

## Abstract

This thesis examines the private and domestic life of the female aristocracy in the period 1685-1858, through a study of the families of four Yorkshire country houses: Harwood House, Castle Howard, Thorp Newton and Burton Constable. The ways that women managed the household and the lives of these houses; their roles as daughters, wives, and mothers, and the ways that they were perceived by others are all considered in order to understand the nature of a woman's domestic life in this period. The thesis is based on a study of the lives of these women, and the ways that they were perceived by others. It is possible to trace their responses to their roles and experiences.

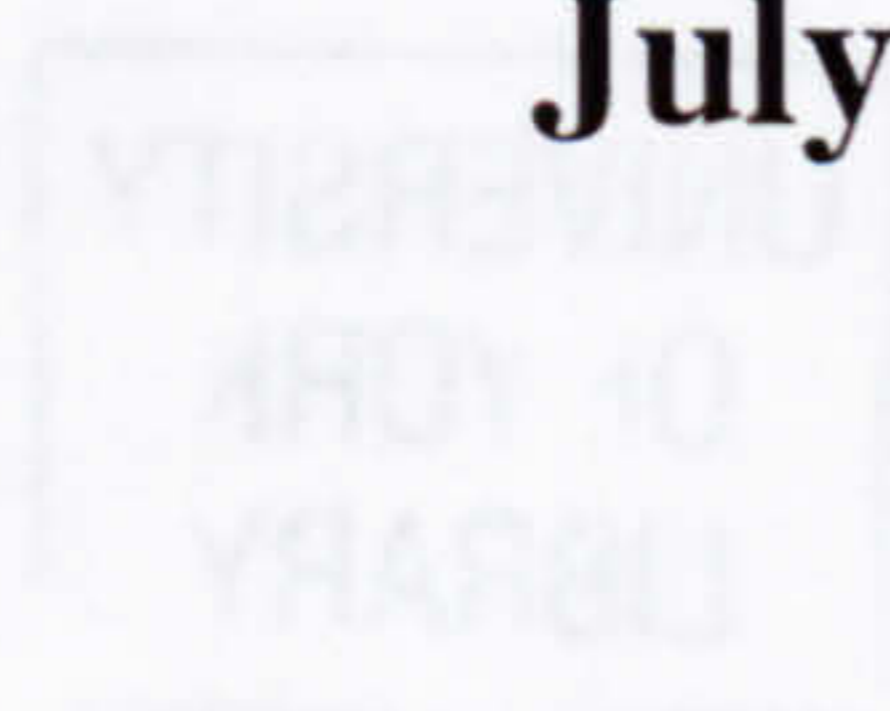
# **Dynastic Domesticity: The Role of Elite Women in the Yorkshire Country House, 1685-1858**

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## Abstract

This thesis examines the familial and domestic life of the female aristocracy in the period 1685-1858, through a study of the families of four Yorkshire country houses: Harewood House; Castle Howard; Temple Newsam and Burton Constable. The ways that women managed the domestic arrangements of these houses; their roles as daughters, wives, and mothers; and their reactions to widowhood, old age and death are all considered in order to understand the nature of country-house life in this period. The thesis is based on original archival research, and through the letters, notebooks and other writings, it has been possible to trace their responses to their roles and experiences.

The thesis is separated into three sections. The first section explores the relationship between women and the house, and their involvement in its design, management and shape. The 'performative' nature of household activities is discussed; I argue that some elite women 'acted' out the domestic roles associated with women during this period in order to demonstrate both their femininity and their position as aristocrats. The second section focuses on the intimate family life of aristocratic women, and the emotional ties that shaped their lives. It explores the degree of affection within the elite family, and demonstrates that the women who form the basis of this survey were normally at the centre of happy and loving households. The thesis finishes with an exploration of the lives of those elite women who do not fit into conventional pictures of the country-house family: single and widowed women; the elderly and those suffering from ill health; the dying and the bereaved. The care that was extended to many of these women by their relatives and the systems of support that were available are considered, demonstrating how crucial familial ties were to elites during this period.

Throughout the thesis the role that the women studied played in the Yorkshire country house and the importance of affection in the family is emphasised. The dual concerns of the domestic and the dynastic are highlighted, and I argue that there was a distinctive form of aristocratic domesticity, 'dynastic domesticity', that shaped the nature of elite family life during the long eighteenth century.

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## List of Abbreviations

|         |  |
|---------|--|
| n.d.    | No date given on the document.                         |
| n.y.    | No year given on the document.                         |
| ERYARS. | East Riding of Yorkshire Archives and Records Service. |
| PRO.    | Public Record Office.                                  |
| WYAS.   | West Yorkshire Archive Service.                        |

### **Note regarding the names used to identify the aristocratic women referred to within the study**

Confusion can arise because of the number of different names that aristocratic women used during their lifetime. For simplicity's sake, women are consistently described in the following terms throughout the thesis, except when quoting from another source:

- The title of the woman is formed to act as her surname. For example: Blanche, Countess Burlington is described as Blanche Burlington.
- Women are uniformly described by the highest title that they held, normally the title they died with. For example: Harriet Howard, whose married surname was Leveson-Gower, and first title was Countess Gower, is described throughout as Harriet Sutherland, even when discussing periods before she gained the title of Duchess of Sutherland.
- The term 'dowager' is not generally used.

There are two exclusions to this rule. Firstly Jane Coleman (1732-1813) who married Edwin Lascelles, Lord Harewood in 1770, kept the title of her first husband, and so is known throughout as Jane Fleming. Secondly, although genealogical sources note that Elizabeth Ingram (1734-1770) married Nathaniel Bailey in 1767, there is no record of this in the documents, and so she is referred to as Elizabeth Ingram throughout.

Appendix One acts as a biographical index to aid identification of the different women. Appendix Two provides family trees, so that the different women can be located within the wider family.

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# Introduction

*Women in particular all want to be ladies, which is simply to have nothing to do, but listlessly to go they scarcely care where for they cannot tell what.*

Mary Wollstonecraft, 1792.<sup>1</sup>

The image of the elite woman of the long eighteenth century has been subject to satire, invention and misunderstanding. Contemporary commentators, such as Mary Wollstonecraft, criticized and attacked wealthy and fashionable women, and these assessments have continued to have currency in the work of twentieth-century historians. Elite women were condemned for lacking utility and enjoying indolent, uneducated, selfish lifestyles. During the seventeenth century, the negative stereotype of the wife was: 'the idle city dame, ever gadding, ever gossiping and tattling'.<sup>2</sup> Women in the metropolis were perceived as visible and free to follow their own desires during the eighteenth century, and the behaviour of the elite was not contained by location or poverty. The wealthy city woman was often described as a virulent consumer of both goods and sex; the consumption of luxury goods was seen as a particularly female activity, which demonstrated a lack of both sensibility and prudence. Shopping and visiting were described as time wasting hobbies with little purpose and plenty of show by numerous commentators.<sup>3</sup> In the section of his *History of Women* (1779 that explored 'Amusements and methods of killing time', William Alexander noted that the female nature:

constantly shews [sic] a greater proclivity to the gay and the amusive, than to the sober and useful scenes of life; and loves better to sport away time amid the flowers that strow [sic] the path of pleasure, than to be entangled among the briars and thorns which perplex the path of care.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> M. Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (Oxford, 1993), p. 229.

<sup>2</sup> S. H. Mendelson and P. Crawford, *Women in Early Modern England, 1550-1720* (Oxford, 1998), p. 67.

<sup>3</sup> See H. Guest, *Small Change. Women, Learning, Patriotism, 1750-1810* (Chicago, Ill., 2000), pp. 70-98.

<sup>4</sup> W. Alexander, *The History of Women, From the Earliest Antiquity, to the Present Time; Giving Some Account of Almost Every Interesting Particular Concerning That Sex, Among All Nations, Ancient and Modern* (Dublin, 1779), i, p. 105.

The disposition for display and performance among fashionable women was a central feature of many of the criticisms. They were presented as essentially deceitful, with their actions not reflecting their true natures. The purchasing and use of makeup by women was criticized by Jonathan Swift in his poem 'The Lady's Dressing Room', where the dressing table was described as laden thus:

Here gallpots and vials placed,  
Some filled with washes, some with paste,  
Some with pomatum, paints and slops,  
And ointments good for scabby chops.<sup>5</sup>

Swift's poem not only described, with great disgust, what lay underneath the facade of fashionable beauty, but also how men were duped by the oils and ointments, bewitched and unable to see the real woman.<sup>6</sup> The falseness of elites was of particular concern during this period, heightened by the popularity of the masquerade, which was criticized for creating a new moral disorder, as people could pretend to be what they were not.<sup>7</sup> Even good works were considered to be part of an act, a display of false virtue. In Hannah More's *Coelebs in Search of a Wife* (1809), fashionable women were condemned for only supporting ostentatious charities as: 'a large atonement for a few amiable weaknesses'.<sup>8</sup>

Aristocratic women's ability to perform was also a concern because of the power and influence that their deception could bring. Didactic authors presented them as embodiments of corrupted desire who sought gratification from exercising power outside their homes through political and economic interests. In the late seventeenth-century Court women were feared because of concerns regarding their influence; female power was considered to be uncontrolled and irrational. Some contemporaries thought that women such as Sarah Marlborough threatened the social order, and so criticized them by exaggerating their power. Alexander Pope, for example, attacked Catherine Sheffield, Duchess of Buckingham through his description of Atossa in his 1733 Epistle II 'To a Lady on the Characters of

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<sup>5</sup> J. Swift, 'The Lady's Dressing Room', in *Selected Poems*, ed. P. Rodgers (London, 1993), pp. 129-33; lines 33-6.

<sup>6</sup> The suitor of the lady of the dressing room: 'disgusted slunk away/repeating in his amorous fits/Oh! Celia, Celia, Celia shits!'. *Ibid.*, lines 116-19.

<sup>7</sup> See, for example, C. Pitt, 'On the Masquerades' (1727), in *The New Book of Eighteenth Century Verse*, ed. R. Lonsdale (Oxford, 1984), pp. 193-9.

<sup>8</sup> Quoted in Guest, *Small Change*, p. 81.

Women'.<sup>9</sup> However, other influential women, such as Lady Ranelagh, were not attacked, suggesting that by conforming to received female traits, such as subtlety and deference, their actions were perceived as more acceptable.<sup>10</sup> In the later eighteenth century, Georgiana Devonshire, was also criticized for her political influence, although this was in relation to the constituency of Westminster rather than the Court. Her actions in publicly canvassing for a non-relative, Charles Fox, in 1784, were considered to be unacceptable by the opposition. They encouraged the Tory press to rebuke Georgiana and her campaign, and used satirical prints that questioned her femininity and chastity.<sup>11</sup>

Attacks on women's power and influence were, however, confined to a few politically famous women. Most commentators did not see women as so politically active, and the image of fashionable women as lazy and self-obsessed was very popular. Many writers through this period portrayed aristocratic women as guilty of being idle and uncaring, and lacking the very virtues essential for them to be successful mothers and wives.<sup>12</sup> In 'The Rape of the Lock' (1714) Alexander Pope ridiculed the emptiness of a fashionable woman's day and mind, and her inability to rouse herself from sleep.<sup>13</sup> By the nineteenth century, the image of the elite woman was that of a selfish social butterfly, who might play Lady Bountiful for her own benefit, but really cared little for anything other than herself and her frivolous social circle. These portrayals of women were largely polemical, used to forward the arguments of those wishing to encourage women to become domestically minded and moral people. Didactic literature ridiculed the image of the elite woman in order to hold 'Folly to the light', as was Addison's aim in his writings in the *Spectator*.<sup>14</sup> In the mid-nineteenth century, elite women faced attack by those who were against the elite political

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<sup>9</sup> V. Rumbold, *Women's Place in Pope's World* (Cambridge, 1989), pp. 168-9.

<sup>10</sup> Mendelson and Crawford, *Women in Early Modern England*, p. 365.

<sup>11</sup> A selection of these images appears in A. Foreman, *Georgiana's World. The Illustrated Georgiana, Duchess of Devonshire* (London, 2001), pp. 98-99. For a discussion of the 1784 election see J. S. Lewis, '1784 and all that: aristocratic women and electoral politics', in *Women, Privilege, and Power: British Politics, 1750 to the Present*, ed. A. Vickery (Stanford, Calif., 2001), pp. 89-122.

<sup>12</sup> N. Armstrong, *Desire and Domestic Fiction, A Political History of the Novel* (Oxford, 1987), p. 60.

<sup>13</sup> A. Pope, 'The Rape of the Lock', Canto I, in *Selected Poems of Pope*, ed. P. Brockbank (London, 1964).

<sup>14</sup> K. M. Rogers, *The Troublesome Helpmate. A History of Misogyny in Literature* (Seattle, Wash., 1966), p. 167.

system of the time, as they used the image of the childlike, decorative, feminine woman to undermine the authority and agency of those in government.<sup>15</sup>

The rhetoric of these attacks has continued to have an impact, and has been used by twentieth-century historians to describe the actual behaviour of elite women. Often presented by historians as a homogeneous mass of identikit women, their image has been based on the polemical ideas of the period rather than developed research. The financial drain on familial finances by women has been overemphasized, especially the cost of maintaining single women and widows, who have been portrayed as tragic, ill-used figures.<sup>16</sup> John Beckett, using language straight from the periodicals of the period, also argues that wives and daughters were costly, suggesting that they were bored with life in the country, and so wanted to be in the city, where they could spend men's money on clothes, dances and the theatre.<sup>17</sup> Some examinations of the aristocracy simply ignore women completely, or considered them only in relation to marriage and the acquisition of wealth.<sup>18</sup> Women are portrayed as either controlling their men, or being controlled by them; their own autonomy and experiences are rarely discussed.<sup>19</sup> In those studies that have explored the lives of elite women, evidence of outrageous behaviour by elite women has been especially highlighted. Many of the more populist biographies published in recent years have focused on 'scandalous' women, especially the complicated home life of Georgiana, fifth Duchess of Devonshire, or the affairs of the Lennox sisters.<sup>20</sup> Although these events were important features of those women's lives, the stories of the exceptional have coloured the understanding of their more sedate counterparts. There has been an essential misunderstanding of the targets of the satirists. Much of their attention was focused on the

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<sup>15</sup> K. D. Reynolds, *Aristocratic Women and Political Society in Victorian Britain* (Oxford, 1998), p. 13.

<sup>16</sup> For example C. Christie, *The British Country House in the Eighteenth Century* (Manchester, 2000), pp. 104-6.

<sup>17</sup> J. V. Beckett, *The Aristocracy in England, 1660-1914* (Oxford, 1986), p. 366.

<sup>18</sup> For example: M. L. Bush, *The English Aristocracy: A Comparative Synthesis* (Manchester, 1984); J. Powis, *Aristocracy* (Oxford, 1984).

<sup>19</sup> See, for example, the representation of Harriet Sutherland in E. Richards, *Leviathan of Wealth. The Sutherland Fortune in the Industrial Revolution* (London, 1973).

<sup>20</sup> A. Foreman, *Georgiana, Duchess of Devonshire* (London, 1998); S. Tillyard, *Aristocrats. Caroline, Emily, Louisa and Sarah Lennox, 1740-1832* (London, 1994).

*beau monde*, the fashionable few who featured in the Tête-à-Tête series in the *Town and Country Magazine* along with details of their love affairs.<sup>21</sup> Although these were members of elite society, not all aristocrats were fashionable; this group was also known as the *bon ton*, a name which acknowledges its exclusiveness. Their consumption of parties, dresses and drink was concentrated during their time in the capital, and even the most fashionable of families would spend some time in the countryside, where life could be quieter and more controlled. The often overstated excesses of the *beau monde* should not be seen as representing elites in general. The fictional writings, satires, and the political, moral and radical criticisms of the period describe the occasional behaviour of a select group.

### The History of Aristocratic Women

The question of how similar upper-class ladies were to their image in the literature of the period has not yet been given a satisfactory answer. The lives of private, unexceptional elite women have been largely ignored, and their home and familial lives have received particularly scant attention. We need to move away from the myth of the scandalous ‘idle drones’, and reveal the many different experiences and roles elite women enjoyed during this period. There have been some moves towards new understandings. In recent years the negative representation of women in the eighteenth century, and elite women in particular, has been subject to scrutiny. Studies of middle and working-class women had dominated the concerns of gender historians during the early years of the discipline.<sup>22</sup> Feminist historians, often inspired by labour history or by an interest in the origins of socialism and of feminism, were rarely attracted by the lives of aristocratic women, although elites were active campaigners for women’s and social issues.<sup>23</sup> However, the desire to reflect the wider roles of women in the past and the recognition that the archives of landed families hold some of the best documented and most articulate accounts of women’s lives in British history can explain in part the renaissance of studies of elite women. By examining the lives of

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<sup>21</sup> C. McCreery, ‘Keeping up with the *Bon Ton*: the *Tête-à-Tête* series in the *Town and Country Magazine*’, in *Gender in Eighteenth-century England: Roles, Representations and Responsibilities*, ed. H. J. Barker and E. Chalus (London, 1997), pp. 207-29.

<sup>22</sup> P. Mandler, ‘Namier in petticoats? Review of K. D. Reynolds’ “Aristocratic women in political society in Victorian Britain”’, *Reviews in History*, February 1999. An online review from the Institute for Historical Research: <<http://www.ihrinfo.ac.uk/ihr/Focus/Victorians/mandler.html>> [10 June 2003].

<sup>23</sup> See, for example, J. Latham, ‘The political and the personal: the radicalism of Sophia Chichester and Georgiana Fletcher Welch’, *Women’s History Review* 9 (1999), pp. 469-87.

aristocrats, the full range of opportunities open to some individual women in the past can be identified. The extent to which women could make choices about their lifestyle, and be independent and influential can be studied by focusing on elites. They were not confined by a lack of finance or mobility as were women from other social classes, and they were able to have a public role. It could be argued that of all women, they had access to the widest opportunities. By studying elite women one can assess the extent to which past women were confined by class and poverty, rather than gender; Joan Perkins describes English aristocratic wives as: 'the most liberated women in Europe'.<sup>24</sup> Historians such as Elaine Chalus and Kim Reynolds have examined the important role that elite women played in eighteenth-century political society, and their ability to become public figures, within certain constraints.<sup>25</sup> The idea that women were nothing more than decorative appendages to their politician husbands has been challenged, and their influence in the political world, through patterns of patronage, and their own efforts in philanthropic and social causes, has been demonstrated. These studies have established that women could be as influential as their husbands and fathers in the political arena, at Westminster, the Court, and in their local communities.<sup>26</sup>

However, although they had a great many opportunities, the expectations placed on elite women were high, and they were under significant public and familial scrutiny. They were not necessarily the 'freest' women. Studies of the labouring classes have shown how poor women were often a powerful force within their own family, and did not conform to gender-specific behaviour to the same extent as women from other social classes; they did what was necessary to survive.<sup>27</sup> Elite women's roles as wives, mothers, daughters and sisters were shaped by culturally specific expectations, and they were not necessarily free from demands to fulfil the ideals of feminine behaviour. These roles, though, have not been studied in the same depth as their political activities, and so the extent to which their gender

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<sup>24</sup> J. Perkin, *Women and Marriage in Nineteenth-Century England* (London, 1989), p. 5.

<sup>25</sup> See, for example: E. Chalus, 'Women in English Political Life, 1754-1790', DPhil Thesis, University of Oxford, 1997; Reynolds, *Aristocratic Women*.

<sup>26</sup> Other studies of elite political women include: K. Gleadle and S. Richardson (eds.), *Women in British Politics, 1760-1860: the Power of the Petticoat* (London, 2000); S. Richardson, 'The role of women in electoral politics in Yorkshire during the eighteen-thirties', *Northern History* 32 (1996), pp. 133-51; A. Vickery (ed.), *Women, Privilege, and Power: British Politics, 1750 to the Present* (Stanford, Calif. 2001).

