, accounts for Haley castle (1722). Signatures of various women on front paste-down and free endpapers
Sarah Horsington	Manuscript compilation	1666	Clark Library	MS.2009.015	Mix of culinary and medical recipes, and extracts from scientific texts
Sarah Hudson	Recipe book	1678	Wellcome Library	MS.2954	Culinary and medical recipes
Lucy Hutchinson, Anne Rochester	<i>Order and disorder: or, the world made and undone, being meditations upon the creation and fall, as it is recorded in the beginning of Genesis</i>	c.1664-1679	Beinecke Library	Osborn fb100	Manuscript presentation copy, signed (1664) and with marginal corrections by Anne St John Wilmot, Countess of Rochester (mother of the poet)
Elizabeth (Lake) Jekyll	Commonplace book	1643-1685	Beinecke Library	Osborn b221	Religious reflections, diary entries, original verse

Anne and Roger Ley	Commonplace book	c.1623-1667	Clark Library	MS.1952.003	Written by both Anne and Roger Ley, mix of extracts and original compositions
Elizabeth Lowther	Commonplace book	c.1689	West Yorkshire Archive Service, Kirklees	DD/RA/F/1	Largely accounts and letters
Elizabeth Lyttelton	Commonplace book	c.1680	Cambridge University Library	MS Add 8460	Prose and poetry extracts, religious aphorisms, some original compositions by Thomas Browne
Elizabeth Newell	Collection of devotional verse	c.1655-1668	Beinecke Library	Osborn b49	8 religious poems, four pages of psalms
Elizabeth Sleigh and Felicity Whitfield	Recipe book	c.1647	Wellcome Library	MS 751	Collection of culinary and medical recipes, inventory of Sleigh's books at the end
Joanna Sudell	Recipe book	1688-1751	Clark Library	MS.1950.023	Culinary and medical recipes
Anne Wentworth Watson	Commonplace book	17 th century	Beinecke Library	Osborn b285	Latin exercises and essays
Mary Webber	Commonplace book	1694	Beinecke Library	Osborn b202	9 hymns and religious poems
Rebecca Winch	Recipe book	c.1666	Folger Library	V.b.366	Culinary and medical recipes
Ursula Wyvill	Commonplace book	c.1662-1672	Beinecke Library	Osborn b222	143 religious reflections and prayers

Appendix III: Part One Accompanying Images

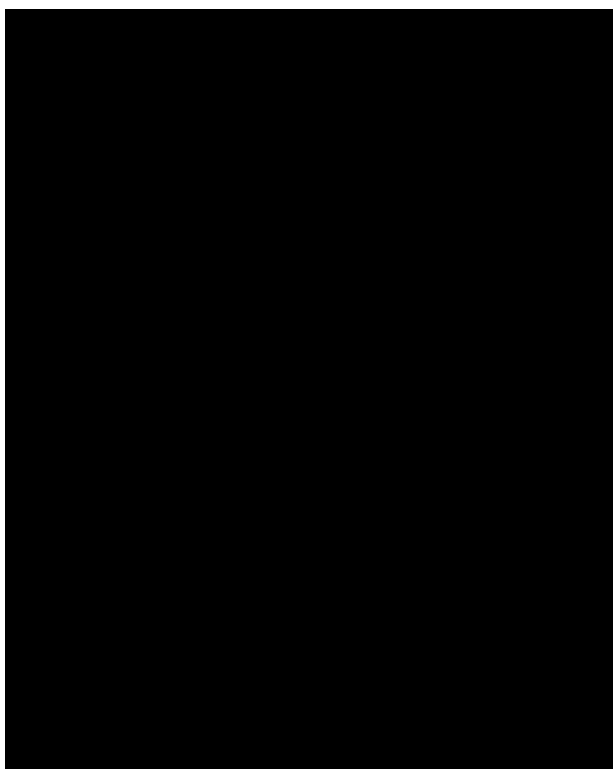


Figure 1: Anthony Weldon, The Court and Character of King James, 165. WD/Hoth/A988/22, Cumbria Record Office. Source: Author



Figure 2: Weldon, The Court and Character of King James, 171. WD/Hoth/A988/22, Cumbria Record Office. Source: Author