<sup>27</sup> See A. Clark, *The Struggle for the Breeches. Gender and the Making of the British Working Class* (Berkeley, Calif., 1995).

shaped their behaviour has not been made clear. Individual biographies include examinations of the woman's familial role, but there have been few systematic surveys of aristocratic domestic experiences in the long eighteenth century. Amanda Vickery's work has provided a major contribution to modern understandings of this area; *The Gentleman's Daughter* examines the lives of a group of genteel women primarily, though not exclusively, based in Lancashire.<sup>28</sup> It is especially concerned with their family life, social networks, and consumption patterns, exploring the ways in which goods conferred politeness, domesticity and elegance. Her work focuses on the lesser gentry, and, in many ways, the experiences that she recovers are closer to those of wealthier middle-class women than of the greater aristocracy. The specific role of wife and mother is considered in Judith Lewis' examination of childbearing among the aristocracy in the later eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.<sup>29</sup> Through a survey of physical and emotional issues regarding the birth of children she found evidence of a growing affection within aristocratic families in the nineteenth century, and her work highlights the possibilities for understanding familial dynamics. Jessica Gerard's *Country House Life* uses the building of the elite home as the basis for her study of the family life of the aristocracy for the period 1815-1915.<sup>30</sup> Although not exclusively concerned with female experiences, she studies the role that women played in the domestic lives of the upper classes, and the issues that affected their lives, including relations between parents and children, and courtship and marriage. Like Lewis, she finds evidence of an affectionate and domestic attitude within aristocratic families in the nineteenth century, and demonstrates that detailed information regarding the private and emotional lives of past women exists.<sup>31</sup> Her study makes use of many published autobiographies and biographies, many of the latter written by relations of the subject. Although these texts are useful, many of the memories recalled are liable to be idealized, especially when talking about childhood experiences. Reflection can mean that events are portrayed in an artificial manner, and that will often reflect the cultural world at the time the biography was written, rather than when the events took place. This is not to dismiss these sources or Gerard's work; both are very

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<sup>28</sup> A. Vickery, *The Gentleman's Daughter. Women's Lives in Georgian England* (London, 1998).

<sup>29</sup> J. S. Lewis, *In the Family Way. Childbearing in the British Aristocracy 1760-1860* (New Brunswick, N.J., 1986).

<sup>30</sup> J. Gerard, *Country House Life, Family and Servants, 1815-1914* (Oxford, 1994).

<sup>31</sup> Gerard, *Country House Life*, passim, esp. p. 276.



useful illustrations of life in the country house. However, it is important to recognize the different ways that individual lives are recorded, and the problems associated with various sources when exploring the history of the family.

The centrality of the family unit in understanding the lives of past individuals has long been recognized by social and gender historians.<sup>32</sup> There is a considerable historiography of studies of the family through a female focus, and Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall have been major proponents of this approach for the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.<sup>33</sup> In *Family Fortunes* (1987) they study the roles that women played within the middle-class family through the use of both family and public archives, and the influence of the domestic ideology of the period on their lives. They focus on the idea of separate spheres and the degree to which it influenced middle-class familial gender relations. This theory suggested that there were distinctive social spheres for men and women, with the male public sphere being inaccessible to women, who only operated in the female private domestic sphere. This understanding of the early nineteenth-century family has featured in feminist histories for many years, and the public/private dichotomy was one that was used by contemporary commentators. However, Davidoff and Hall's study found that the actual separation between the spheres was often indistinct and subject to personal interpretation, and the universality of the idea of separate spheres has also been questioned in subsequent studies.<sup>34</sup> Therefore, its use as an approach to the history of women and the family, especially among the upper classes, has been challenged.<sup>35</sup> Vickery has argued that only rarely did the

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<sup>32</sup> For example: M. Abbott, *Family Ties. English Families 1540-1920* (London, 1993); R. Houlbrooke, *The English Family 1450-1700* (London, 1984); L. Jordanova, 'The representation of the family in the eighteenth century: a challenge for cultural history', in *Interpretation and Cultural History*, ed. J. H. Pittock and A. Wear (Basingstoke, 1991), pp. 109-34; N. Tadmor, *Family and Friends in Eighteenth-century England: Household, Kinship, and Patronage* (Cambridge, 2001).

<sup>33</sup> L. Davidoff, *Worlds Between, Historical Perspectives on Gender and Class* (Cambridge, 1995); L. Davidoff, M. Doolittle, J. Fink, and K. Holden, *The Family Story, Blood, Contract and Intimacy 1830-1960* (London, 1999); L. Davidoff and C. Hall, *Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middle Class 1780-1850*, Revised Edition (London, 2002); C. Hall, *White, Male, and Middle Class, Explorations in Feminism and History* (Cambridge, 1992).

<sup>34</sup> Davidoff and Hall, *Family Fortunes*, Introduction.

<sup>35</sup> See: H. Barker and E. Chalus, 'Introduction', in *Gender in Eighteenth-Century England: Roles, Representations and Responsibilities*, ed. H. Barker and E. Chalus (London, 1997), p. 18; L. Kerber, 'Separate spheres, female worlds, woman's place: the rhetoric of women's history', *Journal of American History* 75 (1988), pp. 9-39; J. Rendall, 'Women and the public sphere', *Gender and History* 11 (1999), pp. 475-488. A. Vickery, 'The Golden Age to separate spheres? A review of the categories and chronology of (continued...)

Georgian use of the terms 'public' and 'private' match their understanding of 'male' and 'female', and that women had access to many public areas, including the opera, urban walks, concerts, libraries and pleasure gardens.<sup>36</sup> Instead, as noted above, wealth and class made the real difference in terms of access into public life, and so birth overrode gender. As Reynolds notes: "In relation to their own families and, to an extent, their own class, aristocratic women were first and foremost women. In relation to the rest of the world, they were aristocrats first and last".<sup>37</sup> This emphasis by eighteenth-century society on the social position of women rather than their gender is central to understanding aristocrats. Historical research needs to move beyond the discourse of separate spheres that has long dominated women's studies. As the research of Vickery, Reynolds and Chalus and others argue, women could play an active role in both spheres, and that the public and private role of elite women were tightly entwined

### **The Women of the Yorkshire Aristocracy, 1685-1858**

This thesis examines the familial and domestic lives of the female Yorkshire aristocracy in the period 1685-1858. It surveys the different roles and responsibilities held by elite women relating to their family. By rejecting the notion of separate spheres, it demonstrates that the home life of the aristocracy did not fall neatly into the concept of private, but could be both personal and social in nature. The family was the central conduit of authority for the aristocracy. Their pedigree was the basis of their position as members of the governing class, and the present family was entrusted in furthering the future dynasty. Events such as births and marriages were therefore family business. They were necessary to their continuing success, even survival, in the upper echelons of society, and therefore essentially public in nature. Although the dynasty has been traditionally perceived as a male concern it was of great importance to elite women too.

By placing the family central to a study of the aristocracy, the complex ways that women shaped and managed elite success can be assessed. The nature of domestic arrangements is examined, and the extent to which aristocratic concerns influenced their

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<sup>35</sup> (...continued)  
English women's history', *The Historical Journal* 36 (1993), pp. 383-404.

<sup>36</sup> Vickery, *The Gentleman's Daughter*, pp. 288 ff.

<sup>37</sup> Reynolds, *Aristocratic Women*, p. 4.

family life is highlighted. I argue that, because of these concerns, there was a distinctively aristocratic style of familial relations, which I term 'dynastic domesticity'. Throughout, I demonstrate that the role of women was shaped by their familial duties, which were informed by both the affectionate nature of family life and the dynastic concerns of the aristocracy. These worked together to create a form of domesticity that encompassed both the public and private needs of the family.

The study focuses on a one hundred and seventy-year period from 1685-1858, which covers the 'long eighteenth century' from its beginnings in the early modern period through to the early years of Victoria's reign. The dates that mark the beginning and end of this time period have been shaped by the sources, and reflect the epoch within which the majority of the women in this survey were creating their letters, diaries, and other documents. The long time period means that the domestic lives of aristocratic women can be studied against the backdrop of the changing ideas of the time, such as the end of the puritanical age, the rise of Whig politics, the Enlightenment, and the evangelical and Reform movements. The long eighteenth century has fallen between the more popular schools of early modern and Victorian studies for many years, and, while this issue is being addressed by current research, the majority of studies of aristocratic women have covered the post 1780 period. There have been some excellent studies of women in the early modern period, especially the work by Patricia Crawford and Sara Mendelson, but these have tended to focus on the pre-Restoration age and are not solely concerned with the aristocracy.<sup>38</sup> There is therefore a clear need to focus upon the elite women of this age, an overlooked but well documented group. Historians have identified this period as a key time for changing familial relations and also in the development of the notion of domesticity. The rest of this introduction considers these themes and the methodology used in the thesis. Following a survey of the four families who form the basis of the study, the sources used and the problems with the evidence are discussed. Then the key themes are outlined, finishing with a survey of the structure of the thesis. By examining these topics over a long time period, the degree to which the continuity central to maintaining elite power came into conflict with the forces of a changing world can be assessed.

First, though, it is important to consider what is meant by the term 'aristocracy', and

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<sup>38</sup> For example: Mendelson and Crawford, *Women in Early Modern England*; M. J. Ezell, *The Patriarch's Wife: Literary Evidence and the History of the Family* (Chapel Hill, 1987); A. Laurence, *Women in England 1500-1760. A Social History* (London, 1994).

the position of women within this definition. Like the labels attached to other social classes, it is hard to identify who fell within the boundaries of this group, and historians have approached the question in different ways. Reynolds takes a limited view of the term in her study of aristocratic women and only includes those women who were married to, or were the granddaughters of, a peer; these were the criteria that Queen Victoria used when selecting women to serve her household.<sup>39</sup> In *The English Aristocracy* Michael Bush includes all the upper strata of society, on the model of the medieval orders, arguing that the gentry and the peers formed part of the same social group.<sup>40</sup> While I support the idea of a wider aristocracy, on a similar scale to the notion of the nobility, it is important to recognize the wide variety of experiences that this group could encompass, from the wealth and power of the Dukes of Sutherland, to the relative poverty of a gentry family living in a small manor house in rural Lancashire. One can distinguish these groups by looking for the elites within the aristocracy. The 'governing elite' can be located by identifying those families who sent relatives to Westminster. A recent study has shown that in 1715 half the M.P.s had fathers who had also sat in the Commons, indicating that a small group of families had considerable political influence.<sup>41</sup> However, not all the wealthiest members of society were active in politics. Some were simply not interested, others were disbarred because of their faith, and so another way is needed to identify the 'social' elite. The ownership of a large country house can be a way of identifying those who belonged to the greater aristocracy; it was a symbol of social superiority.<sup>42</sup> While this has problems, since numerous factors influenced the size of a country house, when taken in conjunction with the idea of a governing elite it can help point to those who were the wealthiest and most influential in society, in matters of politics, taste, and fashion.

This thesis focuses on the female members of this group, who are identifiable by their relationship to a country house of considerable size located in a large landscaped estate. They may have grown up in the house, be part of the kin network that inherited the house,

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<sup>39</sup> Reynolds, *Aristocratic Women*, p. 22.

<sup>40</sup> Bush, *The English Aristocracy*, p. 2.

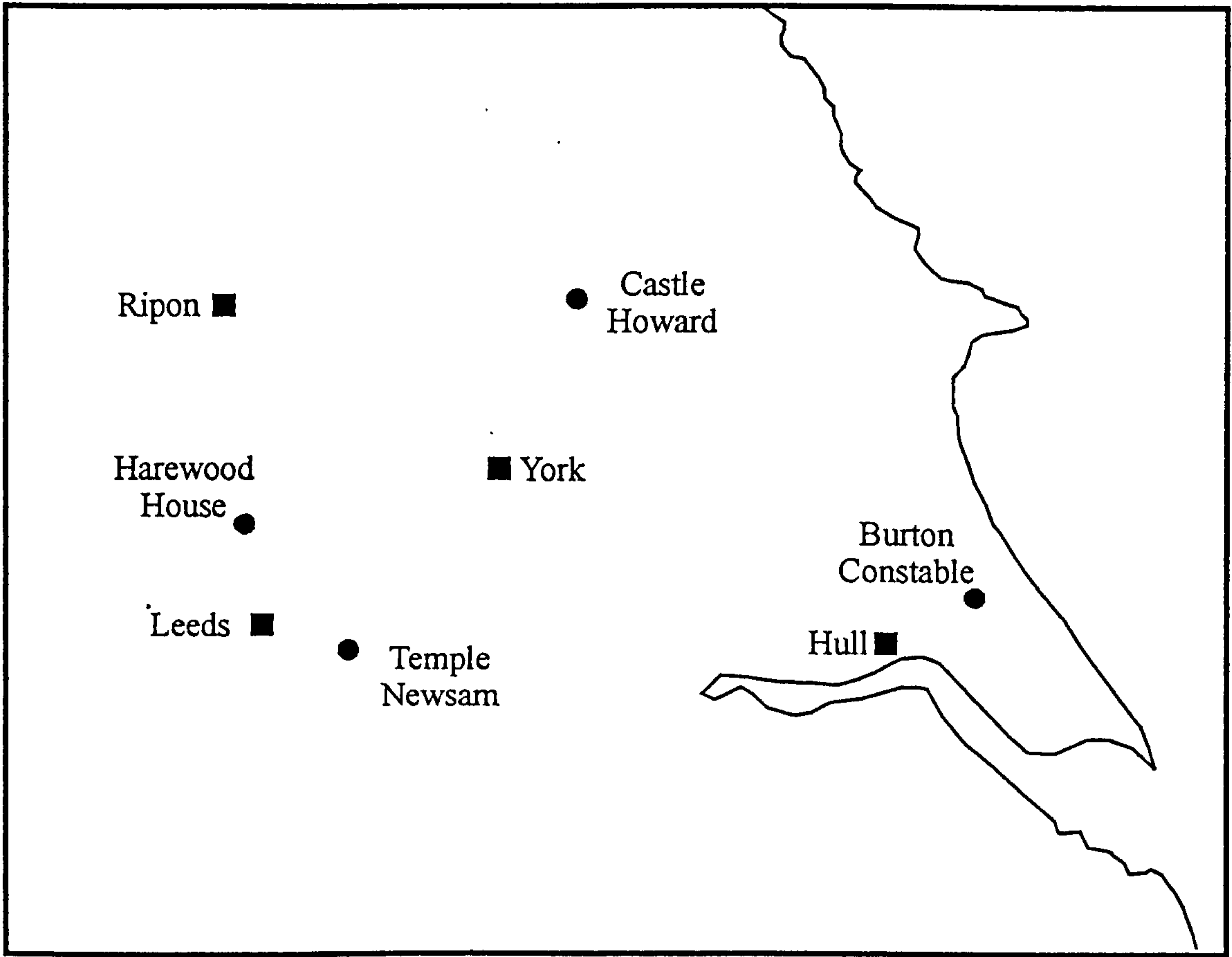
<sup>41</sup> E. A. Watson, 'The House of Commons, 1660-1945: parliamentary families and the political elite', *The English Historical Review* 106 (1991), pp. 635-651.

<sup>42</sup> M. W. McCahill, 'Open elites: recruitment to the French noblesse and the English aristocracy in the eighteenth century', *Albion* 30 (1999), p. 601.

This thesis focuses on the female members of this group, who are identifiable by their relationship to a country house of considerable size located in a large landscaped estate. They may have grown up in the house, be part of the kin network that inherited the house, or married into the family who was based there. It concentrates on a small number of families, since exploring a limited sample group over a longer period allows a deeper understanding of family forms, while preventing misleading anomalies caused by different familial needs and temporary trends. By examining women from a small number of families their domestic and home life experiences can be compared and contrasted, both between the families, and also within the family over time. In order to limit concerns about regional difference, and to study the possibility links between individuals, I have chosen families from four houses from the same region, Yorkshire. This is not to confine the history of the families within the northern region; the national and international world in which the women moved is of central concern, as their influence and concerns were not confined to the area surrounding the country house. Links are also made to the birth families of women who married into one of the Yorkshire dynasties, thus extending the range of people studied. Overall, nearly ninety women are included in the survey, for thirty of whom there are substantial archival sources remaining. These women are studied in detail.<sup>43</sup> Their families are the Lascelles of Harewood House, the Howards of Castle Howard, the Ingrams of Temple Newsam and the Constables of Burton Constable (see Map One). The families were chosen because of the availability of archival sources, open access to the house and therefore other research material (portraits, miniatures, sketches, etc.), and the interrelations between the families. I would not wish to claim anything unique about these houses that makes them more worthy of study than other homes in the region. They form a representative sample of the wealthier families in the county, and while they each have their own distinctive history, they represent the range of experiences that the aristocracy faced in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Family life is studied through the setting of the country house, the main seat for each of the dynasties. The house formed the architectural stage that shaped the nature of domestic relations. It represented the dynastic concerns of the family, and acted both as a symbol of their pedigree and a home. It is important to consider the nature of the house in which a family lived, as it could have a significant impact on family life. Below is a survey of each house and family, in order

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<sup>43</sup> For further detail of these women, see Appendix One for biographical details and Appendix Two for the family trees.



Key:

- Location of Houses
- Location of Towns

**Map One.**

**Location Map for Burton Constable, Temple Newsam,  
Castle Howard, and Harewood House.**

(not to scale)

to briefly discuss the history of the houses, the political and social background of the families, and to introduce some of the key women who are studied in this thesis.

**Burton Constable, East Riding of Yorkshire:** In relation to both its architecture and the family, Burton Constable has the longest history of the houses in this survey. The Constables were leading landowners in Holderness from the thirteenth century onwards, when they were based at their main house in Halsham. They moved to Burton Constable in about 1570 when Sir John Constable enlarged an existing medieval tower house on the site.<sup>44</sup> Successive generations began adding to the house, each building further rooms and changing the interior to match their needs and the fashions of the period. In the mid-eighteenth century, William Constable was strongly tempted to demolish and rebuild his home, as others were doing at various houses he had visited, including Harewood House and Kedleston Hall.<sup>45</sup> However, he was aware of the dynastic history that the house represented, and instead modernized, so that he could fulfil his needs for modern comforts and fashionable taste within a building that continued to represent his family's pedigree and prestige.

Burton Constable was the seat of the Viscounts Dunbar from 1620 until the early eighteenth century when the title became extinct, and the property passed through the female line. The family's Catholicism prevented them from taking a seat in the House of Commons and so they existed outside the formal political world through the eighteenth century. This meant that their position in Yorkshire society was different from the other three families studied. They were outside the Westminster circle that encouraged networking between aristocrats both in the capital and in the provinces, and links between the Constables and the other families were therefore less well developed. There was no intermarrying, as they married only other Catholics, and there appears to have been only limited formal contact. Their position geographically also meant that it was more difficult to maintain ties. The house is about forty miles from York, which was on the main road between London and Edinburgh during the eighteenth century, and so they were less likely to attract polite tourists who were travelling around the country. Due to their remoteness

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<sup>44</sup> I. Hall, *Burton Constable* (Burton Constable, 1994), p. 1; M. Prescott, 'Burton Constable: An Evaluation of the Archaeology', MA Dissertation, University of York, 1995.

<sup>45</sup> Hall, *Burton Constable*, p. 3.

from the cultural and physical centre of the county, they were less able to network regularly and efficiently with their non-Catholic counterparts.<sup>46</sup> Hull was their nearest town, and they often used local traders in order to furnish the house. Remote in location, belief, and taste, they often existed in a very different circle to their elite Yorkshire neighbours.