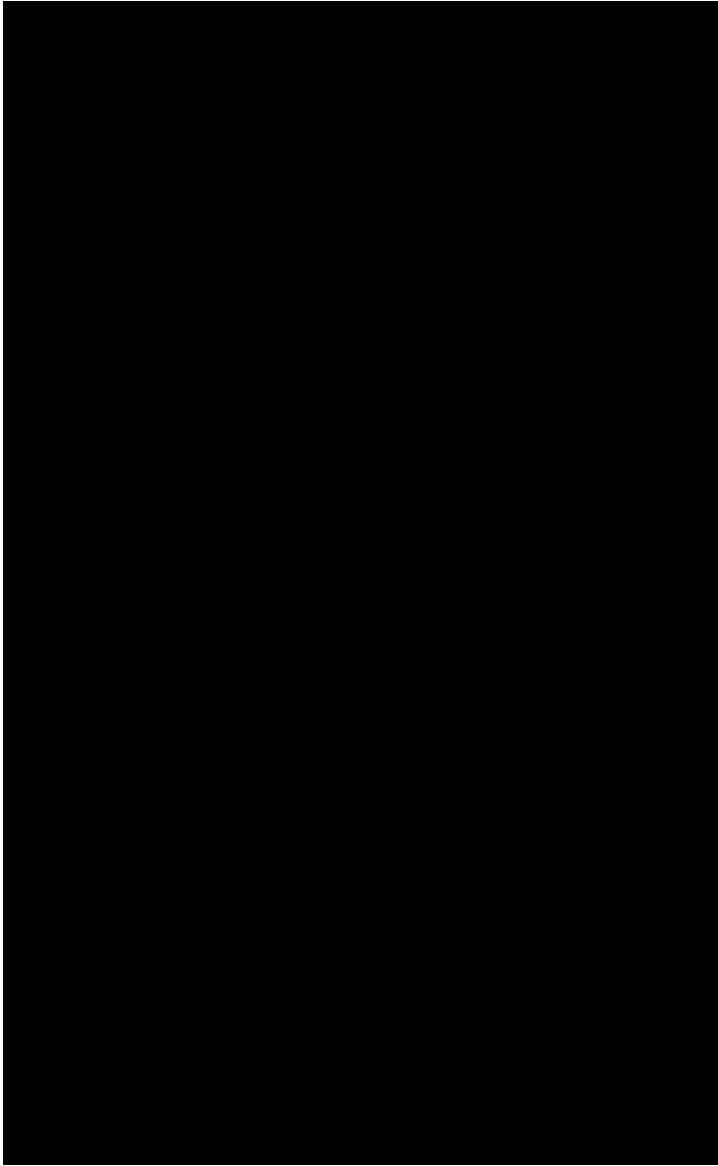


Figure 3: Susanna Beckwith's Bible, Isa.66, 464.c.5(1), British Library. Source: Author

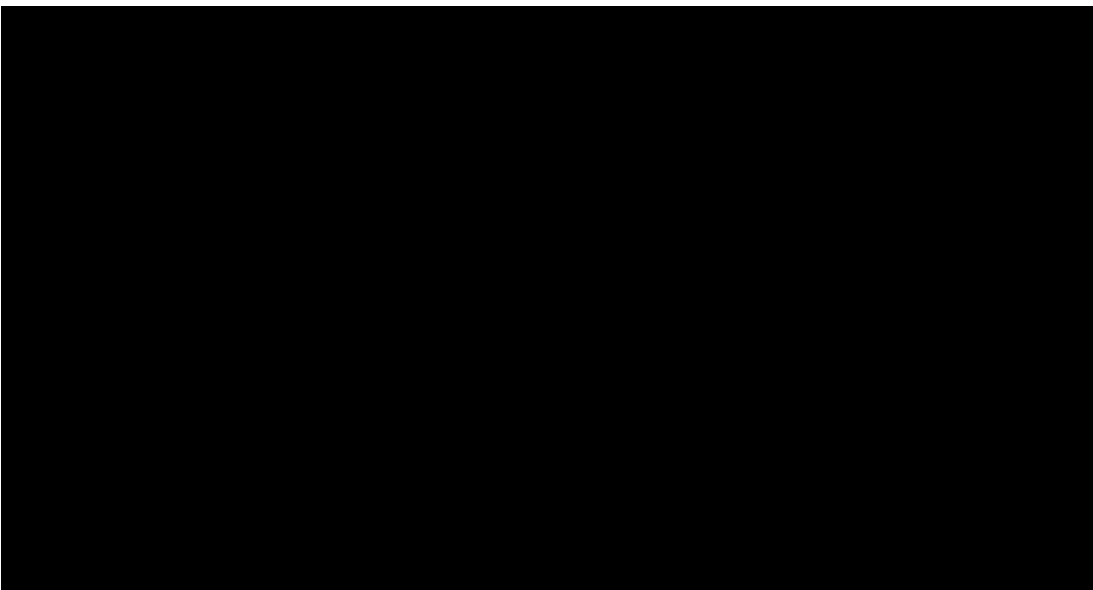


Figure 4: Vital d'Audiguier, A Tragi-Comicall History of Our Times, STC 907 (copy 1), Folger Library. Source: Author

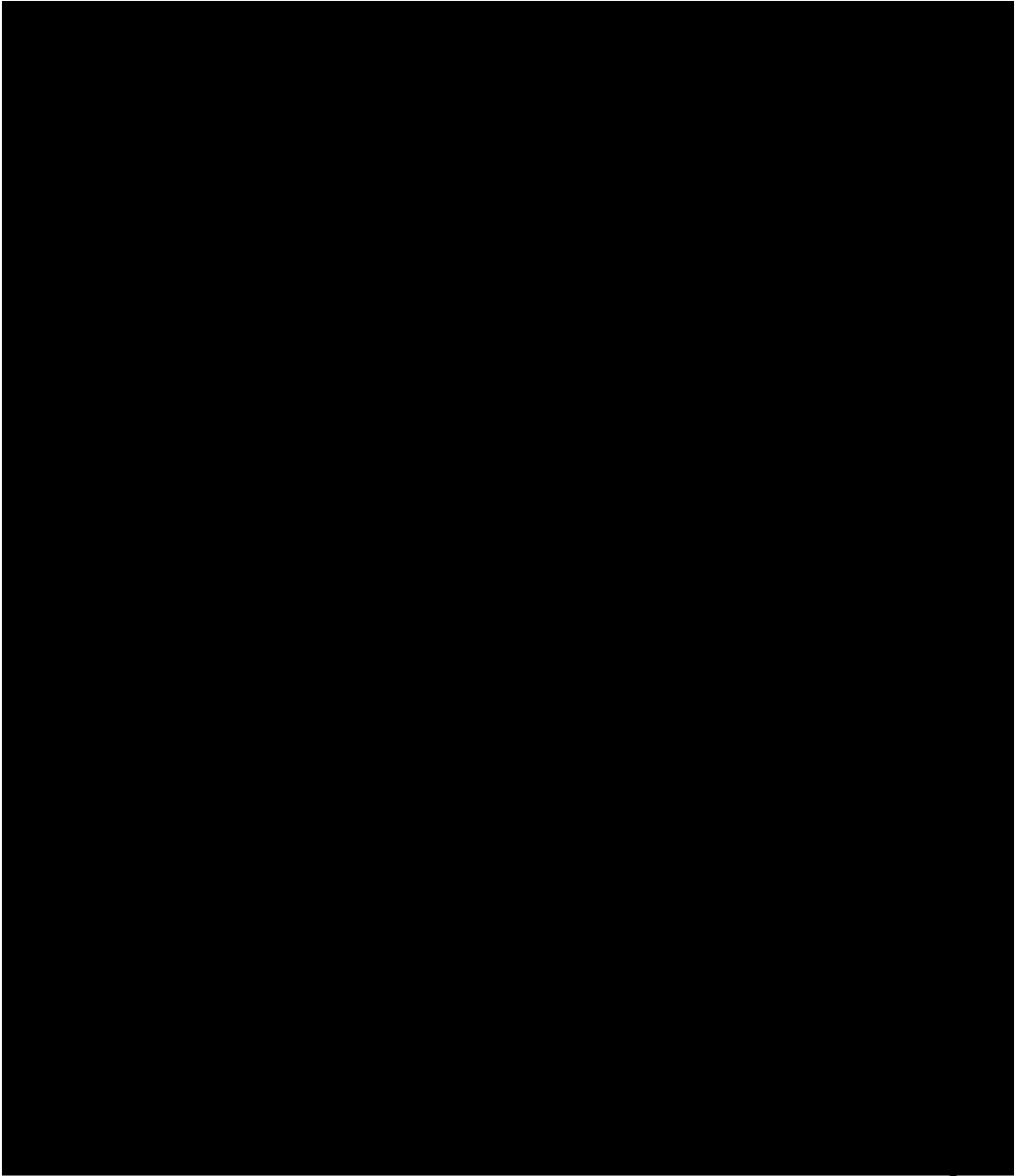


Figure 5: John Evelyn, Publick Employment and an Active Life, E3511a, Folger Library. Source: Author