However, they were still part of the aristocratic circuit of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and were particularly involved in the intellectual world. In the mid eighteenth century Cuthbert Constable and his sons showed great interest in learning; half-brothers William Constable and Marmaduke Tunstall were fellows of both the Royal Society and the Society of Antiquaries.<sup>47</sup> The gallery at Burton Constable was reshaped in order to accommodate the owners' libraries, scientific laboratory and natural history specimens. The Clifford Constables, the branch of the family who inherited the house in the 1820s, were devotees of fashionable taste, and were well received in the courts of Louis Phillipe of France and his successor, Emperor Napoleon III.<sup>48</sup> The family was still part of the elite world, and although their access to Westminster circles remained prohibited because of their faith, they were still able to gain access to some of the most influential and powerful figures in this period.<sup>49</sup>

Many of the women who grew up at Burton Constable became nuns, and there are only limited sources relating to their childhood and their relations with the family after they joined Holy Orders. The family also had succession problems, with the house passing to increasingly distant cousins during the eighteenth century. This has fragmented some of the archival sources, and few details survive relating to the women from the various branches of the family that became part of the Burton Constable dynasty. Among the women whose papers survive in larger numbers are: Winifred Constable (1752-1774), the unmarried sister of William, who owned the house in the mid-eighteenth century; sisters Eliza (1798-1859)

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<sup>46</sup> The family did have ties to Catholic York, especially through the Bar Convent School, which a number of the girls attended. H. J. Coleridge, *Saint Mary's Convent, Micklegate Bar, York, 1686-1887* (London, 1887), pp. 393-4.

<sup>47</sup> M. J. Boyd, "The Catholic Maecenas of his Age". Cuthbert Constable (c. 1680-1747) of Burton Constable', in *Burton Constable Hall: The Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries* (East Yorkshire Local History Series 51, 1998) pp. 28-37; Hall, *Burton Constable*, p. 3.

<sup>48</sup> Hall, *Burton Constable*, p. 5.

<sup>49</sup> In the nineteenth century, Thomas Aston Clifford Constable was active within the local Conservative Association. ERYARS, DDCC/144/35, Letters to Sir Clifford Constable 1843-1876, Part Two, Chair of the East Riding Conservative Association to Leading Members.



and Marianne Chichester (c. 1808-1862), the latter of whom married into the Burton Constable household at the start of the nineteenth century; and their sister-in-law, Mary Barbara (1826-1876), who grew up in the house. These women were central figures in the history of the house and family, whose influence and talent shaped and promoted its dynasty.

**Temple Newsam, West Yorkshire:** The Ingram's property of Temple Newsam is a Tudor building, based four miles east of Leeds, that was considerably altered during the eighteenth century.<sup>50</sup> The house had numerous owners, including the Darcy family, before Arthur Ingram bought it from the Crown in 1622. Arthur was a wealthy merchant who, after making his fortune in London, acquired a number of properties in Yorkshire, including a house in the grounds of York Minster. He demolished much of the original Tudor house at Temple Newsam, and built new wings to the north and south. His grandson, Henry, was ennobled and took the extinct Scottish title of Viscount Irvine, although the family had no links to the town of Irvine; the family always used the English form of Irwin.<sup>51</sup> The Irwins faced many problems with succession over this period that damaged the family's limited finances. From the title's creation to its extinction there were nine Viscounts in just over one hundred years (see Appendix Two for family trees).<sup>52</sup> The third Viscount, who had himself inherited the title from his brother, was the father to nine sons, five of whom held the title. However, these sons only produced one male heir between them, Charles, who inherited the title from his uncle George in 1763.

During this period, the third Viscountess, Isabella (c. 1670-1764), remained closely involved in the running of the estate, and acted as executor to the estates of a number of her sons. Charles, the ninth and final Viscount, was the father to five girls, and his lack of male cousins and the details of his marriage settlement meant that the property passed to his wife Frances (1734-1807) after his death. She owned Temple Newsam in her own right, and it was then inherited by two of her daughters, Isabella Hertford (1759-1834) and Frances Gordon (1761-1841). For ninety-six years of the period 1774-1904, the house was owned

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<sup>50</sup> The best single history for Temple Newsam is S. D. Kitson and E. D. Pawson, *Temple Newsam*, Third Edition (Leeds, 1929).

<sup>51</sup> Kitson and Pawson, *Temple Newsam*, p. 21.

<sup>52</sup> In comparison, the period from the creation of the title 'Earl of Carlisle' to the death of the ninth Earl spanned 250 years.

by women, and they played a significant role in the building's history.<sup>53</sup>

Although they were not the wealthiest of families, the Irwins had considerable influence during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The fifth Viscount, who was married to Anne Irwin (1696-1764), daughter of the third Earl of Carlisle, was offered the position of Governor of Barbados, although he died before he could take the position up.<sup>54</sup> The seventh Viscount's support for the Whig cause was rewarded by a well-paid office as commissioner general for the stores of Gibraltar and Minorca, which did not require him to leave Yorkshire for the Mediterranean.<sup>55</sup> Three of the Viscounts also held the role of Lord Lieutenant of the East Riding of Yorkshire, and were active in suppressing uprisings in the region, as well as preparing for feared invasions at time of crisis.<sup>56</sup> The family was most active politically in relation to the House of Commons. On her marriage in 1685, Isabella Irwin brought to the family control of the parliamentary seat for Horsham, East Sussex, the town where she grew up. Several of her sons sat in the Commons for the town, and in the later eighteenth century Frances Irwin was involved in a protracted struggle to maintain control over the family interest.<sup>57</sup> These positions made it possible for the family to form links with wealthy neighbours. They were regular guests of the Rockinghams, intermarried with the Carlises, and were friendly with the Harewoods, whom they advised when they wanted to alter the house's landscape. Isabella Hertford, Frances' eldest daughter and owner of Temple Newsam from 1807, was a favourite of the Prince of Wales, acting as his

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<sup>53</sup> Emily, Mrs. Meynell Ingram, daughter of Charles, first Viscount Halifax, and widow of Hugo Francis Meynell Ingram, was the fourth female owner of the property, from her husband's death in 1871 until 1904.

<sup>54</sup> Historical Manuscripts Commission, *Fifteenth Report, Appendix, Part 6: The Manuscripts of the Earl of Carlisle, formerly Preserved at Castle Howard*, ed. R. E. G. Kirk (London, 1897), p. 29.

<sup>55</sup> Kitson and Pawson, *Temple Newsam*, p. 24.

<sup>56</sup> Rich, Arthur and Henry were all Lord Lieutenants; the latter commanded the East Riding Volunteers against the Jacobites in 1745. See Historical Manuscripts Commission, *Reports on Manuscripts in Various Collections*, Volume 8 (London, 1913), pp. 104 ff.; W. M. Ormrod (ed.), *The Lord Lieutenants and High Sheriffs of Yorkshire, 1066-2000* (Barnsley, 2000), pp. 12-13.

<sup>57</sup> The Duke of Norfolk wanted to control the seat, but Frances battled against his campaign, winning the seat after petition. For further discussion see E. Chalus, 'Women, electoral privilege and practice in the eighteenth century', in *Women in British Politics, 1760-1860: The Power of the Petticoat*, ed. K. Gleadle and S. Richardson (London, 2000), pp. 19-38.

confidant and, because of her influence, was known as 'Queen of the Regency'.<sup>58</sup> The three Viscountesses, Isabella, Anne and Frances Irwin, feature heavily in the thesis, as the remarkable archival sources that they left build a clear picture of their domestic world.

**Castle Howard, North Yorkshire:** Castle Howard is one of Britain's most famous stately homes, and the central dome has made it one of Yorkshire's distinctive icons. Building began in 1699, and the third Earl of Carlisle employed Vanbrugh as his architect, although he was known primarily as a playwright and had no formal training in designing country houses or landscapes.<sup>59</sup> The Carlises were a cadet branch of the Howard family that was headed by the Dukes of Norfolk. Their first seat was at the medieval Naworth Castle, north of Carlisle, which meant that they were isolated from the wider elite society and the political world. Through his mother, the third Earl was able to secure land at Henderskelf, fifteen miles north east of York, on which he built Castle Howard. The name of the building underlines their distant dynasty, for although the Earls of Carlisle were a relatively recent creation, they came from a far older family, and the house and its landscape act to reaffirm their status and pedigree. On the approach route to the house, for example, one gateway was castellated and another decorated with a pyramid, and a second pyramid containing a bust of the founder of the Carlisle branch was located in the field immediately to the south of the house.<sup>60</sup> The third Earl was keen to build a property that would match his rapidly rising position in the Court of William and Mary, and so desired a palace that could match the new architectural triumphs of the capital, including St. Paul's Cathedral and Greenwich Hospital. However, during the reign of Anne, Carlisle's political career faltered, and he withdrew from London and the Court. He dedicated himself to a domestic life at Castle Howard, where he continued to improve the house and the gardens. These changing concerns mean that the building should be considered 'as a place of highly projected fantasy

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<sup>58</sup> Kitson and Pawson, *Temple Newsam*, p. 27.

<sup>59</sup> The most complete survey of the architectural history of Castle Howard is C. Saumarez Smith, *The Building of Castle Howard* (London, 1990), based on his PhD thesis, 'Charles Howard, third Earl of Carlisle, and the architecture of Castle Howard', PhD Thesis, University of London, Warburg Institute, 1987. K. Doves, *Sir John Vanbrugh. A Biography* (London, 1987), p. 197. For a discussion of Vanbrugh's role in design landscapes see the essays in C. Ridgway and R. Williams (eds.), *Sir John Vanbrugh and Landscape Architecture in Baroque England 1690-1730* (Stroud, 2000).

<sup>60</sup> G. Worsley, 'After ye Antique': Vanbrugh, Hawksmoor and Kent', in *Sir John Vanbrugh and Landscape Architecture in Baroque England 1690-1730*, ed. C. Ridgway and R. Williams (Stroud, 2000), pp. 131-153.

and psychological retreat'; Carlisle created a building that could be both a monument of power and a home.<sup>61</sup>

It took many years for the house and the landscape to develop, and substantial building work was taking place throughout the eighteenth century. The house was never really finished, on the basis of the original plans, and the family's decision to keep an asymmetrical house, part Palladian, part Baroque, rather than rebuilding, indicates that they developed an emotional attachment to the house as a home rather than a work of architectural expertise. Throughout this period, though, the importance of dynasty shaped the design of the house and the landscape. In the mid-eighteenth century the mausoleum was built, a permanent reminder of the deceased relatives who formed the basis of the pedigree and status of the living family. Its location reflects the importance of the past and the dead to the living; it was designed to be viewed from the house, especially from the Earl's private rooms, and the grounds were landscaped in order to highlight the building. Together with the historical symbols in the design of the house and grounds, the pyramid and the mausoleum acted to affirm the family's dynastic status.

Numerous women in the family worked to maintain the dynastic heritage with varying degrees of success. The third Countess, Anne (1674-1752), separated from her husband early into the building of Castle Howard, and lived the rest of her life in London. Frances (1696-1742) bore Henry, the fourth Earl, six children, but the three sons died young, as did their mother, leading Henry to remarry. His second wife Isabella (1721-1795), the great-aunt of the poet Byron, produced an heir who reached full maturity, but, like Anne and Frances, she appears to have done little to promote the family. This duty fell to their daughters, especially Anne Irwin and Anne Howard (1744-1799), both of whom held influential positions in Court. The countesses of the later eighteenth and early nineteenth century were more involved in enhancing the family's name and fortunes. Caroline (1753-1824) and Georgiana (1783-1858) were both from grand Whig families, the Leveson Gowers and the Cavendishes, and increased the profile of the family again by supporting and promoting the political careers of their husbands and sons. Among Georgiana's daughters were Harriet Sutherland (1806-1868), society hostess and mistress to the robes to Queen Victoria, and Blanche Burlington (1812-1840), who married the future seventh Duke of Devonshire. Together they helped the Carlisle family to become central to the Whig

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<sup>61</sup> Saumarez Smith, *The Building of Castle Howard*, p. 194.

cousindom, and remain an important force in politics into the nineteenth century.<sup>62</sup>

**Harewood House, West Yorkshire:** The Lascelles' home, Harewood House, was the last of the houses in this survey to be built, and the family were the newest recruits to the aristocracy. In the seventeenth century the Lascelles family were merchants, and began to accumulate considerable wealth through trading and slavery activities in the West Indies.<sup>63</sup> Henry Lascelles recognized that an investment in land within Britain would bring him both the wealth and the prestige that he desired. In 1739 he bought the adjoining estates of Gawthorp and Harewood, which not only offered the landowner significant political interest, but were also located in an area where the Lascelles had both historical and existing links. The family had originally settled in Yorkshire after the Norman Conquest, and made allies with a number of local families, especially the Gascoignes, who at one point owned Harewood.<sup>64</sup> Henry Lascelles also had present interests in North Yorkshire, and in 1742 he bought the property voting rights in Northallerton for £23,000. He sat as the M.P. for the town, and was succeeded in the Commons by his son following his death in 1753.<sup>65</sup> By being able to consolidate these concerns, the Lascelles were able to claim a degree of dynastic continuity for their location in Yorkshire, and for Harewood specifically. They could move from being a successful merchant family to being members of the gentry, landowners, politically active, with noble aspirations.

In order to assert their position within the Yorkshire elite they needed a house to reflect their status, and soon plans were made for a new building to replace the Old Hall at Gawthorp, seven miles north of Leeds, with a modern, Palladian home. Henry's eldest son, Edwin, was placed in charge of the Harewood estate before his father's death, and was able to make large alterations after he had inherited two thirds of his father's fortune, a sum of

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<sup>62</sup> For a discussion of the Whig cousindom see P. Mandler, *Aristocratic Government in the Age of Reform: Whigs and Liberals, 1830-1852* (Oxford, 1990), passim.

<sup>63</sup> The activities of the Lascelles family in the West Indies were the subject of a Leverhulme Trust funded research project at the University of York entitled: 'Trade, Enslavement and British Wealth: The Lascelles of Harewood House'. I must thank the participants of this project, especially Douglas Hamilton, for discussing their findings with me.

<sup>64</sup> C. Kennedy, *Harewood. The Life and Times of an English Country House* (London, 1982), p. 32.

<sup>65</sup> M. Mauchline, *Harewood House. One of the Treasure Houses of Britain* (Ashbourne, 1974), pp. 11-15.

around £170,000.<sup>66</sup> Slowly, parts of the buildings that now form Harewood House and the formal estate began to be built, starting with the stable block in 1755. Foundations for the house were dug in 1759 after a protracted debate regarding its design, which remained unsettled throughout its build.<sup>67</sup> In 1771 the family were able to move into the house, which was being furnished by Adam and Chippendale at the time.<sup>68</sup> Lascelles created a domestic seat that could act as a symbol of its dynastic wealth and history, as well as being a home for the family, the basis of an elite future.

Among the women who enjoyed the wealth of the Lascelles family were Jane Fleming (1732-1813) and Louisa Harewood (1801-1859). They both played a central role in the redesigning of the house and grounds, making it a home to reflect the status of the new dynasty. They were both also mothers, whose offspring brought differing fortunes to the family. Jane, who married Edwin Lascelles in 1770, had two daughters from her previous marriage to Sir John Fleming. One was the infamous Dorothy Worsley, whose criminal conversation trial was a cause célèbre in 1782, and was known for her high spirits during her visits to Harewood House.<sup>69</sup> Louisa married the third Earl in 1823, and brought a more virtuous family to the house. She was a Victorian 'domestic goddess' and mother to thirteen children, many of whom married into well-connected families, thus strengthening the political and social networks of their natal dynasty. Her sister-in-law was Caroline (1803-1881), eldest daughter of the sixth Earl of Carlisle, who married William Lascelles in 1823, and whose diary describes life at Harewood in the nineteenth century.<sup>70</sup> Together, Louisa and her children were able to set the foundations for the family to become important figures in Court life in the later nineteenth century, leading to the marriage of the sixth Earl of Harewood to Princess Mary, daughter of George V, in 1922.

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<sup>66</sup> The other third went to his younger brother, Daniel, who was in charge of the family business in the West Indies.

<sup>67</sup> Kennedy, *Harewood*, pp. 37-41.

<sup>68</sup> A. Sproule and M. Pollard, *The Country House Guide. Family Homes in the Historic Houses Association* (London, 1998), p. 134.

<sup>69</sup> Descriptions of the spirited activities of Dorothy and her sister at Harewood House can be found in Nottinghamshire Archive Office, DDFJ 11/1/4, Francis Ferrand Foljambe, Aldwark, to John Hewitt, Grosvenor Street, 28 January 1779, f. 33. Thanks to Sandra Dunster for this reference

<sup>70</sup> Excerpts are published in M. Leconfield (ed.), *Three Howard Sisters. Selections From the Writings of Lady Caroline Lascelles, Lady Dover and Countess Gower, 1825 to 1833*, Completed by J. Gore (London, 1955).

Substantial archival collections remain for each of these houses, although the range and depth differ greatly. The Carlisle manuscripts are the most complete, and the wide range of sources that are still kept in the house's muniment room are complemented by a series of published sources, including letters written by the sister and daughters of the sixth Countess.<sup>71</sup> Both Burton Constable and Temple Newsam archives are largely complete collections, although both have key omissions and the documentation for some members of the family is very scarce. It is unclear whether these documents ever existed, or whether they were lost when the papers were moved to archive offices. When family papers have been sorted by later generations, it appears that the papers of women have often been edited or discarded, as was the case with the papers of the fifth Duchess of Devonshire at Chatsworth.<sup>72</sup> The archival sources for the women of Harewood House are considerably leaner than those of the other houses. The majority of letters surviving from the eighteenth century are those to and from the steward, and family correspondence is largely absent. However, other sources, including paintings, miniatures and the house itself, contain information regarding the women of Harewood, as do letters that survive in other collections. Besides the archival sources associated with the houses, the collections of relatives, friends and correspondents have also been consulted, and provide a deeper understanding of their lifestyles and social networks outside their country houses.

The main resources available to the historian of eighteenth-century aristocratic women are their letters.<sup>73</sup> It has been argued that because of the way that women wrote their letters, between daily tasks, that they offer a better understanding of household and familial matters than letters written by men. In her study of the Verney family archive Susan Whyman has found that women mainly wrote their letters in the moments between fulfilling their domestic duties, and thus it is not unreasonable to assume that these issues, those most pressing on

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<sup>71</sup> H. Cavendish, *Hary-O. The Letters of Lady Harriet Cavendish, 1796-1809*, ed. Sir G. Leveson Gower and I. Palmer (London, 1940); V. Surtees (ed.), *A Second Self. The Letters of Harriet Granville 1810-45* (Salisbury, 1990); Leconfield, *Three Howard Sisters*.

<sup>72</sup> Foreman, *Georgiana*, p. xv.