Figure 6: Frances Fitzherbert, Manuscript Miscellany, c. 1693-103, Osborn b435, Beinecke Library. Source: Author

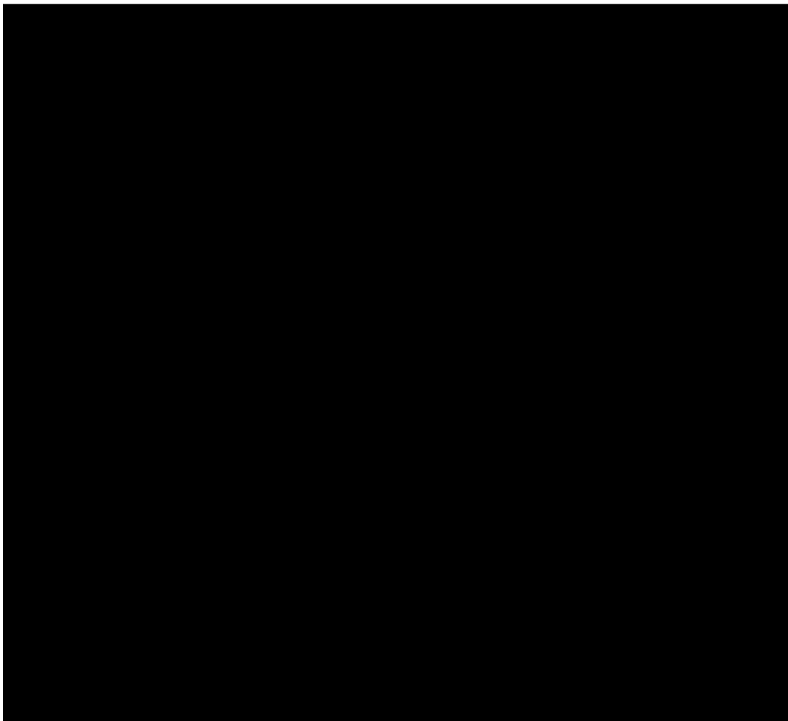


Figure 7: Francis Cholmondeley, Commonplace Book, c. 1652, Osborn b103, Beinecke Library. Source: Author

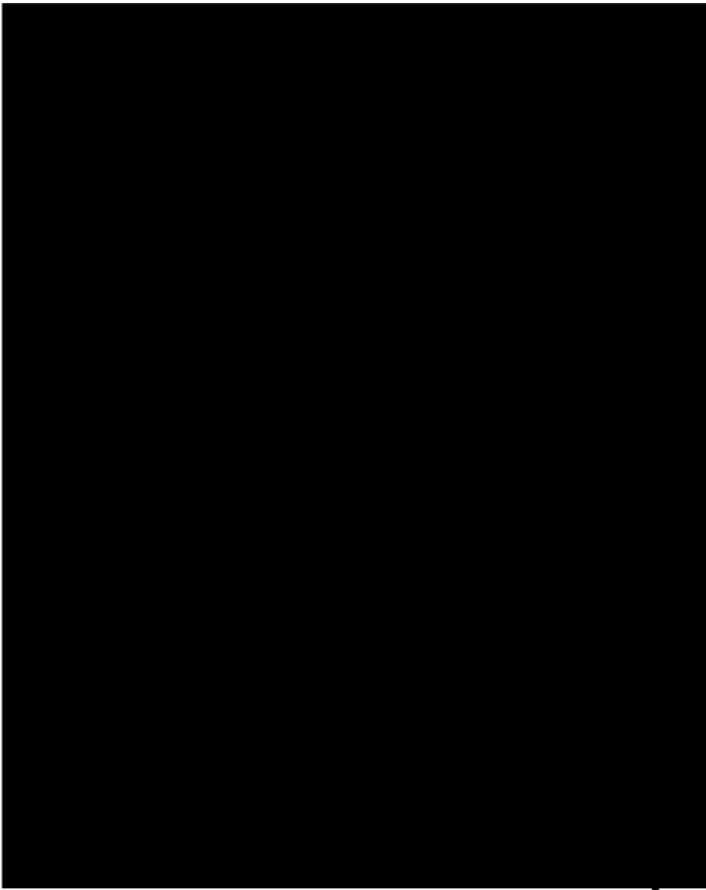


Figure 8: Elizabeth Lowther, Commonplace Book, DD/RA/F/1, West Yorkshire Archive Service. Source: Author

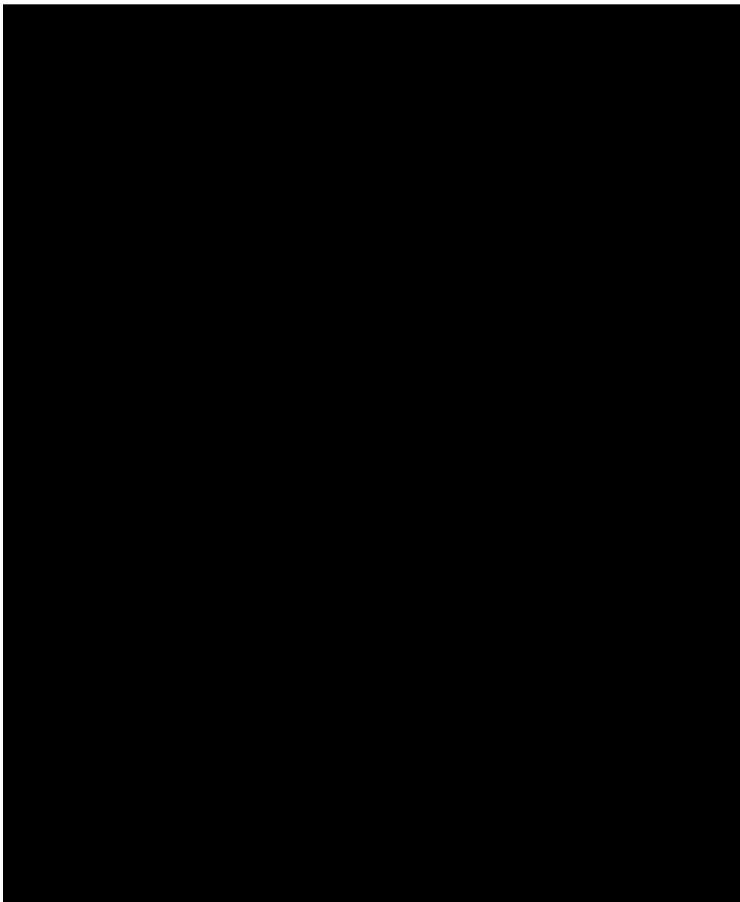


Figure 9: Sarah Horsington, Arcana, 1666, MS.2009.015, Clark Library. Source: Author