<sup>73</sup> For surveys of the nature of letter writing, especially by women see: D. Barton and N. Hall (eds.), *Letter Writing as a Social Practice*, *Studies in Written Language and Literacy*, 9 (Amsterdam, 2000); J. Daybell (ed.), *Early Modern Women's Letter Writing, 1450-1700* (Basingstoke, 2001); R. Earle (ed.), *Epistolary Selves: Letters and Letter Writers, 1600-1945* (Aldershot, 1999); S. M. Fitzmaurice, *The Familiar Letter in Early Modern English: A Pragmatic Approach* (Amsterdam, 2002).

their mind at that moment, would be expressed in their letters.<sup>74</sup> As Amanda Vickery's work on the lower gentry has shown, it is possible to attain a more intimate understanding of the domestic situation through the letters of women than can be obtained by statistical analysis of the average household size, or from the business letters of male household heads.<sup>75</sup> It has also been suggested that letter writing was a liberating activity for many women, as it gave them the opportunity to discuss the issues that concerned them, whether it was the state of their own house or the House of Commons. The letters of elite women do offer information beyond the business of the house and home and cover a wide range of opinions and emotions. As the aristocratic women studied in this survey were of a high enough social status to delegate most of domestic work to others, they were able to view letter writing as a leisure activity, which they dedicated considerable time to. Their writings were less focused on worries about servants and the cost of napkins, as was the case in Vickery's survey, but concentrated on the activities of their families. Because of their high levels of literacy and education they had the vocabulary to express personal opinions about a wide range of issues, and to clearly articulate their own feelings. There was a move away from the formal style of the letter that dominated in the late medieval period, and by the later seventeenth century women were able to write amusing, witty letters that covered many topics, including politics, gossip, and other 'news'.<sup>76</sup>

Letters, though, were not simply descriptions of daily life and news; they also expressed the feelings of the individual writer. Letters allowed women to connect with their relatives, to form social networks, and assert their position within the family.<sup>77</sup> Correspondence between close relatives or friends offers the historian a way into a person's

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<sup>74</sup> R. Earle, 'Introduction: letters, writers and the historian', in *Epistolary Selves: Letters and Letter Writers, 1600-1945*, ed. R. Earle (Aldershot, 1999), pp. 1-14; S. Whyman, "'Paper visits": the post-Restoration letters as seen through the Verney family archive', in *Epistolary Selves: Letters and Letter Writers, 1600-1945*, ed. R. Earle (Aldershot, 1999), p. 21; S. E. Whyman, *Sociability and Power in Later-Stuart England. The Cultural Worlds of the Verneys 1660-1720* (Oxford, 1999).

<sup>75</sup> For gendered understandings of letters see: Earle, 'Introduction', p. 6; Vickery, *The Gentleman's Daughter*, pp. 10-11; R. O'Day, 'Tudor and Stuart women: their lives through their letters', in *Early Modern Women's Letter Writing, 1450-1700*, ed. J. Daybell (Basingstoke, 2001), p. 141.

<sup>76</sup> See: J. Daybell, 'Introduction', in *Early Modern Women's Letter Writing, 1450-1700*, ed. J. Daybell (Basingstoke, 2001), p. 2; E. Chalus, 'Elite women, social politics, and the political world of late eighteenth-century England', *The Historical Journal* 43 (2000), p. 677.

<sup>77</sup> S. Whyman, 'Gentle companions: single women and their letters in late Stuart England', in *Early Modern Women's Letter Writing, 1450-1700*, ed. J. Daybell (Basingstoke, 2001), pp. 178-9.



emotional history; letters expressed their feelings regarding their role as a wife, a mother or a widow and explain what it was like to be an elite woman. This thesis explores in most detail the emotional history of aristocratic women, including their responses to their duties and daily activities, and their love, or otherwise, for their families. The use of letters in this way requires a degree of caution. One needs to consider the extent that women were reflecting the cultural norms of the period in their writings. Sensibility, evangelicalism, and romanticism created new languages of expression that would have affected the tone of the correspondence. Literary conventions may have also influenced the style of the letter, especially during the period when the epistolary novel was fashionable during the eighteenth century. However, to dismiss the content of these sources as simply mimicking the fashion of the period is to deny that the letter, and its writer, could express personal opinions. Most of the letters from the archives still have their original envelopes, many of which still had the remains of a seal. This indicates that the sender did not expect the letter to be openly read, but that it contained private information, either for the family or the named individual. Correspondents expected their ideas to remain private; Harriet Granville's (1785-1862) letters to her sister, Georgiana Carlisle, often included an insistence that she did not show the contents to Lord Carlisle, as she was embarrassed about the opinions she expressed. Harriet was confident that Georgiana would not show it to anyone other than her husband, and so did not have to request that her thoughts were kept private from the wider Carlisle family.<sup>78</sup> Because the letters were private, they did not need to be essentially fashionable in order to preserve status; they could speak with real emotion. With caution, and acknowledgement of the literary conventions of the moment, letters can be used to uncover the emotional and private world of the eighteenth-century aristocratic woman.

Although letters are the main source used, other forms of evidence can illustrate the lives of elite women in the past too. There are a number of diaries in the collections, and while the vast majority are journals of trips abroad, they do hold useful information regarding the familial relations. There is also a small collection of daily-use diaries, which include appointments and brief comments on their activities. The nineteenth-century pocket diaries of Georgiana Carlisle, for example, are studied in detail in chapter seven, as they contain information regarding her ill health and her reactions to her condition, and form an important source in understanding a woman's emotional responses to her declining mental

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<sup>78</sup> For example Surtees, *A Second Self*, p. 144.

health.<sup>79</sup> Financial texts are also useful. There are a number of pocket and accounting books held by the chatelaines of the various houses, and also general bills that detail expenditure on specific items, such as clothes, portraits, books and furniture. These documents reflect the amount of money available to the various women and are central sources in understanding their role in the running of the household and the family. There are also numerous legal documents, including marriage settlements, that show the fiscal basis of husband and wife relationships, and the provisions arranged for future children. Other settlements discuss the financial plans made for older family members, and wills offer an opportunity to gain an understanding of the distribution of goods. These documents do not only reflect the legal frameworks within which families operated, but also suggest patterns of affection and emotional bonds between individuals. There is also the evidence offered by the houses themselves: the internal uses of space, the decorative patterns, and the examples of portraiture that can be used to consider the portrayal and representation of aristocratic women.

These sources cannot provide a complete picture of every woman's life; letters are missing, or were never written, which would illustrate important moments in individuals' lives. There are no letters remaining, for example, which describe Isabella Irwin's reaction to the death of her husband and her sons, of whom she was very fond. A couple of surviving letters from Georgiana Carlisle to her brother Hart, written following the death of their mother in 1806, include the instruction 'burn this letter'.<sup>80</sup> It may be that others were more diligent in completing this request, and so we have lost some accounts of the distress felt by women following a bereavement. Legal documents only reflect the intention of action, and are constrained by standardized language. It is therefore impossible to tell from a marriage settlement whether it was a happy marriage, and it is even difficult to assess whether it was a happy or willing betrothal. It has also not been possible to read every single item that may contain information regarding female experiences in the country house. In most cases only the items that specifically related to women were consulted: letters to and from women; items written by women; legal documents that explicitly dealt with female experiences. Exclusively male documents were overlooked, because of constraints on time

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<sup>79</sup> Carlisle MSS, J18/62/1-15, Georgiana Carlisle's pocket books and diaries.

<sup>80</sup> Devonshire MSS, Letters of the fifth Duke of Devonshire, 1890, Georgiana Morpeth to Lord Hartington, 10 April 1806.

and the sheer size of the archival collections. This means that letters between men were not studied, although they may contain information relating to their wives, mothers and sisters. While normally each item that specifically related to a woman within the survey was consulted, a sampling system had to be used for the very large collection of letters and papers of Georgiana Carlisle.<sup>81</sup> This collection is so sizable that it was neither possible nor fruitful to read all her correspondence, and so efforts were concentrated on letters around key dates, especially marriages, births and deaths. This thesis explores the lives of many women, and so to concentrate on a single life would be to the detriment of the other examples.

This study is heavily dependent on original archival sources and relatively few of the documents used have been published.<sup>82</sup> This has meant that I have been able to use the accessible papers unhindered by the concerns of an editor, writing with different interests and concerns. While archivists, both past and present, will have shaped the collections, by using the original documents I have been able to access the words of the women of the past in their complete setting. Details that are often excluded from edited editions, such as comments in the margins, the ways that letters were addressed and signed, and the style of writing paper, include important information regarding familial relations and the position of elite women in the past. While the accounts from the documents are incomplete, by bringing together the different sources and building up evidence from other known examples, it is possible to piece together central themes, moments and ideas that shaped elite women's lives in the period 1680-1858.

### **Women and the Aristocratic Family in the Long Eighteenth Century**

This period is traditionally thought to be one of change for familial and domestic relations, a position presented by both Lawrence Stone and Randolph Trumbach.<sup>83</sup> Trumbach argues that in the late seventeenth century there was a move away from the

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<sup>81</sup> Carlisle MSS, J/18 The papers of Georgiana Howard, née Cavendish, sixth Countess of Carlisle.

<sup>82</sup> In addition to the letters written by relations of Georgiana Carlisle, the Historical Manuscripts Commission has also published edited editions of the papers relating to the Carlisle and Irwin families: H. M. C., *Manuscripts of the Earl of Carlisle*; H. M. C., *Manuscripts in Various Collections*, pp. 1-195.

<sup>83</sup> L. Stone, *The Family, Sex and Marriage In England 1500-1800* (Harmondsworth, 1979); R. Trumbach, *The Rise of the Egalitarian Family. Aristocratic Kinship and Domestic Relations in Eighteenth-Century England* (New York, N.Y., 1978).

patriarchal family form that had been common in the early modern household. The pattern of subjugation of family members by male household heads had been questioned in seventeenth-century western societies, and by the early nineteenth century there was a substantial move to an egalitarian philosophy where everyone, even slaves, could be considered as equals. This egalitarian ideology, he contends, would have greatly changed the domestic lives of aristocrats from about 1750, as equal friendship, even romance, between husbands and wives was now considered possible. Female property rights increased, women placed more emphasis on their role as mothers, and there was an increased attention given, by both sexes, to children.<sup>84</sup> Lawrence Stone also notes the growth of domestic ideals in aristocratic families, although he argues that these changes took place in the earlier rather than the later eighteenth century. He suggests that numerous factors encouraged change. Individualism had become more popular, encouraged among the landed elite by the examples of the late seventeenth-century professionals. There was also a post-Restoration change in religious ideas, which meant that there was a shift towards the importance of pleasure in this world rather than waiting for heaven. New property laws through the eighteenth century were developed too, and these were both reflective of and encouraging towards new affective ideas of the family. There was also, from the 1650s, an increased emphasis on privacy, especially architecturally in the great country houses, with the development of many new features, especially corridors.<sup>85</sup>

Both these writers suggest that there ought to be significant evidence of change in the nature of familial relations among the upper classes during the eighteenth century. There have been numerous critics of both these texts, and, at the point of publication, Stone's book in particular created significant controversy.<sup>86</sup> Reviewers disliked the 'broad brush' approach used by both writers, as well as the use of psychology to support their arguments

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<sup>84</sup> Trumbach, *The Rise of the Egalitarian Family*, pp. 3-4.

<sup>85</sup> Stone, *Family Sex and Marriage*, pp. 150 ff.

<sup>86</sup> See: E. P. Thompson, 'Happy Families', *New Society* 41 (1977), pp. 499-501; A. Macfarlane, 'Review of Lawrence Stone's 'The Family, Sex and Marriage in England 1500-1800'', *History and Theory* 18 (1979), pp. 103-126.

and their use of evidence.<sup>87</sup> Stone in particular, was criticized for relying heavily on printed sources while making little reference to the radical or conservative agendas of the texts, and tending to present official doctrines as personal practices.<sup>88</sup> Also, in order to emphasize his argument regarding the nature of post-1660 affective individualism, he represented the periods both before the eighteenth century and after 1800 as uniformly patriarchal, an assertion that has been attacked by numerous women's historians.<sup>89</sup> However, the emphasis on the nature of elite affectionate relations in the eighteenth century is an important legacy that both texts offer, and needs to be considered further by historians of both sexes.

I would suggest that the main problem with both Trumbach's and Stone's argument lies in their representations of the timing, speed and nature of changes in the development of the affectionate family. Because of their emphasis on change, both become embroiled in debates over chronology, and the need to make the case for the harshness of life in the seventeenth century, which are now outdated in light of more recent studies. They also overemphasize the nature of the change, and its universality. A search for evidence of continuity of attitudes and domestic relations instead may be more illuminating, and would allow questions of customary behaviour, habits and emotional constants to be addressed. Trumbach and Stone also paid little attention to the role of women, who, as this study illustrates, played an important role in maintaining the continuation of the elite household. The emphasis on the dynastic among the elites, and the importance of the endurance of family and familial ideals, would encourage conventional as opposed to new behaviour. Evidence of these patterns of continuity, as well as evidence for change is highlighted through this thesis.

The way that ideas of affection influenced and shaped the family is also addressed. The extent to which eighteenth-century aristocratic women and their families can be described as 'domestic' is discussed. This term has been mostly associated with women of the Victorian age, when the idea of the 'angel in the house' developed as the ideal for the

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<sup>87</sup> R. B. Outhwaite, 'Review article. Population change, family structure and the good of counting', *Historical Journal* 22 (1979), pp. 229-37; F. D. Dow, 'Review article. The early modern family', *History* 63 (1978), pp. 239-45; D. Levine, 'Review: The Rise of the Egalitarian Family, by Randolph Trumbach', *Journal of Social History* 14 (1981), pp. 495-7.

<sup>88</sup> Vickery, *The Gentleman's Daughter*, p. 2; Barker and Chalus, 'Introduction', p. 18.

<sup>89</sup> For example: Vickery, *The Gentleman's Daughter*, p. 40; J. Rendall, *The Origins of Modern Feminism: Women in Britain, France and the United States 1780- 1860* (London, 1985), p. 113; Laurence, *Women in England*, chapter four.

middle classes. Influenced by the growth of evangelical notions of manner and morals, a new home ethic was created, which was influential beyond the Christian bourgeoisie.<sup>90</sup> There was a need to find a role for the increasingly leisured women of the polite classes that would maintain their genteel image while keeping them safe from accusations of idleness and corruption. Within the didactic literature of the time, the management of home and family was promoted as the most important role for women.

The original model of the ideal woman at home was based on the aristocratic lady. There was a growth in the number of conduct books produced through the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries following the failure to renew the licensing act in 1695.<sup>91</sup> Throughout this period the texts promoted a feminine ideal and celebrated the objective of a happy home. At the beginning of the century many of the texts were a mixture of devotional and manners books and were aimed at the aristocracy, of both sexes. Later, this genre was slowly mixed with a more humble style of book that featured recipes and hints for managing the domestic economy, and used the country house as the ideal setting for the perfect household.<sup>92</sup> However, although many used seventeenth-century aristocratic ideals and homes as inspiration, didactic writers of the eighteenth century increasingly moved away from using elites as positive role models. There was a new passion for frugality, and the country-house traditions of display and hospitality were rejected as simply symbolic practices of noble power and therefore discouraged. Texts warned against marrying wealthy women, as they were too expensive to keep, and aristocratic homes were denounced for their lavishness. Slowly, the attack on the aristocracy became engendered, and the masculine country house was seen as in need of a new female domesticity.<sup>93</sup>

As demonstrated above, the elite woman of the period was considered as 'idle'; it was argued that they were not active participants in the duties of the home. However, among the aristocracy, it was centrally important to be leisured; it was because they were nonworkers that they were elite. It was believed that as elite men could not work, activities such as running estates or businesses on estate land could not be classified as labour, as they

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<sup>90</sup> C. Hall, 'The early formation of Victorian domestic ideology', in *Fit Work for Women*, ed. S. Burman (London, 1979), p. 15.

<sup>91</sup> Armstrong, *Desire and Domestic Fiction*, pp. 62-3.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 62-69.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 71-74,

were the activities of the aristocracy. Thus the duties of elite women, such as their philanthropy, their familial and domestic duties or political activities were likewise unable to be understood as work.<sup>94</sup> This meant that there was an intrinsic problem in the representation of elite women; they could not work, or present themselves as labouring and so risked accusations of indolence. Aristocratic women could use the idea of domesticity in order to shape their duties at home, and show themselves to be active, but not working. The polite classes, which promoted the ideal of the domestic woman, did not present these exertions as work, but rather as vocational; by using this language, aristocrats could be active without compromising their status.

The nature of the activities that women could undertake were, to an extent, shaped by contemporary ideas regarding both work and home. Being a wife and mother was not considered as labour, and being active in these roles would enforce rather than comprise a woman's gentility. Duties within the household were considered permissible, not only managing the servants and family, but also tasks such as managing the dairy, which was considered a peculiarly female exercise in the earlier eighteenth century.<sup>95</sup> Philanthropic activities were also considered safe for upper-class women as it was assumed that they were playing the same role in the houses of the poor as they would have played in their own homes. Many male writers ignored the political dimensions of charitable visiting, and it was not admitted that it gave women considerable power on the estates.<sup>96</sup>

The vast majority of the activities that elite women undertook were centred around furthering the family's profile, and maintaining their aristocratic status. Women were active in politics, both local and national, canvassing votes for their family members, hosting influential parties, and using philanthropy as a way of encouraging the electorate.<sup>97</sup> Their involvement was important since peers were prevented by law in interfering with elections

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<sup>94</sup> Reynolds, *Aristocratic Women*, pp. 20-1.

<sup>95</sup> D. Valenze, 'The art of women and the business of men: woman's work and the dairy industry c. 1740-1840', *Past and Present* 130 (1991), p. 144

<sup>96</sup> A. Summers, 'A home from home: women's philanthropic work in the nineteenth century', in *Fit Work for Women*, ed. S. Burman (London, 1979), pp. 33, 45

<sup>97</sup> See: Chalus, 'Epidemical madness'; Richardson, 'The role of women in electoral politics'.

themselves, and so they needed their wives' and daughters' support.<sup>98</sup> Women were also influential in business deals, and their family links, friends, and social networks would have allowed their husbands and fathers to make the connections necessary to forward their financial plans. The aristocracy furthered itself through the maintenance and improvement of its own dynastic image and power. Women were crucial to this, and their roles of chatelaines, mothers, philanthropists and electioneers were important in the preservation of the families' image. Women played a central role, through their active work, in the development of the aristocracy. By using the language of domesticity and the motivation of the dynasty, they were crucial to the continuing success of their families.

Women's responses to the expectations of domesticity can be considered as 'performative' in nature. In her studies of gender, Judith Butler has argued that gender is 'performed', a 'doing' rather than a 'being'.<sup>99</sup> 'Acts' signify a gender, which are part of a ritualized production that is shaped by society to confirm that gender. People play out these roles, and their gender is validated. She stresses that:

gender is not to be chosen and ... "performativity" is not a radical choice and it's not voluntarism ... Performativity has to do with repetition, very often with the repetition of oppressive and painful gender norms.<sup>100</sup>

This idea of gender being conveyed and confirmed by acts is important when considering the roles that women played in the eighteenth-century country house. Many of the duties that they undertook could have been delegated to servants or other staff, and the activities that they did undertake were very much shaped by personal choice. However, for elite women performativity does not appear to have been either oppressive or painful; the performance helped them to gain status and enjoyment from the role. Throughout the thesis I argue that there was a significant performative nature to elite women's domestic roles, and that this was central to dynastic domesticity. However, the acting of roles was not just confined to performing gender; it was important that they played at being aristocratic too. They conformed to the ideals regarding their gender and class in order to reassert their status and their femininity, and so to assure the emotional and dynastic well-being of the

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<sup>98</sup> Reynolds, *Aristocratic Women*, p. 130.

<sup>99</sup> J. Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York, N.Y., 1990), pp. 24-5. For a discussion see M. Carlson, *Performance. A Critical Introduction* (London, 1996), pp. 170-182.

<sup>100</sup> Butler, quoted in E. Cohen, 'Posing the question. Wilde, wit, and the ways of man', in *Performance and Cultural Politics*, ed. E. Diamond (London, 1996), p. 37.



family.

This thesis is separated into three sections. The first section consists of two chapters that explore the relationship between women and the house, and how they were involved in its design, management and shape. The roles that women played in the running of the home are explored in the first chapter, and the performative nature of many of these activities is discussed. Although they had servants to undertake any necessary household tasks, many women were involved in the running of the house; I argue that some women performed these roles in order to demonstrate that they were able to fulfil those duties expected of them as aristocrats and women. The theme of performativity is also explored in the second chapter, which considers how elite women made the country house a home through a survey of their writings and the work that they undertook to redecorate the buildings. This section also explores the position of the country house as the dynastic centre of the family, and the role that women played in encouraging loyalty to the family and to both its dynastic and domestic ideals.