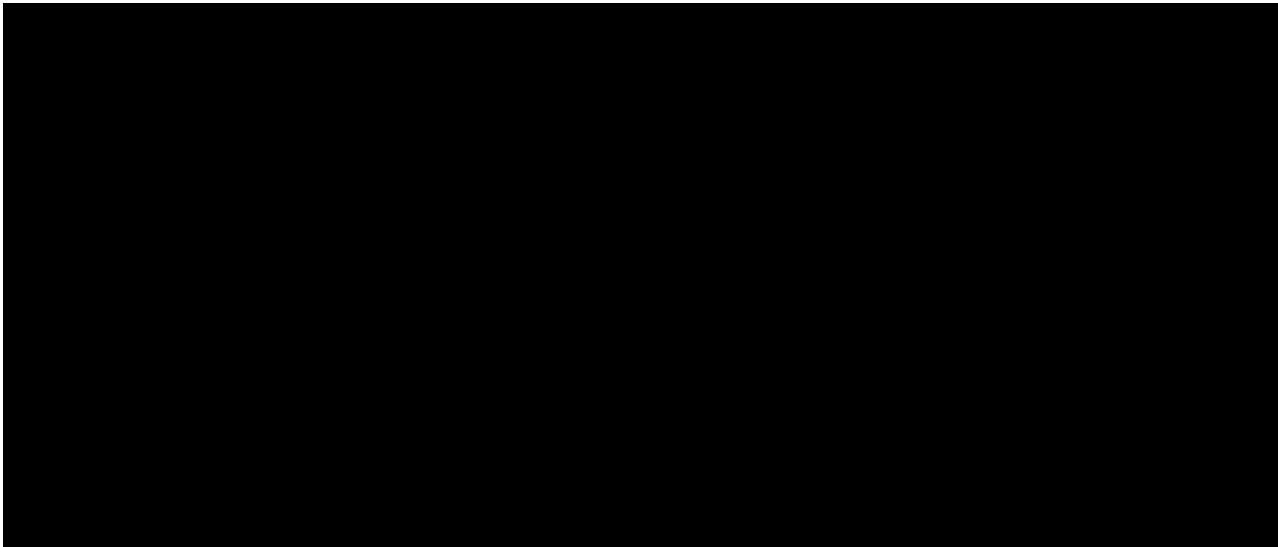


Figure 10: 21st - 24th Dec 1695, box 3, folder 38, MS.1951.021, Clark Library. Source: Author

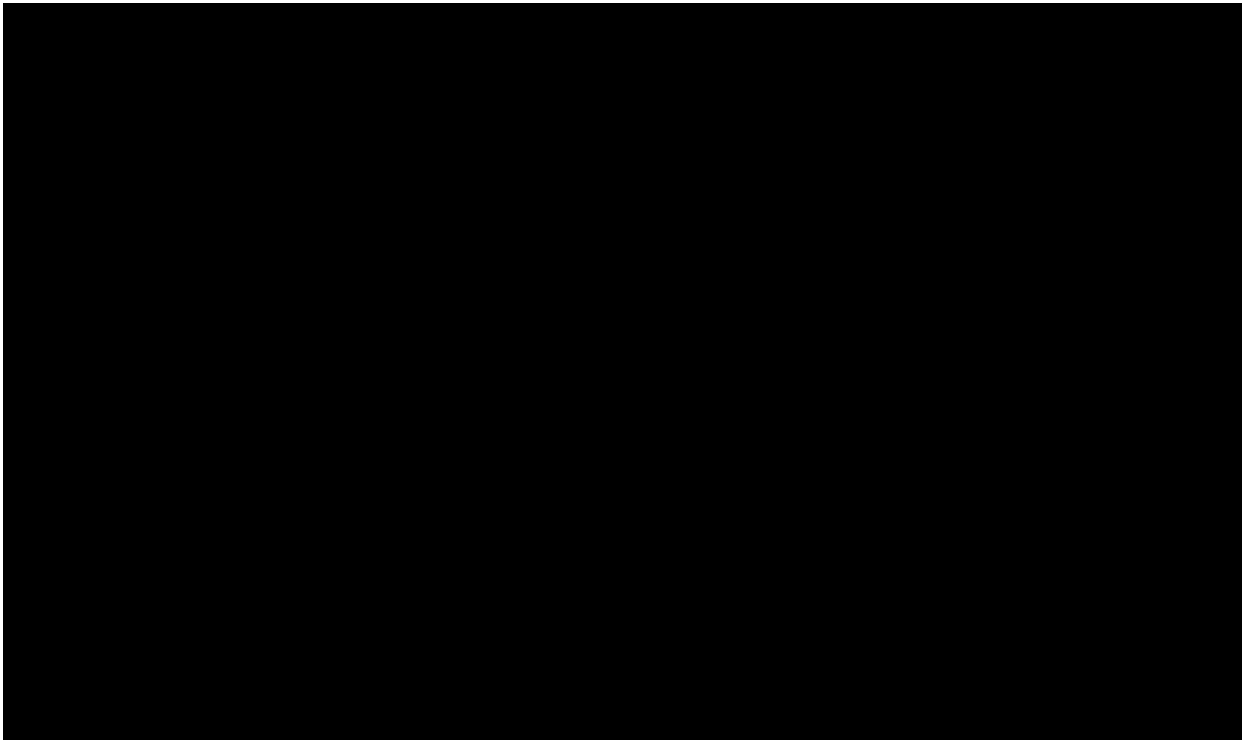


Figure 11: 14th June 1692, box 1, folder 21, OSB MSS 60, Beinecke Library. Source: Author



Figure 12: Box 3, folder 44, MS.1951.021, Clark Library. Source: Author

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