The second section focuses on the intimate family life of women, and the emotional ties that shaped their lives. It explores their experiences through the writings of the women, and so it has been possible to reach a sense of what it was like to be a child, a wife, and a mother through the study of their own words. The chapter on childhood deals with how a child's gender shaped their youth, and their position in the family. It studies their education, and argues that their pedagogical programme was designed to prepare them to perform the roles of accomplished and powerful elite women. The success of their youth is assessed in the following chapter, which examines the courting and marriages of elite women. The degree of freedom women had in their choice of partner is demonstrated, and the evidence for happy and loving marriages among the elite presented. The experiences of these wives as mothers are the basis of the final chapter in this section, where the journey of a mother from her first pregnancy through to her duties as a mother of grown-up children is charted. This section explores in detail the degree of affection within the elite family and demonstrates that women were not normally neglected and abused, but rather could be the centre of happy and loving households.

The thesis finishes with an exploration of the lives of those women who have often been forgotten by the historian, and fail to fit into conventional pictures of the elite family. Firstly, the role of single and widowed women is considered, and how they dealt with their

position of being independent from, but reliant on, their male relatives. The elderly and the unwell are explored in the next chapter, which highlights the degree of affection within the networks of the aristocratic family. The care that was extended to all these women by their relatives, and the systems of support that were available to them, are considered, demonstrating how crucial familial ties were to elites during this period. The extent of affection within the elite family is further explored in the final chapter, which addresses death, dying and grief. The importance of death within the aristocratic family is presented, and the sentiment demonstrated by the behaviour of the bereaved assessed.

Although the study of the aristocratic woman in the long eighteenth century has been a growth area in history in recent years, there are still many topics left uncovered. The study of their home life has been neglected in favour of research into their role in politics, although the country house was a power base for both the women and men of the upper classes. The favouring of the 'political' by historians may have been shaped by a desire to demonstrate their power within the 'male' world. However, it is important to consider that women can be empowered within their domestic roles, and that it is not necessary for women to undertake 'male' tasks for them to be influential and important within their society. The domestic arrangements, the patterns of upbringing, and household structure were all influential features in the lives of elite women in the period, and it is important that we celebrate those duties too. These activities featured in their letters and their other writings and were clearly a significant part of elite women's lives. Within these archives it has been possible to trace the emotional history of some of the women of the Yorkshire country houses, and to explore the extent to which the family was an affectionate unit. Their responses to the different stages of life, from childhood to old age and death, have been assessed, and what is discovered are the lives of complex figures. The women in this survey are not those described by Wollstonecraft and Swift, selfish, deceitful and consuming, or the timorous and invisible figures described by historians. They could be loving, considerate women, who cared for both the emotional and dynastic well-being of their families, and often played a central role in maintaining and promoting the fortunes of the family.

## Chapter One: Household

*Conceal, from the indifferent spectator, the secret springs which move, regulate and perfect the arrangement of your household.*

Isabella Carlisle, 1790.<sup>1</sup>

Isabella Carlisle's advice in *Maxims Addressed to Young Ladies* (1790) to hide the mechanisms that ensured the smooth running of a country house reflects the tensions women faced when managing the establishment. The didactic writings of the period encouraged women to be active housewives, as a way of ensuring their virtue and the happiness of the family. Elite values, though, discouraged activities that could be described as work; conspicuous consumption of leisure asserted the wealth and influence of the aristocracy. Aristocratic women therefore needed to be both visible and invisible in running the household and family. The language of 'domesticity' provided women with the opportunity to relieve this tension. They could 'perform' the roles of the domestic woman, without having to undertake the day to day tasks. Some women did take on the role of chatelaine, which provided them with a complex job within the household, including managing expenses, staff and the purchasing of goods. The extent to which women fulfilled these duties varied from person to person, shaped by numerous factors including their background, their other roles in the family, and, perhaps most importantly, personal choice. However, even those women who took little practical interest in the household were influenced by the language of sentimental domesticity, and were involved in the emotional aspects of the country house.

The household and the family were central arenas for the domestic life of elite women in this period. Although domestic pleasures could be found outside the country house, such as purchasing household items from shops or attending fashionable urban dinner parties, the household was the main location for domestic emotions. This chapter examines the relationship between women, household and domesticity. It focuses both on women's practical and playful responses to the household, and on how they flourished in and managed this environment. The roles that women played in the country house are assessed, and the extent to which their responses to the domestic world were always functional is questioned.

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<sup>1</sup> I. Carlisle, *Thoughts in the Form of Maxims Addressed to Young Ladies on Their First Establishment in the World* (Dublin, 1790), pp. 19-20.

Alongside a study of the managerial duties of women, the emotional aspects of 'domesticity', what it signified, and how women conveyed its ideals, are considered. Using Butler's concept of performativity, I argue that 'acting' the role of the domestic woman was as important a duty for the elite woman as carefully managing the expenses and staff of the household.

### Household Management

Elite women played an important role in the care of the country house and its staff, especially in the two central areas of economy and management. The role of women in managing household finances has been overlooked by historians of the aristocracy, and while there has been a growing appreciation of the role women played in middle-class and gentry households, the aristocratic woman's relationship to money has remained neglected.<sup>2</sup> Recent research has highlighted that while women were involved in the family, the household should not be considered as a 'separate sphere' that was a specifically female concern. Although roles in the household were often gendered, they were not 'oppositional' in nature, with mutually exclusive categories; the male head of the family played an important role too, and husbands and wives would manage the household together.<sup>3</sup> The management of a country house, with its family and staff, was a weighty undertaking that gave significant responsibility to the heads of the family. A strong partnership and supportive staff were therefore crucial in maintaining the household.

As some men expected their wives to undertake a number of the duties relating to household management, the roles of elite women as housewives often featured in the concerns of men seeking a spouse. Domestic qualities were considered to be important for a wife to possess, even if, in practice, the amount of work they were expected to do could be fairly limited. When the young Edward Irwin was on his Grand Tour in 1704 he was concerned that: 'a pretty woman, good housewife and great fortune should tempt me to matrimony here, which I can assure you I am afraid of, since they are all angels here, that

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<sup>2</sup> In her early work, for example, Catherine Hall portrayed seventeenth-century elite women as idle, and argued that housewifery was only seen as a skill among lesser gentry and middle-class women. C. Hall, *White, Male, and Middle Class. Explorations in Feminism and History* (Cambridge, 1992), pp. 54-5. See also A. Vickery, *The Gentleman's Daughter. Women's Lives in Georgian England* (London, 1998).

<sup>3</sup> K. D. Reynolds, *Aristocratic Women and Political Society in Victorian Britain* (Oxford, 1998), pp. 21, 31, 41; L. Weatherill, *Consumer Behaviour and Material Culture in Britain 1660-1760*, Second Edition (London, 1996), p. 138.

is to say for making a wife'.<sup>4</sup> Edward was keen to ensure that his wife would be able to manage a harmonious household successfully, and guarantee his felicity. A century later, the importance of 'domestic happiness' was also considered central to a good marriage. In 1825 Marianne Clifford Constable was assessed as a good choice as wife for her cousin, Thomas, as: 'she has been under the protecting care of a most religious and virtuous mother, by following whose example she must make her husband truly happy'.<sup>5</sup> Virtue was increasingly seen as the crucial quality of a good housewife, and so was sought in potential wives as they needed to be able to provide moral guardianship over the household. In Ben Jonson's *To Penshurst* (c.1616) he praised the abilities of the absent lady of the house as a housewife, as she had trained her staff so well that they could cope when a royal visitor called unexpectedly. He tied this praise to her fertility and marital fidelity, noting that her husband was unusual in being able to be certain that his children were all his own.<sup>6</sup> Those men who did not marry also recognized the importance of having a woman that they trusted to head the household, and would use female relatives to fulfil the domestic duties of the wife, as Winifred Constable did for her brother.<sup>7</sup> Personal probity and the ability to manage the household were closely linked throughout this period, and so a man needed a virtuous woman he could trust in order to run the country house.

The importance of being a trustworthy and reliable female head of the household can be seen in light of their relationship with the servants. The elite family were very dependent on the moral probity of their staff, as they were privy to many of the family's private emotions and actions. They would also have access to a wide range of the valuable items within the house, and the fear of theft and deceit by servants ran high, leading to detailed

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<sup>4</sup> WYAS, Leeds, Pawson MSS, Ac 1038, Volume 7 (April 1691-December 1704), Edward Irwin, Delft, to Isabella Irwin, Temple Newsam, 15 July 1704.

<sup>5</sup> ERYARS, DDCC/144/32, Letters to Mr and Mrs Chichester, J. Nagle, North Cliff, Black Rock, to Mrs Chichester, Caverleigh, 7 July 1825.

<sup>6</sup> M. T. Crane, "Players in your huswifery, and huswives in your beds": conflicting identities of early modern English women', in *Maternal Measures. Figuring Caregiving in the Early Modern Period*, ed. N. J. Miller and N. Yavneh (Aldershot, 2000), p. 219.

<sup>7</sup> See chapter six. D. Connell, 'The Grand Tour of William and Winifred Constable 1769-1771', in *Burton Constable Hall: The Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries*, East Yorkshire Local History Series 51, 1998, p. 38; see also C. Adams, 'A choice not to wed? Unmarried women in eighteenth-century France', *Journal of Social History* 29 (1996), pp. 883-94.

inventories being kept in some houses.<sup>8</sup> A moral guardian was therefore needed to head the household, in order to provide a good example and act as a beacon of virtue. The lady of the house, as at Penshurst, was often considered to be responsible for the servants even if, as was normal, she had delegated control to other staff, usually the housekeeper and steward. Elite women, though, did continue to show an interest, and were often central to the hiring of new staff members. Harriet Sutherland was concerned to find a new cook quickly when hers left in 1840 to start a restaurant in London; she was frustrated with the English cooks that she had found in her preliminary enquiries, considering them ‘very vulgar’.<sup>9</sup> Rudeness among servants was a real concern. When searching for a new footman for Anne Scarburgh Irwin (c. 1699-1766) in 1738, her husband specified: ‘he must be a sightly fellow and one that has been in service before and knows something of waiting and if possible one that has had the smallpox. We would rather have one of the country than a London one for they are apt to be sawcy [sic]’.<sup>10</sup> Because male staff, especially footmen, were often on display, it was important that they were polite and physically attractive. Height was a particular bonus, and Georgiana Carlisle was keen to have a former *maitre d’* of the Duke of Leeds although she knew nothing about him except that he was tall.<sup>11</sup> It was important to ensure that footmen were respectable as they would wear the livery of the family, act as messengers and fulfil public roles.<sup>12</sup> The footmen were public representatives of the family, and so they needed to be worthy of that honour.

The family often became close to servants, and would have particular favourites. Servants were often included in wills. For example, the only female servant of Elizabeth Constable (d. 1765) inherited a year’s wages from her mistress as well as all her wearing apparel, and her other silks, woolens and linen.<sup>13</sup> As a young woman Caroline Cawdor was

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<sup>8</sup> Reynolds, *Aristocratic Women*, p. 30.

<sup>9</sup> Keele University Library, Sneyd MSS, SC13/138, Harriet Sutherland, Stafford House, to Ralph Sneyd, 8 July 1840.

<sup>10</sup> WYAS, Leeds, TN/C/15/136, Arthur Irwin to Hopkinson, 11 November 1738.

<sup>11</sup> Keele University Library, Sneyd MSS, SC5/6, Georgiana Morpeth, Castle Howard, to Ralph Sneyd, c. 1823.

<sup>12</sup> G. Russell, “‘Keeping place’”: servants, theater [sic] and sociability in mid-eighteenth century Britain’, *Eighteenth Century - Theory and Interpretation* 42 (2001), pp. 31-2.

<sup>13</sup> ERYARS, DDCC/134/151, Will of Elizabeth Heneage, 5 December 1765.

insistent on having a particular servant with her for a long journey in 1788, and only child Talbot Clifford Constable was fond of the servants who cared for him while his parents were away during 1837.<sup>14</sup> There was real concern when children became too close to servants, as the morals of the paid staff were considered questionable. Georgiana Carlisle wrote of her concerns when her own children were spending a great deal of time with the Castle Howard staff, noting that: 'tho they should always be kind and civil to them it is certainly is a bad thing for children to be in habits of great intimacy and familiarity with them'.<sup>15</sup> However, servants were an important part of elite life, and the family were very dependent upon them. It is clear that Isabella Irwin was reliant on 'Sarah' during the early eighteenth century, who appears to have been the housekeeper, or acted in a similar role, as regular amounts of money were paid to her to cover expenses.<sup>16</sup> When Isabella Carlisle set up her house in Moulins, France, in 1782 she employed 'a cook, two maids, besides my own, two footmen and an upper servant, a pair of horses and a coachman', which she considered to be necessary in order to live as a gentlewoman.<sup>17</sup> To ensure the smooth running of the household, women recognized the importance of having good servants and Harriet Sutherland even opened a school to train domestic servants on her Scottish estate in the mid-nineteenth century.<sup>18</sup> It was assumed that elite women could not function without the paid help, and were not expected to undertake simple tasks themselves. When Frederick Carlisle left on a peace mission to America during the Revolution, he took a significant part of the household staff with him. He wrote apologetically to his wife: 'I have taken all the servants so you must be most starved and neglected. I promise you I will bring them all back as soon as I can, and myself too'.<sup>19</sup> That she did survive suggests that she was more resourceful than her husband thought.

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<sup>14</sup> York City Archive, Munby Family Papers, 54:99, Francis Gregg to Reverend John Forth, 18 December 1788; ERYARS, DDCC/144/33, Letters to Marianne Clifford Constable, Talbot Clifford Constable, Burton Constable, to Marianne Clifford Constable, Caverleigh, 24 January 1837.

<sup>15</sup> Carlisle MSS, J15/1/56, Georgiana Morpeth to Caroline Carlisle, 30 July, n.y.

<sup>16</sup> WYAS, Leeds, TN/EA/14/18, Notebook.

<sup>17</sup> Carlisle MSS, J14/13/6, Isabella Carlisle, Moulins, to Mr Gregg, 26 February 1782.

<sup>18</sup> J. Gerard, 'Lady Bountiful: women of the landed classes and rural philanthropy', *Victorian Studies* 30 (1987), p. 199.

<sup>19</sup> Carlisle MSS, J15/1/9, Frederick, fifth Earl of Carlisle, to Caroline Carlisle, Trident, 18 April 1778.

The relationship between servants and mistresses was one of interdependency, and the staff were significant social actors in the domestic household.<sup>20</sup> The elite family needed the servants in order to ensure the smooth running of the household, and reliable upper staff whom the female head could leave in charge of the administration were crucial in allowing her to pursue other activities, such as politics, holidaying, or running businesses.<sup>21</sup> However, staff could be easily fired. They were replaceable, and because of the movement of the family between the country house and London, work could be seasonal. Good physical appearance, immunity to diseases, and being single were expected qualities in a servant, and failure to fulfil these requirements could lead to unemployment. This power relationship between the employer and servants was an important part of eighteenth-century life, and featured in the literature and plays of the period, including James Townley's *High Life Below Stairs*, first performed in 1759.<sup>22</sup> As the household was often complicated in form, elite women could face problems in controlling all of their staff. In order to control this, women would often use the senior staff to direct the other servants, and devolve to them the worries and problems of managing a large staff. However, the servants' actions would have still reflected upon elite women's virtues and abilities, even when they were absent. In the mid-eighteenth century, for example, Frances Irwin criticized Isabella Carlisle because her servants were badly behaved, and so she was considered to have a disordered household.<sup>23</sup> A poorly managed staff was considered to be a sign of a less than virtuous mistress, and a disrupted household was seen as the result of personal impropriety.

Another area where the elite woman was expected to bring virtuous concerns to the household was in the management of money. Jonathan Powis notes that: "thrift" was, of course, not an aristocratic watchword'.<sup>24</sup> While he was right to stress the importance of conspicuous consumption in the maintenance of status, he neglected to consider how the

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<sup>20</sup> J. Dwyer, *Virtuous Discourse: Sensibility and Community in Late Eighteenth-Century Scotland* (Edinburgh, 1987), p. 95.

<sup>21</sup> While there is no evidence of women in this sample running businesses, Reynolds found a number of examples from the nineteenth century. Reynolds, *Aristocratic Women*, pp. 60-70.

<sup>22</sup> See Russell, "Keeping place".

<sup>23</sup> J. Day, 'Household Management and Domestic Structure at Temple Newsam House near Leeds, in the second half of the Eighteenth Century', MA Dissertation, University of Leeds, 2001, p. 7.

<sup>24</sup> J. Powis, *Aristocracy* (Oxford, 1984), p. 34.



poorer nobles, whose position he acknowledged, managed to afford display, beyond suggesting that they borrowed heavily.<sup>25</sup> Mortgaging estates was not the only way that an elite family could balance their finances and careful management of the household economy also played an important role. This was not simply the responsibility of the male head of the family, or his agents, since women could, and did, play an important role in managing estate finances. In her *Maxims* Isabella Carlisle stressed the importance for women to be aware of household costs. She advised new wives to: 'study such occupations as will render you of consequence to him [the husband] - such as the management of his fortune, and the conduct of his house - yet without assuming a superiority unbecoming of your sex'.<sup>26</sup> Isabella argued that women should be aware of the importance of costs to the family, but be subtle in their management. She counselled that wives should not discourage their husbands 'innocent pleasures on the pretexts of economy', but should instead manage their own expenses in order to promote their husbands' happiness. That household management featured in the advice literature of the period, especially in pieces written for an elite audience, indicates that there was an expectation that women ought to be concerned in the running of the country house. As women were often seen as spendthrifts in popular literature, the advice regarding care and self-sacrifice was seen as a particularly important message to pass on to women.<sup>27</sup> There was a close relationship between prudence and personal probity in the didactic writings of the early modern period, and women needed to assert their ability to manage the family finances as evidence that they could manage their own bodies; to be a good housewife was to be a good woman.<sup>28</sup>

The best documented example of careful household management among the four houses studied is the stewardship of Isabella Irwin (c. 1670-1764) of Temple Newsam as both the wife of the third Viscount Irwin, and as dowager and adviser to her sons, five of whom held the title during her lifetime. The Irwins could be described as 'poor nobles'; the estate was impoverished through the first half of the eighteenth century, and they were

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<sup>25</sup> Powis, *Aristocracy*, pp. 27-30.

<sup>26</sup> Carlisle, *Maxims*, p. 2.

<sup>27</sup> See: M. Finn, 'Women, consumption and coverture in England, c. 1760-1860', *The Historical Journal* 39 (1996), pp. 703-5; H. Guest, *Small Change. Women, Learning, Patriotism, 1750-1810* (Chicago, Ill., 2000), pp. 70-98.

<sup>28</sup> Crane, "Players in your huswifery", pp. 212, 219.

deeply in debt, with much of the land mortgaged. Isabella kept a close control of the finances of the house and estate, which was necessary as the estate inherited by her husband in 1690 was in poor condition financially; one executor had noted ten years previously that: 'he saw no appearance of the recovery of so languishing an estate'.<sup>29</sup> The estate trustees were particularly concerned when Isabella's husband unexpectedly inherited the title, as he was thought to be a gambler, and his stakes were reputed to be so high that they feared that little money would return to Temple Newsam.<sup>30</sup> While they may have had satisfactory concerns regarding the new lord, his wife, Isabella, was quick to take control of the declining estate from the trustees. It appears that she was able to persuade Arthur Irwin to lead a prudent lifestyle, which suited neither 'his humour or honour', and to settle into less expensive country pursuits.<sup>31</sup> Her father, John Machell, also offered to help his daughter financially. As John had no sons and Isabella's sister had married without her his consent, he was willing to invest in the Irwin family.

Isabella not only provided her father's money to help the estate, but also brought the benefits of her careful financial acumen. She used her network of family and friends to stay informed of factors that might affect household costs. In 1694, for example, she became aware of an impending tax on sugar that would make it 'extraordinary [sic] dear', and so requested that a large amount would be bought in advance in order to limit the impact on their finances.<sup>32</sup> She was keen to seek out a bargain, and requested that her steward sent out enquiries across the country in order to get the best value for household goods.<sup>33</sup> Because of her close awareness of the costs of goods, she made a note of her indignation when items increased in price. From 1702 she managed Temple Newsam for her eldest son,

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<sup>29</sup> WYAS, Leeds, Pawson MSS, Ac 1038, Volume 6 (September 1642-April 1691), Short memories of the Executorship of George Townshead, c. 1680.

<sup>30</sup> WYAS, Leeds, Pawson MSS, Ac 1038, Volume 6 (September 1642-April 1691), Nicholas Best to John Roades, Temple Newsam, 5 March 1690; WYAS, Leeds, Pawson MSS, Ac 1038, Volume 6 (September 1642-April 1691), Nicholas Best to John Roades, Temple Newsam, 20 October 1690.

<sup>31</sup> WYAS, Leeds, Pawson MSS, Ac 1038, Volume 7 (April 1691-December 1704), George Townshead to John Roades, Temple Newsam, 2 July 1691; WYAS, Leeds, Pawson MSS, Ac 1038, Volume 7 (April 1691-December 1704), Nicholas Best to John Roades, Temple Newsam, 16 January 1692.

<sup>32</sup> WYAS, Leeds, Pawson MSS, Ac 1038, Volume 7 (April 1691-December 1704), Charles Drury to John Roades, Temple Newsam, 27 February 1694.

<sup>33</sup> See, for example, WYAS, Leeds, TN/C/9/14, Matthew Wettenhall, London, to Mr Roades, 4 March 1700/1.

who inherited the title from his father. Her husband's death had put further pressure on the already tightened finances, and so she was especially aware of any extra expenditure. She noted in 1709: 'I never remember provisions so dear as this year. You can't buy a good chicken for under 8 groats ... for my part I grudge everything that is more than plain meat'.<sup>34</sup> Prudence was of crucial importance to Isabella, illustrated by her ownership of a 1705 edition of Savage's translation of *The Art of Prudence: Or, A Companion for A Man of Sense* (1702).<sup>35</sup> Isabella was not only fulfilling her duties as a good housekeeper in being aware of the price of commodities, but she was also publicly displaying her efficiency and self-sacrifice in maintaining household standards. For herself, she would not be indulgent, and so ate only simple foods, thus performing the role of the domestic woman by highlighting her feminine commitment to household economy and her careful management of both herself and her expenditure.

Isabella's management of the household was not confined to enquiring about the price of commodities and acts of self-denial; she maintained her own private account books for a number of years. Her notebook for the first decade of the eighteenth century included details of general household expenses, which normally amounted to about £11 a week, as well as unusual costs, such as visiting the doctor or purchasing items for a son before he enrolled at a new school.<sup>36</sup> She not only managed the money leaving the household, but also that coming in; from 1706, for example, she included income from selling sheepskins. The account book shows how she combined her different roles in managing her finances. Business money was accounted for alongside costs incurred in running the household, being a mother, and her own private spending; there were numerous entries for small amounts of money to go in 'my pocket'. The different types of income and expenditure covered in her notebook reflect the complex roles that she fulfilled and the multiplicity of duties that could form part of an elite woman's role in the country house.

Isabella Irwin's role in the household was not unusual; other women within this

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<sup>34</sup> WYAS, Leeds, Pawson MSS, Ac 1038, Volume 8 (January 1705-December 1716), Isabella Irwin to John Roades, Temple Newsam, 14 April 1709; see also WYAS, Leeds, Pawson MSS, Ac 1038, Volume 8 (January 1705-December 1716), Isabella Irwin, London, to John Roades, Temple Newsam, 8 October 1709.

<sup>35</sup> WYAS, Leeds, TN/EA/3/26, Catalogue of all the Household furniture, plate linen etc. of Lady Dowager Irwine [sic] at her late dwelling house at Windsor, 11 October [1764].

<sup>36</sup> WYAS, Leeds, TN/EA/14/18, Notebook.

sample also kept detailed accounts of the household expenditure. Isabella Carlisle completed lengthy accounts for Castle Howard in the mid-eighteenth century, although these did not include her expenditure on herself or her children, but were simply reflective of her role as chatelaine.<sup>37</sup> She too kept abreast of the changing costs of commodities. There are numerous notes in the margins of her account books identifying those products that had increased in price, including claret and sugar, thus resulting in an increase in the monthly expenditure. However, her accounts were not completed on a daily basis, noting money as it was spent, as Isabella Irwin's were. Isabella Carlisle's were neat summaries of accounts, probably based on documents kept by her housekeeper and other staff. By creating abstracts, she was acting as overseer of household expenses and managing her staff closely. Her marginal notes regarding the increase of price of goods probably reflected conversations she had with staff when she enquired about rising costs. Isabella Carlisle was managing from a distance, acting as an auditor rather than playing a central role in the day to day financial concerns.

Other women managed only their personal expenditure, and appear to have left the household accounting to others. Georgiana Carlisle, for example, kept detailed accounts in the 1830s of what she spent on her children or donated to charitable events, but not the cost of beer and bread for Castle Howard.<sup>38</sup> It is unclear what determined the degree of involvement in detailing household expenditure; it appears to be a matter of taste and circumstance. Women who were in wealthy households may have thought it unnecessary for them to be closely involved; if it was all being managed successfully by the paid staff, there was less compulsion to be an active auditor. Some, such as Isabella Carlisle, may have taken an interest out of a desire to feel useful and to prove their worth; Mary Wortley Montagu noted her surprise when Henry Carlisle married Isabella, and was concerned about her 'gay' nature.<sup>39</sup> Isabella may have felt it important to demonstrate that she was able to run a large establishment like Castle Howard to prove her critics wrong. Other women may have felt that their intervention was not required. However, when a family was in financial difficulties, it would have been more important to be able to be in control of the money

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<sup>37</sup> Carlisle MSS, H1/14, Isabella Carlisle's abstract of household accounts, 1744-1755.

<sup>38</sup> Carlisle MSS, J8/62/15, A case of books.

<sup>39</sup> M. Wortley Montagu, *The Complete Letters of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu*, ed. R. Halsband (Oxford, 1966), ii, p. 312.

personally, in order to ensure that they were not being ill advised by their staff, and that they could manage their own expenditure accordingly. Women in smaller households were also likely to be careful managers of their money too. Widows and single women often kept detailed accounts, such as those maintained by Elizabeth Constable, widow of Cuthbert Tunstall Constable, for the period 1752-6.<sup>40</sup> Factors such as their childhood, social background and what they expected their role as wife would be, may have affected whether a woman took on an active role in the household accounting. It is of note that the two most active managers in this sample were women who were from a less wealthy background. Isabella Irwin's family were untitled and had made their money from many years of financial investment, and the Byrons, Isabella Carlisle's family, had suffered from financial difficulties. It may be that their childhood experiences had prepared them to be in charge of the household economy, and so, once married, they automatically expected it to be their role.

There may also have been a chronological shift. There was a move away from the polite household towards sentimental domesticity, and eventually romanticism. Most of the examples of diligent economic housekeeping date from the first half of the eighteenth century; after this point, the keeping of records was more personal, more family based. The documents from the later period can be seen as records of familial sentimentality, which highlighted a woman's concern with her household and family. Caroline Carlisle's dairy records from the 1820s can be appreciated in this light. These were not working records that carefully assessed the produce from the Castle Howard dairy farm. Instead, they were neat abstracts that stood as testaments to her concerns with the rustic environment.<sup>41</sup> In these records she noted the amount of butter and milk that the cows were producing, and the amount 'sold' to the house, as well as to other customers. The dairy was seen as an especially female environment, made popular by Marie Antoinette, and acknowledged as a sentimental location that entwined women and nature.<sup>42</sup> The change from the practical to the personal in the way that women kept accounts and managed the household can be seen as reflecting the changing language of the period, and the increasing idealization of the

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<sup>40</sup> ERYARS, DDCC(2)/20A/2, Elizabeth Constable's Account Book, 1752-1756.

<sup>41</sup> Carlisle MSS, F4/27/4, Dairy Book, Lady Carlisle's Dairy Accounts.

<sup>42</sup> D. Arnold, 'Defining femininity: women and the countryhouse', in *The Georgian Country House. Architecture, Landscape and Society*, ed. D. Arnold (Stroud, 1998), p. 96; D. Valenze, 'The art of women and the business of men: woman's work and the dairy industry c. 1740- 1840', *Past and Present* 130 (1991), pp. 142-69.

domestic.

However, through this period most women appear to have wanted to have a degree of control over the household, even if they devolved that power. Although it was acceptable for women to 'opt out' of direct management of the household, it was considered most inappropriate if the choice was taken out of their own hands. Running the household was a form of economic empowerment for women, and their desire to keep hold of this role was a common theme in literature, particularly in the nineteenth century.<sup>43</sup> Men who prevented their wives from fulfilling their duties faced criticism. The second husband of Elizabeth Lechmere (1701-1739), Thomas Robinson, was considered by her sister Anne Irwin in 1727, to be a man who wanted to be 'master of every thing'; Anne was afraid that he would prevent Elizabeth from having her own friends and interests.<sup>44</sup> Her fears appear to have been well founded, as Robinson tightly controlled his wife, and refused to give her money of her own. It was only after the intervention of Elizabeth's family that Robinson allowed his wife to play an active role; he paid her the money that he owed her and set up an allowance that she could use to run the household. Anne wrote of her pleasure to see her sister successfully managing the house, and was relieved when she finally: 'looks like the mistress of it'.<sup>45</sup> Anne was concerned for her sister's happiness while Elizabeth was unable to be 'mistress' of her own house. Being the head of the household was a responsibility of the elite woman, even if she did not actively take on its duties. Women who had no authority in the household would have had trouble controlling their servants, and limited opportunity to manage internal disputes. To be prevented from fulfilling these duties would mean that a woman's domestic abilities could be questioned, and her femininity placed in doubt.

### Performing Domesticity

Domesticity was not simply about running the household effectively; it also had emotional qualities. Being devoted to one's family and home life were also important features of the life of the domestic woman. This response to the ideal of domesticity was

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<sup>43</sup> E. Copeland, *Women Writing about Money. Women's Fiction in England, 1790-1820* (Cambridge, 1995), pp. 61-71.

<sup>44</sup> Carlisle MSS, J8/1/189, Anne Irwin to the third Earl of Carlisle, 9 January [1728].

<sup>45</sup> Carlisle MSS, J8/1/256, Anne Irwin to the third Earl of Carlisle, 23 March, n.y.

shaped by notions of sentimentality, which had increasing currency during the later eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.<sup>46</sup> Writers such as Rousseau, whose work was read by many elite women, discussed the values of sentiment and sensibility in their work.<sup>47</sup> The fifth Earl of Carlisle read Sterne's *Sentimental Journey* (1768) in the 1770s, and recommended his wife read it too, by which point sentiment had become firmly associated with moral and aesthetic refinement.<sup>48</sup> Many works from this date idealized the home as the location of 'felicitous sentimental' domesticity, with the affectionate husband and natural mother at the centre of the stories.<sup>49</sup> The idealization of family life often led to public displays of familial affection, and acting out the features of a 'domestic' life. While George IV, as the Prince of Wales, faced criticism as 'a despiser [sic] of domestic ties', his father and his family were particularly keen to demonstrate their domestic virtues in the late eighteenth century.<sup>50</sup> Queen Charlotte played a central domestic role, managing the King's household during his illness and educating Princess Charlotte, the only legitimate granddaughter born during her lifetime.<sup>51</sup> Her portrait painted by Benjamin West further publicized her domestic role, as she was painted in front of a tableau of her own family.<sup>52</sup>

The social status of elite women and the staff available to them meant that it was not necessary for them to take on the *work* of the domestic woman. However, increasingly the ideals of domesticity were considered as important signifiers of sensibility and femininity, and so it was important to perform the role of the domesticated woman. Aristocratic

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<sup>46</sup> For a discussion of the rise of the sentimental in the literature of the period see: G. J. Barker-Benfield, *The Culture of Sensibility. Sex and Society in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Chicago, Ill., 1992), esp. chapter six; J. Mullan, *Sentiment and Sociability. The Language of Feeling in the Eighteenth Century* (Oxford, 1988), passim, J. Brewer, *The Pleasures of the Imagination: English Culture in the Eighteenth Century* (London, 1997), passim.

<sup>47</sup> For example, Francie Irwin bought a six volume copy of *La Nouvelle Héloïse* in 1761 for 15 shillings; WYAS Leeds, TN/EA/12/18 Bills for Books, stationary, etc.; Bill to Mrs Ingram from J. Jackson, 1761.

<sup>48</sup> Carlisle MSS, J15/1/2, Frederick, fifth Earl of Carlisle, to Caroline Carlisle, Paris, [1771-3].

<sup>49</sup> Brewer, *The Pleasures of the Imagination*, pp. 114-22, esp. p. 116.

<sup>50</sup> L. Davidoff and C. Hall, *Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middle Class 1780-1850* Revised Edition (London, 2002), pp. 152-3.

<sup>51</sup> C. Campbell Orr, 'Introduction: court studies, gender and women's history, 1660-1837', in *Queenship in Britain 1660-1837. Royal Patronage, Court Culture and Dynastic politics*, ed. C. Campbell Orr (Manchester, 2002), pp. 22-3.

<sup>52</sup> L. Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation 1707-1837* (New Haven, Conn., 1992), pp. 269, 273.

women needed to fulfil the ideals of their sex, without hindering the ideals of their class; elite women could not work and still be considered as 'ladies', and so the occupations that filled their day could not be construed as labour.<sup>53</sup> By acting out the enjoyable aspects of domesticity, and demonstrating that they upheld its ideology, they could be ideal women, while not damaging their elite credentials.

Although they can be seen as performing the roles of the domestic woman, this is not to discredit their actions; the acting out of these roles was an important part of their identity. I would uphold Leonore Davidoff's point, made in relation to the middle classes, that the house: 'was not simply a place of inactivity where women played out an elaborate game of femininity for their husbands'.<sup>54</sup> Being the domestic woman was not a game, but an assertion of status and sensibility for wider society. Elite women's roles were only different from those of the middle and lower-class women in that they had more choice in their degree of involvement in domestic concerns; they could delegate the practical aspects of running the household, and only take on the ideological facets. Unlike Butler's understanding of the performance of gender roles, the acting of the role of the domestic woman by elite women in this period was not necessarily oppressive.<sup>55</sup> While to undertake the performance may not have been a fully conscious decision, and its purpose was to fulfil culturally determined expectations, it could also empower women. Women could use the language and culture of domesticity to highlight the importance of their familial and private lives, and it was through performance that they asserted and enhanced their status in numerous different ways. The idealization of the house and home allowed them to demonstrate domestic sensibilities, and to highlight their love of the feminine and private, a theme increasingly popular in nineteenth-century art.<sup>56</sup> They could also fulfil the virtues of the domestic woman through their ability to run a household, their piety and their domestic accomplishments. By performing this role within the household they could assert their femininity and their virtue, while remaining distinctly aristocratic.

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<sup>53</sup> Reynolds, *Aristocratic Women*, p. 21.

<sup>54</sup> Quoted in E. Higgs, 'Domestic servants and households in Victorian England', *Social History* 8 (1983), p. 209.

<sup>55</sup> J. Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York, N.Y., 1990).

<sup>56</sup> H. E. Roberts, 'Marriage, redundancy, or sin. The painter's view of women in the first twenty-five years of Victoria's reign', in *Suffer and Be Still. Women in the Victorian Age*, ed. M. Vicinus (Bloomington, 1972), p. 51.



By acting out the role of the domestic woman, elite women could demonstrate that they were virtuous, committed to their family, and moral guardians for the dynastic future. Evidence of this performativity can be found through the period, although the display of domestic qualities became more sophisticated from the later eighteenth century onwards. There were various ways that women performed domesticity. Many women shared their knowledge of food and cooking, demonstrating that they were conversant with the domestic arts, although they would have employed staff to cook their meals.<sup>57</sup> A large number of private recipe books were written by elite women across the country, and these often included recipes for both foods and medicines. The books acted as a way of collating information relating to domestic concerns, and could be used by women to demonstrate their knowledge. Isabella Carlisle had a large 'book of receipts for Medicines, Oiling, Preserving and other things', which included instructions for making potpourri, lemon cakes, cherry wine, and a cure for a sore throat.<sup>58</sup> Some recipes were accredited to other elite women. There was, for example, 'Lady Berkeley's mouth water', and details on how to make a 'pudding Lady Sunderland'. This sharing of recipes among elite women can be seen in other examples of cookery books, as well-being evidenced by their inclusion in their letters.<sup>59</sup> Women would also own books that included recipes, both medicinal and for cookery, Isabella Irwin owned both Thomas Short's *Medicina Britannica* (1747), and Richard Bradley's *A General Treatise of Husbandry and Gardening* (1726).<sup>60</sup> A number of the recipes in the Temple Newsam collection appear to have been sent to the family as attachments to letters, including details of medical cures and instructions for a highly alcoholic punch.<sup>61</sup> Letters were also useful spaces for making notes of new recipes. Isabella Irwin, for example, scribbled down instructions for baking a pudding on a letter received

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<sup>57</sup> During the eighteenth century the idea of cooking for sensual pleasure developed. Barker-Benfield, *The Culture of Sensibility*, p. 156.

<sup>58</sup> Carlisle MSS, J13/1/4, My Book of Receipts.

<sup>59</sup> See, for example, R. Aspin, 'Who was Elizabeth Okeover?', *Medical History* 44 (2000), esp. p. 538.

<sup>60</sup> WYAS, Leeds, TN/EA/3/26, Catalogue of all the Household furniture, plate linen etc. of Lady Dowager Irwine [sic] at her late dwelling house at Windsor, 11 October [1764].

<sup>61</sup> WYAS, Leeds, TN/F8 Recipes seventeenth century and eighteenth century.

from her son in 1749.<sup>62</sup>

Women would not only share details of recipes in letters, but would also send one another food packages. Through the eighteenth century, Isabella Irwin was a prolific sender of food parcels, and there are few letters written to her that do not thank her for a gift.<sup>63</sup> This led to a complex gift exchange system within the family, with Malta figs, Stilton cheese, and quails among the presents sent to and from Lady Irwin.<sup>64</sup> Food gifts were sometimes specifically regional, sending specialist items to areas that may not necessarily have them as a matter of course. In 1812, for example, Caroline Cawdor promised her brother some salmon from the Highlands.<sup>65</sup> The exchange of gifts through the postal system would have been a relatively public way of demonstrating both wealth and domestic taste. The arranging of items to be sent and their physical bulk would have allowed as many people as possible to be aware of the concerns of the women involved. It could also show the wealth of the giver; Castle Howard sent game and pineapples to Sydney Smith in the early nineteenth century, goods that needed high numbers of staff, skill and investment to produce.<sup>66</sup> The importance of giving food lay in the understanding that the consumables from a household were the work of the female head of the household, rather than of the staff who prepared them. The providing of meals was still considered the duty of the wife, as part of her role to care for the members of the household.<sup>67</sup> Food could also be seen as a gift that reflected the giver's sympathy with the receiver, and their sentimental concerns for their relatives.<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> WYAS, Leeds, TN/C/17/126, George Ingram to Isabella Irwin, 2 July 1749.

<sup>63</sup> For example, WYAS, Leeds, TN/C/19/13, Mrs Isabella Ramsden (née Ingram), to Isabella Irwin, 20 October 1761.

<sup>64</sup> WYAS, Leeds, TN/C/5/343, Arthur Todd, Doncaster to Mr Roades, Temple Newsam, 20 September 1689; WYAS, Leeds, Pawson MSS, Ac 1038, Volume 10 (January 1748-December 1776), Lord Irwin to Isabella Irwin, Windsor, 27 April 1748; WYAS, Leeds, Pawson MSS, Ac 1038, Volume 9 (January 1717-December 1747), Arthur Ingram, Temple Newsam, to Isabella Irwin, Windsor, 26 November 1734.

<sup>65</sup> Carlisle MSS, J15/1/41, Caroline Cawdor to Caroline Carlisle, 21 February 1812.

<sup>66</sup> A. Bell, *Sydney Smith* (Oxford, 1980), p. 136

<sup>67</sup> Weatherill, *Consumer Behaviour*, p. 149.

<sup>68</sup> For a further discussion of the cultural significance of food giving in the eighteenth century see S. Pennell, 'The Material Culture of Food in Early Modern England circa 1650-1750', DPhil Thesis, University of Oxford, 1997, pp. 266 ff.

One could also perform the role of the domestic woman by undertaking certain accomplishments. Embroidery in particular offered women a route to demonstrate publicly their domestic sensibilities. A task associated with patience and purity, embroidery was not a meaningless pastime to keep idle hands busy, but could allow women to engage with the discourse of homely virtue. In her letters, Elizabeth Ingram often used the language of domestic sensibility when describing her family life. She wrote in 1758: 'Lady Irwin works very hard at her chair and my cousin at her handkerchief which my sister drew for her, so on goes the spectacles, and admire it vastly, and she is so obliged to her and down she drops twenty castings ... for she is the very pink of good breeding'.<sup>69</sup> The blushing of the cousin and the diligence of Anne Scarborough Irwin work together to highlight the admirable qualities of the young ladies, and their femininity. As Rozsika Parker notes, during this period it was thought that: 'women embroidered because they were naturally feminine and were feminine because they naturally embroidered'.<sup>70</sup> In the 1770s Isabella Carlisle saw embroidery as a way of occupying herself when in Europe during her old age, in self-imposed exile after her separation from her husband and financial ruin.<sup>71</sup> She asked for silks to be sent to her, so she could undertake her 'summer employs', and fill her time usefully.<sup>72</sup> By publicising her undertaking of embroidery she could try and regain a virtuous image that she had lost, and demonstrate to her untrusting family her willingness to follow acceptable patterns of behaviour.

Embroidery could also have practical uses; it was not just a way for elite women to employ their time, but allowed them to fulfil their duties as a mother and wife. They often made embroidered covers for chairs and other furnishings that decorated their houses, and they could publicly demonstrate their accomplishments by displaying these items. Isabella Ramsden (1729-1762) was proud of her work, but was aware that boasting was not a feminine quality; she thought that her chairs, in pea green and purple would: 'be much

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<sup>69</sup> Horsham Museum, Machell Ingram MSS, 794.6, Letter from Elizabeth Ingram, Hills, to her sister, 7 November 1758.

<sup>70</sup> R. Parker, *The Subversive Stitch. Embroidery and the Making of the Feminine* (New York, N.Y., 1984), p. 11.

<sup>71</sup> For a further discussion of Isabella's exile in France see chapter six and W. H. Smith, *Originals Abroad. The Foreign Careers of Some Eighteenth-century Britons* (New Haven, Conn., 1952), pp. 91-114.

<sup>72</sup> Carlisle MSS, J13/1/3, Copy books of letters to Julia Howard from Isabella Carlisle, 1771-2, ff. 81, 124.

handsomer than Gobelin Tapestry but I am modest, and therefore shall say no more of it'.<sup>73</sup> Embroidery offered women a useful way to employ their time, which could demonstrate their domestic virtues, and decorate the country house, bringing practicality to the performance of the duties of the domestic woman.

Another area where women could play a role in the household management was through purchasing goods for the country house. By redecorating the country house, choosing furniture items and purchasing items for the garden, elite women were using their powers as consumers to influence and shape the house and estate. A number of historians have highlighted the important role of elite women in the development of the consumer market in this period, and the woman as owner and purchaser of goods has been most recently examined by Amanda Vickery.<sup>74</sup> She highlights that the eighteenth-century growth of domesticity along with the growth of consumer outlets offered women greater purchasing opportunities. They were able to control the purchasing and management of luxuries and decencies, as domestic products had recently been elevated to that height. These items had gained new social prestige during the Georgian period that was in addition to the increased appreciation of their sentimental worth.<sup>75</sup> Women appear to have used goods to establish their families' abstract attributes (status, lineage); to control its moral and ideological image; and to negotiate personal qualities of taste, sociability and worth.<sup>76</sup> By taking on an active role in the redecoration of the house, they were able to shape it for their own needs, and to assert their pedigree and status. Through dynastic domesticity, they were improving their family life, their status, and, often, indulging their own pleasures.

Smaller items, such as tea sets, card tables, and small domestic goods were consumer markers of a woman's interest in polite sociability, and reflected their concerns with the

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<sup>73</sup> WYAS, Leeds, TN/C/23/55, Isabella Ingram, Hills, to Mrs Charles Ingram, Temple Newsam, 26 November [1761?].

<sup>74</sup> See: A. Vickery, 'Women and the world of goods. A Lancashire consumer and her possessions', in *Consumption and the World of Goods*, ed. J. Brewer and R. Porter (London, 1993), pp. 274-301; Vickery, *The Gentleman's Daughter*, pp. 161 ff; Weatherill, *Consumer Behaviour*, passim.

<sup>75</sup> J. Brewer and R. Porter, 'Introduction', in *Consumption and the World of Goods*, ed. J. Brewer and R. Porter (London, 1993), p. 5.

<sup>76</sup> See: P. Glennie, 'Consumption within historical studies', in *Acknowledging Consumption, A Review of New Studies*, ed. D. Miller (London, 1995), p. 179; D. Miller, 'Consumption as the vanguard as history: a polemic by way of introduction', in *Acknowledging Consumption, A Review of New Studies*, ed. D. Miller (London, 1995), p. 35.

familial environment in fulfilling their role as a domestic woman.<sup>77</sup> The ordering and display of these items would work as signifiers of their feminine credentials, as well as being objects needed to fulfil household activities. Among the bills for goods purchased for Temple Newsam were requests for payment for £3 3s. for a mahogany tea table and tray for Anne Scarborough Irwin in 1730, and, in 1758, for £7 7s. for a china tea set from Frances Irwin. That these bills were addressed directly to women suggests how these items were ordered in their names, and that they were acknowledged as items needed by elite women within their domestic world.<sup>78</sup> Items of a specifically domestic nature could make suitable gifts; Georgiana Carlisle, for example, thanked Ralph Sneyd, a family friend, for the 'very pretty' creamjug that he sent her in the early nineteenth century.<sup>79</sup> In the same way that exchanging food as gifts affirmed the domestic sensibilities of both the sender and receiver, so too did the gift of domestic ware. The value attached to dining as social contact can be determined through the increasing use of highly decorative ware such as the social gatherings for tea drinking or dining that offered women the opportunity to display their domestic credentials.<sup>80</sup> Domestic ware featured heavily in the wills written by women, and household items were often exchanged from mother to daughter(s). As they were normally unable to bequeath land to their children, personal domestic items were often all they had to bestow, and so they would have placed a high emphasis on the goods.<sup>81</sup> These items would in term become 'value laden', as they represented their deceased ancestors and became part of the female dynastic heritage. In 1858, Louisa Harewood bequeathed wine, other liquors, household stores and other consumables along with plate, linen, china and glass to her unmarried daughters, thus giving them the equipment they needed to become domesticated women.<sup>82</sup> That these items were most especially associated with women is most clear in separation agreements. In the division of goods that featured in these agreements,

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<sup>77</sup> See Vickery, *The Gentleman's Daughter*, pp. 168-9.

<sup>78</sup> WYAS, Leeds, TN/EA/12/5, Scrap Book of Bills.

<sup>79</sup> Keele University Library, Sneyd MSS, SC5/13, Georgiana Morpeth to Ralph Sneyd, 2 March, n.y.

<sup>80</sup> Weatherill, *Consumer Behaviour*, p. 137.

<sup>81</sup> Vickery, 'Women and the world of goods', p. 294.

<sup>82</sup> WYAS Leeds, Harewood accounts 115, Epitome of the will of the Rt. Hon. Louisa, Countess Dowager of Harewood, 1 June 1858.

household items such as plate and linen usually went with the women. This can be seen in the 1769 deed of separation between Isabella Carlisle and William Musgrave that ensured that Musgrave was unable to lay claim to domestic items belonging to Isabella.<sup>83</sup> Although, in law, married women were not able to own goods, in practice, their claim to household items could be strong.

Women also used goods to establish their family dynasty, and the display of items that embodied the ideal of the family was important. Isabella Irwin, for example, was keen to commission portraits of her relatives during the 1750s.<sup>84</sup> Portraits were important household goods and they featured in inventories and wills alongside other items.<sup>85</sup> Expensive goods, such as collectable porcelain, silverware and furniture would reflect the wealth of the family, as well as their taste and access to high quality craftspeople. Women were often involved in purchasing plate for the house. Soon after she married in 1758, Frances Irwin ordered a significant number of items including bread baskets, cutlery, and salts.<sup>86</sup> The process of gaining new items could be lengthy; filling Frances' order was going to take three months, reflecting the expense and investment in these items. Books were also bought in significant numbers by elite women; at her death in 1764, Isabella Irwin's library included more than a hundred volumes.<sup>87</sup> Books could be fancy items, costing significant amounts of money; her edition of Thurloe's *State Papers* cost Isabella £3 10s., and the third Earl of Carlisle bought his wife five books covered in green vellum and gilt as part of an expensive order.<sup>88</sup> A large library could therefore highlight the owner's wealth and taste.

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<sup>83</sup> Carlisle MSS, J13/2/1, Deed of separation of Sir William Musgrave and dowager Countess of Carlisle, 15 March 1769.

<sup>84</sup> WYAS, Leeds, TN/C/19/3, Elizabeth Ingram, London, to Isabella Irwin, 22 January 1761; C. R. Saumarez Smith, 'Charles Howard, third Earl of Carlisle, and the Architecture of Castle Howard', PhD Thesis, University of London, Warburg Institute, 1987, p. 261.

<sup>85</sup> M. Pointon, *Strategies for Showing. Women, Possession and Representation in English Visual Culture 1650-1800* (Oxford, 1997), p. 29.

<sup>86</sup> WYAS, Leeds, TN/C/23/71, John Musseny to Mrs Charles Ingram, Temple Newsam, 24 August 1758.

<sup>87</sup> WYAS, Leeds, TN/EA/3/26, Catalogue of all the Household furniture, plate linen etc. of Lady Dowager Irwine [sic] which will be sold by auction by Mr Pervill on 11 October 1764.

<sup>88</sup> Saumarez Smith, 'Charles Howard', p. 20; WYAS, Leeds, TN/EA/3/26, Catalogue of all the Household furniture, plate linen etc. of Lady Dowager Irwine [sic], which will be sold by auction by Mr Pervill on 11 October 1764.

However, the contents of the books and what they represented (knowledge, learning and, with the appropriate texts, virtue) could also reflect a woman's domestic role. Advice books for example featured heavily among the books bought through this period, by Isabella and Frances Irwin, and by Eliza Chichester, who also owned numerous religious books that reflected her Catholicism.<sup>89</sup> These goods worked together to highlight the domestic concerns of the women, alongside their elite credentials; portraits, silver wear and gilt bound books were the objects of dynastic domesticity.

Through performative domesticity, elite women could demonstrate their feminine and virtuous credentials while keeping hidden the 'secret springs' that ensured the smooth running of the household. The language of sensibility that developed through the eighteenth century encouraged displays of devotion to family life and household concerns. Although more concentrated in the later eighteenth century, when the language of sensibility was more developed, there are examples of women performing domesticity throughout this period. However, women did not treat the household as the stage for a complex charade. Both the practical and playful elements of their domestic duties required diligence, and were important factors in ensuring their aristocratic status. A smooth running household was essential for the success of the family, as it reflected on their ability to manage and organize wider society, and when a woman failed, as Isabella Carlisle did, she faced criticism. Women were considered to be especially culpable for the failings of their staff, and so they had a considerable responsibility for the dynastic image of the family. Some women, such as Isabella Irwin, had a yet more important role, and were central to ensuring financial security and keeping together the estates that formed the basis of their title and position. Most aristocratic women, though, were more concerned with reflecting the virtues of the family through their own displays of domestic values; through purchasing goods and undertaking activities they could demonstrate their sensibilities without damaging their status. The country house was a central arena for the practice and display of dynastic domesticity, and through the management of the household and affection for one's family, women could remain feminine while enhancing the status of the family.

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<sup>89</sup> WYAS, Leeds, TN/EA/12/18 Bills for Books, stationery, etc.; ERYARS, DDCC(2)/42/6, Catalogue of Books of Eliza Chichester.

## Chapter Two: House and Home

*I amuse myself wonderfully and I may say prodigiously for I have attacked a huge wing of Templenewsam [sic] - have pulled down walls as thick as the Tower for the sole pleasure of building them up again and here I am now in the midst of desolation created by my own nonsensical self.*

Frances Irwin, 1795.<sup>1</sup>

After her husband died in 1778, because of the lack of a male heir and the agreements drawn up in their marriage settlement, Frances Irwin became the owner of Temple Newsam.<sup>2</sup> She was free to change the house and its environment as she wished; she did not have to gain permission from a husband, but could knock down the walls of her home for pleasure. Although Frances was unusual in that she had full control over the building, many women were able to have a direct impact on the way that the country house was designed and used as a home. It was uncommon for major structural work to be led by women, because architecture was considered a ‘gentlemen’s sport’, and so their male relatives would have been keen to lead the changes.<sup>3</sup> However, during this period a number of women did take part in major building projects across England, including Lady Wilbraham at Weston Park and Duchess of Marlborough at Blenheim.<sup>4</sup> Even if they did not get involved in major structural work, married and single elite women often changed the usage of rooms in the houses, and were instrumental in shaping internal design. They could, and did, have an impact on the country-house exterior and the landscape too, expressing their views regarding the gardens, lakes and follies.

This chapter examines the relationship Yorkshire elite women had with the built environment of the country house. Many traditional histories of the country house have either ignored the role of women in the history of the structure, or presented them as bored

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<sup>1</sup> PRO 30/29/4/2/54, Frances Shephard to Lady Stafford, 14 June 1795.

<sup>2</sup> WYAS Leeds, TN/F/18/2, Marriage Settlement between Charles and Frances Irwin.

<sup>3</sup> For a study of the role of the male patron and the relationship with the builder, see R. Wilson and A. Mackley, *Creating Paradise. The Building of the English Country House, 1660-1880* (London, 2000), pp. 109 ff.

<sup>4</sup> D. Arnold, ‘Defining femininity: women and the country house’, in *The Georgian Country House. Architecture, Landscape and Society*, ed. D. Arnold (Stroud, 1998), p. 85.



with rural life, desperate to be in town, enjoying urban pleasures.<sup>5</sup> However, elite women were not enclosed by the buildings, but could have an intimate and active relationship with country houses, in their form, design and use. Below is an examination of the role that women played in designing houses and their landscapes in Yorkshire that highlights how their needs and desires could be important factors in the shapes and uses of the buildings. Their concerns, though, cannot be categorized as distinctly 'feminine'; the changes that women made to the houses were often shaped by the needs of the family and domesticity, concerns shared by both sexes. Women were also often central in maintaining the status of the buildings and promoting them as elite locations. The relationship women had with a built structure enabled it to be more than a place of shelter, or even the power base of their husband or father. Instead, by combining the dynastic and the domestic, it could be their 'home'. In studying the responses women had to these buildings, I suggest that country houses were not simply sites of conspicuous consumption, or palaces that bored women were desperate to escape from. They could be homes, in which elite women invested a great deal of time, money and emotion. These investments can be seen as reflecting the pleasures that they took from their home, and their role as domestic aristocratic women.

### Home

The 'home' can be understood as the emotional embodiment of the house, and the transformation of a house into a home is a personal response to the building and the activities that took place there. In his history of the idea of 'home', Witold Rybczynski identifies three key elements to the modern bourgeois ideal of home: privacy, domesticity and comfort.<sup>6</sup> These principles were also important to the eighteenth-century elite notion of home, and can be seen as shaping architectural changes in the country house in this period, such as the increased use of corridors, more familial rooms, and better heating.<sup>7</sup> When Vanbrugh was building Castle Howard he was keen for domestic concerns to be central to the design, and so ensured that the interiors were easy to keep clean and that

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<sup>5</sup> J. V. Beckett, *The Aristocracy in England, 1660-1914* (Oxford, 1986), p. 366.

<sup>6</sup> W. Rybczynski, *Home. A Short History of an Idea* (London, 1986).

<sup>7</sup> L. Stone, *The Family, Sex and Marriage In England 1500-1800* (London, 1977), p. 245. While corridors had been a feature of the country house from at least the early seventeenth century they were increasingly used to enhance privacy during the eighteenth century. M. Girouard, *Life in the English Country House. A Social and Architectural History* (London, 1978), p. 123.

draughts were limited, so that the house could be heated economically and candles would not be overused.<sup>8</sup> There was, across all classes, an increased emphasis on the home as a location of comfort that was reached by architectural changes augmented by the investment of consumer goods, reflecting changing domestic sensibilities. Women increasingly sought to make the home a place where their husbands would come for their leisure time, as opposed to the alehouses.<sup>9</sup> In her published book of *Maxims* Isabella Carlisle advised new wives in 1790 that:

if absolute necessity, or free choice, call him [the husband] often from home (suppose it to be too often) when he shall re-visit that home, make it so agreeable that it shall finally acquire the preference.<sup>10</sup>

Among elites, the idea of the house as a retreat from the Court had been in place since at least the sixteenth century, and so the idea of the country house as a place for the family had been well established by this period.<sup>11</sup> However eighteenth-century commentators continued to stress this ideal, but for all classes, especially emphasising the idea of the home as the refuge for women.<sup>12</sup> Increasingly, it became imperative to ensure that the house was also a home, and this was considered to be the duty of the elite woman.

Among elites the interweaving of 'object', 'place' and 'memory' could shape how the house was perceived, and encouraged them to view it as a home.<sup>13</sup> These themes have particular relevance for understanding the elite notion of home, as they encompassed both dynastic and domestic concerns. Personal objects could work as signifiers that the house was a home. Women could introduce their own personal objects to a house in order to highlight their close and emotive association with the building. Some women designed

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<sup>8</sup> C. Saumarez Smith, *The Building of Castle Howard* (London, 1990), pp. 113-14.

<sup>9</sup> G. J. Barker-Benfield, *The Culture of Sensibility. Sex and Society in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Chicago, Ill., 1992), pp. 99, 157.

<sup>10</sup> I. Carlisle, *Thoughts in the Form of Maxims Addressed to Young Ladies on Their First Establishment in the World* (Dublin, 1790), p. 6.

<sup>11</sup> C. Shamma, 'The domestic environment in early modern England and America', *Journal of Social History* 14 (1980), p. 3.

<sup>12</sup> C. Saumarez Smith, *Eighteenth-century Decoration: Design and Domestic Interior in England* (London, 1993), p. 233.

<sup>13</sup> I must acknowledge the impact of John Hubbard's paper in shaping these thoughts. J. Hubbard, 'Disclosing Intimacy: approaching the reading of rooms as personal space' given at 'The Domestic Interior: 1600 to 1940. Postgraduate Research Day', Victoria and Albert Museum, London, 22 November 2002.

objects specifically for a house, which would suggest a degree of control over the internal space. Marianne Clifford Constable's 1841 self-designed dragon chair, for example, acted as a statement that the Chinese room was her own space.<sup>14</sup> Objects could also reflect a dynastic past. These took many forms, from portraits of the ancient relatives through to newer items brought by newly married women in to their husband's house. When Frances Shepherd married Charles Irwin in 1758, she brought a pair of Chinese cabinets with her.<sup>15</sup> These objects not only reflected her past status, but also her independent wealth. By bringing the items with her and introducing them into the Temple Newsam collection she was illustrating that her dynastic past was being shared with that of the Irwins, and could now become part of their dynastic future. The idea of 'place' was also especially important, as the location of the country house reflected the basis of their power. It was their ownership of the landscape that surrounded the building that underlined the dynastic basis of the family, and was central to their identity. Memory too asserted their dynastic relationship to the home. A family's elite position was enhanced by the continual remembrance of the family's pedigree, their past successes and the strength of their bloodlines. The country house embodied the ideals of memory, place and object, and in doing so it became the home of the dynasty.

'Memory', 'object' and 'place' were prevalent themes in the writings of elite women, and they used them in order to reflect their emotional understanding of the country house as home. During the eighteenth century there was an increasing awareness of the importance of the home in the language of the period. Novels, for example, began to replace the seventeenth-century themes of the exotic and the scandalous with domestic narratives and images of homely conjugal bliss. These texts became so popular that the family became one of the main themes in extended narrative from around 1750 onwards.<sup>16</sup> In both literature and art, domestic scenes were aggrandized, and the ideal of the home was increasingly romanticized as a location of virtue. Conversation piece portraits presented

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<sup>14</sup> I. Hall and E. Hall, *Burton Constable. A Century of Patronage* (Beverly, 1991), pp. 85-7.

<sup>15</sup> Unattributed, *Temple Newsam*, (Leeds, 1999), p. 14.

<sup>16</sup> C. Flint, *Family Fictions. Narrative and Domestic Relations in Britain, 1688-1798* (California, Calif., 1998), pp. 15, 37.

elite families as both affectionate and, by the later eighteenth century, sensible.<sup>17</sup> The letters of elite women in this sample reflect these stylistic changes, and one can identify an increasing romanticization of the ‘home’, especially in the letters dating from the 1750s onwards. It was during this period that there was a growth in the examples of letters that feature declarations of affection for the country house. Women wrote of their attachment for their home while away from it and their family. While in France in 1771 Isabella Carlisle described Castle Howard as a ‘place I shall ever love’; her memories of her time in the building shaped her affectionate response to it as a home.<sup>18</sup> Their fondness for their home was often expressed through the language of familial affection, describing the place in relation to the love of their family, rather than as an architectural triumph. Harriet Sutherland, for example, wrote in 1821 of her sadness when leaving home and ‘driving from those comfortable walls that contain so many dear to us’.<sup>19</sup> A cosy image of her home was painted here, instead of the stately grandeur normally associated with Castle Howard, and the contents of the home, its ‘objects’, rather than the overall structure of the house stirred her affection.

The importance of ‘place’ in the creation of the idealization of the home is of particular interest, as a number of women stressed that it was the location of the building in Yorkshire that meant that it could be a domestic retreat. In her 1760s letters to her London-based friend, Frances Irwin wrote with delight about her happy marriage, and her comfortable life, noting that her domestic pleasures gave one: ‘the sort of happiness one perceives is really what makes life desirable’.<sup>20</sup> In her letters, Frances clearly separated herself and her family, whom she described as ‘the homely ones’ from the ‘fine folks’ of fashionable society, who needed opera and gambling to keep them amused. She created an idealized image of her home as a centre for sensibility and simplicity, and compared it to the ‘finery’ and fashionable nature of urban life:

I leave you to Ranelagh and all its charms, while I am contented to

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<sup>17</sup> Barker-Benfield, *The Culture of Sensibility*, p. 218. See, also, the images in Saumarez Smith, *Eighteenth-century Decoration*, passim.

<sup>18</sup> Carlisle MSS, J13/1/3, Copy books of letters to Julia Howard from Isabella Carlisle, 1771-2, Letter 10, Beaucaire, 4 December, f. 36.

<sup>19</sup> Carlisle MSS, J15/1/64, Harriet Howard to Caroline Carlisle, 20 [May] 1821.

<sup>20</sup> PRO 30/29/4/2/2, Letter from Frances Shephard, Temple Newsam, to Susan Stafford, 16 March, n.y.

secure health and tranquillity in a more quiet sphere, without being troubled with the pangs of envy or tortured with political Horrors, a bright day, serene air and merry children make up the sum of my enjoyment and really, when my Half is here, fill my soul with delight and pleasures. I work, I read, I walk, I talk, and all without the trouble of making believe, as you are all forced to do in London from Morning to night.<sup>21</sup>

She presented her home as a location of truth, of domestic happiness, and separated her life from that of the display and deceit of London. She stressed that the northern location meant that her home was a 'retreat', a safe haven. While she used the language of spheres in her letters, she did not engender her rural 'quiet sphere', and the public sphere was not described as 'masculine', but immoral. She argued that her homely sphere needed a man, her husband, to make it complete; it was not a perfect world because it was feminine, but because it was domestic.

Frances' letters were, to an extent, sarcastic, and she mocked herself as much as the fashionable world she satirized. She noted: 'Your great world is full of mischief, heaven preserve my country Brains from infection when it is my fate to go there'.<sup>22</sup> She had been part of the fashionable world before her marriage, and her comments are made with a knowing smile. However, she was not alone among the Yorkshire aristocracy in commenting about the virtues of rural life. In the mid-eighteenth century Anne Irwin compared the rural environment to that of a wife, chaste and practical, while she thought London 'a mistress', dissolute and extravagant.<sup>23</sup> Others commented on the specific beauties of Yorkshire. In 1824 Georgiana Carlisle wrote to a friend in France to note that he would find life: 'very agreeable at Paris and that next to Yorkshire it must be the best Place to spend the winter at.'<sup>24</sup> An affection for one's local environment was encouraged among the aristocracy; Isabella Irwin was pleased when her son won the Leeds Plate, a

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<sup>21</sup> PRO 30/29/4/2/20, Letter from Frances Shephard, Temple Newsam, to Susan Stafford, 8 April 1766.

<sup>22</sup> PRO 30/29/4/2/25, Letter from Frances Shephard, Temple Newsam, to Susan Stafford, 8 November 1787.

<sup>23</sup> Carlisle MSS, J8/1/194, Anne Irwin to Charles Carlisle, 6 February, n.y.

<sup>24</sup> Keele University Library, Sneyd MSS, SC5/5, Georgiana Morpeth, Castle Howard, to Ralph Sneyd, 28 December 1824.

horse race, in 1709, as she hoped it would help strengthen his ties to the locality.<sup>25</sup> It was important for the aristocracy to play an active role in the local area and to show a commitment to those people whose lives they directly affected. This localized concern was not simply limited to the men of the household; women played an important role in the wider and political affairs of the family, and by highlighting their dynastic domesticity, they were fulfilling a central duty of the aristocratic woman.

But why did elite women use the language of eighteenth-century commentators to describe their affection for their homes? The cultural world in which women lived would have shaped their letters and their writing style, as the magazines, pamphlets and novels that they read would have helped to form their vocabulary and values. However, I would argue that this representation of themselves as 'rural' women was more deliberate than mere mimicry, and women were not just being amusing, entertaining their friends by acting the stereotype of the naive rural woman.<sup>26</sup> Frances Irwin's descriptions of life at Temple Newsam can be considered as 'performative'. She deliberately used the language of the moralists in order to highlight her role as a domestic woman. By presenting herself as enjoying the simple pleasures of country life she was separating herself from the dissolute fashionable woman of London. By declaring their affection for the home, women were performing the idealized role of the elite woman. Through the presentation of their familial felicity they were showing that they were fulfilling feminine ideals of sensibility, domestic attachment, and loyalty to the dynastic home.

### **Shaping the Country House and Estate**

The rest of this chapter explores the importance of performative domesticity and display in shaping the women's relationship to the design of the country house. As the eighteenth century continued, it was considered increasingly important for elite women to make the country house into a home, a safe haven for themselves and their family. In doing so, they could assert their credentials as a domestic woman. By being actively involved in the decoration of the building women could confirm their status as wives and mothers, and

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<sup>25</sup> WYAS, Leeds, Pawson MSS, Ac 1038, Volume 8 (January 1705-December 1716), Isabella Irwin, Horsham, to John Roades, Temple Newsam, (1)5 September 1709.

<sup>26</sup> This was quite a common act, and one woman apologized for the lack of gossip in her letter by noting: 'how presumptuous it is to think one can write news from the north of England'. Keele University Library, Sneyd MSS, SC5/5, Georgiana Morpeth, Castle Howard, to Ralph Sneyd, 28 December 1824.

demonstrate their ability to make their homes locations of retreat and virtue. The changes that they brought to the house, whether major structural changes or minor decorative items, acted as a way to display their femininity. Charles Saumarez Smith notes that from the mid-eighteenth century women were increasingly considered to hold a privileged position in relation to their ability to comment on fashion and the decoration of homes, in order to display 'a special form of visual sensibility'.<sup>27</sup> There was also a performative element to these decorations too; in writing about their improvements, discussing them with friends, and showing them to visitors, they were performing the role of the domestic women. Below, after a brief exploration of the way that women's input into the country-house design has been assessed by architectural historians, the influence of women in the shape and style of the building is discussed. The importance of performativity and display is highlighted as a crucial way that women asserted their status and femininity. However, the status of the country house as the family seat, the symbol of their pedigree, also needed to be considered. Elite women worked to combine these two factors in the house, and through dynastic domesticity aimed to make the house both a home and a symbol of the family's pride.

Architectural historians have often portrayed the country house as an essentially male location.<sup>28</sup> Built by men for men, in the name of a male pedigree, women's role in the design and use of the house has been largely overlooked. Country houses have been considered to be pre-eminently symbols of public worth and status, and so it has been the exterior that has been considered most important. This reading of a country house can marginalise women, who are more traditionally associated with the interior, although their role here has been largely overlooked too.<sup>29</sup> In architectural studies of the houses on which this thesis concentrates, there has been little mention of the influence of women, although specific case

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<sup>27</sup> Saumarez Smith, *Eighteenth-century Decoration*, p. 233.

<sup>28</sup> This approach has been a result of the continuing dependence on Mark Girouard's work, *Life in the English Country House*, which emphasized the masculine role of the country house. Other writers that have largely overlooked the role of women in the house include: G. Beard, *The English House Interior* (London, 1990); Wilson and Mackley, *Creating Paradise*. Dana Arnold's work is beginning to correct this male centred approach, especially 'Defining femininity', *passim*.

<sup>29</sup> A. Ravetz, 'A view from the interior', in *A View From the Interior: Feminism, Women and Design*, ed. J. Attfield and P. Kirkham (London, 1989), p. 187.

studies have highlighted individual efforts.<sup>30</sup> This is in some way due to the lack of direct evidence for the roles that women played in the original building of the houses, the main focus of the majority of architectural histories.<sup>31</sup> Subsequent minor changes to the buildings have not enjoyed the same detailed analysis, and so the activities of both men and women in this area do need further consideration. Although some work has been undertaken on the interior of the country house, many of these have focused on identifying the craftspeople rather than the role that women played in the design process.<sup>32</sup>

Studies have also been hampered because of the difficulties in assessing the role of women in redesigning a country house through archival sources. The majority of the bills and letters from designers, builders, and other workers, were often addressed to the male head of the household, even if his wife was closely involved, or even running, the project. Because, legally, the wife was a *femme covert*, and could therefore not have debts in her name, major financial transactions would normally use the husband's name. It is often the case that it is only possible to understand the function of women in the building and redesigning of houses if they were either unmarried or widowed.<sup>33</sup> However, women could have a significant impact on the design of the house when they were wives, sisters, or daughters, and their impact can be found through examining their own private letters and papers, documents often overlooked by those writing architectural histories of buildings.

Some studies have tried to locate the role of women in the country house in relation to their influence on the 'female' spaces of the building. In locating these areas, there have

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<sup>30</sup> For example at Temple Newsam: A. Budge, 'Temple Newsam and "the Good Shepherd's"', in *Leeds Art Calendar* 98 (1986), pp. 8-15; A. Wells-Cole, 'Another look at Lady Hertford's Chinese Drawing Room', in *Leeds Art Calendar* 98 (1986), pp. 16-22; A. Wells-Cole, 'The Terrace Room at Temple Newsam', in *Leeds Art Calendar* 108 (1991), pp. 13-23.

<sup>31</sup> In his study of the building of Castle Howard, for example, Saumarez Smith does not explore whether the third Countess was involved building of the house, but instead proposes that the project caused her to leave her husband. Saumarez Smith, *The Building of Castle Howard*, passim.

<sup>32</sup> For example see: G. Beard, *The English House Interior* (London, 1990); Saumarez Smith, *Eighteenth-century Decoration*; K. Scott, *The Rococo Interior: Decoration and Social Spaces in Early Eighteenth-century Paris* (New Haven, Conn., 1996). For a study of the female role in the country house see T. Lummis and J. Marsh, *The Woman's Domain: Women and the English Country House* (London, 1993).

<sup>33</sup> Famous female builders such as Bess at Hardwick Hall and Sarah Duchess of Marlborough are only known to us because they were either unmarried and widowed, and so could manage the project in their own name, or that they wrote significant quantities of letters to the architect, which have been examined by buildings historians. Girouard, *Life in the English Country House*, pp. 116-18; K. Downes, *Sir John Vanbrugh: A Biography* (London, 1987).



often been misleading assumptions about usage of space and the female role. Colin Campbell, for example, assumes that the 'public' spaces of a house were implicitly 'masculine', as they served the needs of the male household head, even though women played a central role in the public promotion of the dynasty.<sup>34</sup> Some rooms have been engendered on the basis of usage; the dining room has been considered to be 'male', and the withdrawing room 'female', due to the eighteenth-century practice of women not taking part in after-dinner conversation.<sup>35</sup> These assumptions are misleading on a number of levels; they assume that males and females had separate spaces, which were not shared, creating distinctive gendered zones within the house. They also suggest that rooms were static in their use, presenting the drawing room as a space that was solely used after dinner by [d]ejected females, although there is little evidence that this practice was the norm. These ideas do not reflect the subtle use of space in the country house, or the hetero-social<sup>36</sup> nature of elite life. Rooms had many functions and users during a day, as Turner's sketches of daily life at Petworth at the start of the nineteenth century illustrate.<sup>37</sup> Rooms could also change in usage quite easily without the need for a new redecoration programme. In 1816 the daughters of Georgiana Carlisle wrote to her for permission to swap their room with the nurse, who was going to swap, in turn, with another staff member. That young girls could rearrange the room usage in their grandfather's home indicates how fluid spatial use was in the country house.<sup>38</sup>

The search for 'female' spaces that women could decorate is therefore both difficult and misleading. Rooms could change in usage quickly, and it is erroneous to ascribe a gender to these rooms. Although women would have had their own private bedrooms allocated to them, which may be considered to be 'feminine', these were not the only spaces

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<sup>34</sup> C. Cunningham, "'An Italian house my lady': some aspects of the definition of women's role in the architecture of Robert Adam", in *Femininity and Masculinity in Eighteenth-Century Art and Culture*, ed. G. Perry and M. Rossington (Manchester, 1994), p. 67.

<sup>35</sup> Girouard, *Life in the English Country House*, pp. 204-5; Arnold, 'Defining femininity', p. 89.

<sup>36</sup> The mixing of both sexes for social activities.

<sup>37</sup> These show, for example, that the Marble Hall, the entrance of the house, was also used as a billiards room in the evening, and for the playing of cards between men and women, as well as being a grand public arena. C. Rowell, I. Warrell and D. B. Brown, *Turner at Petworth* (London, 2002), pp. 88-91, 108-115.

<sup>38</sup> Carlisle MSS, J18/11/34, Caroline Howard, Castle Howard, to Georgiana Morpeth, 3 February 1816.

which they could decorate. They could, and did, have a much wider remit; halls, kitchens, Chinese rooms, and libraries were among the rooms changed by women in this survey. They redecorated the domestic interior, reshaped the external facade, and designed gardens and pleasure grounds. Elite women were an important force in the design and use of the country house and its landscape. Their needs and desires and those of the domestic family could shape the design of the country house, and enable it to become a home.

It is notable that the introduction of new women into a family often created a fresh interest in redesigning the house. It is not surprising that a new owner of a building would launch a redecoration campaign, feeling flush with their inheritance and keen to establish their own identity within the building. However, these changes were not simply about male pride and display; the needs and desires of their wives and children would also influence changes to the building. When Rich, fifth Viscount Irwin, married Anne, daughter of the third Earl of Carlisle in 1718, it was assumed that they would want to make considerable modifications to his house, Temple Newsam. The steward wrote to them soon after their wedding to send them his ideas regarding plans to build an underground passage in order to link the kitchen and the dining room.<sup>39</sup> The staff in the household were aware that their new mistress had grown up in the fashionable Castle Howard, and so they were keen to see their outdated and poorly designed house altered. The suggested changes were undertaken, and ensured that the domestic arrangements were far better organized, and that the food could remain warm as it was delivered to the dining room. It was the status of the new lady of the house that had encouraged the changes, and it was her expectations that the staff were keen to fulfil.

By 1736 Temple Newsam was in need of repair again and when the seventh Viscount, Henry, inherited the title he wrote to his mother, complaining about the: 'old house over my head'.<sup>40</sup> The previous Viscount does not appear to have maintained Temple Newsam; the family were in financial difficulties, and he, a single man, appears to have ignored the house's poor state of repair. Henry, however, was married, and so wished to have a house that he could live in with his family. He and his younger brother had married two of the Scarborough sisters, co-heiresses of Charles Scarborough of Windsor, and the quartet lived

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<sup>39</sup> WYAS, Leeds, Pawson MSS, Ac 1038, Volume 9 (January 1717-December 1747), Robert Hopkinson to Rich Irwin, Castle Howard, 6 May 1718.

<sup>40</sup> WYAS, Leeds, Pawson MSS, Ac 1038, Volume 9 (January 1717-December 1747), Henry Irwin Temple Newsam, to Isabella Irwin, Windsor, 15 March 1738.

together at Temple Newsam after Henry became Viscount Irwin in 1736. They were later joined by the third Scarborough sister, the widowed Henrietta, Lady Jenkinson, who was accommodated in a new suite of rooms that were created for her use in 1738, indicating that she was made welcome.<sup>41</sup> The three women were keen embroiderers, and it is thought that they added their own decorations to a number of the chairs in the house; a later inventory included a number of old needlework screens dating from the time that the Scarborough sisters were in residence.<sup>42</sup> The needs of these three women to have Temple Newsam as a home would have meant that Henry felt compelled to ensure the necessary repairs were undertaken swiftly. The prospect of children and family life, and the desire to impress one's wife, appears to have encouraged both Henry and Rich to modernize Temple Newsam, to make the building a comfortable home.

The redecoration of a country house could be considered as reflecting both a desire to have a comfortable family home, and a need to invest in the house in order to promote the family dynasty both in the present and the future. Women played an important role in financing, shaping and managing these changes, and the needs of the women and their family were often the main driving force behind the projects. Some women would take responsibility for work themselves, and these could include large-scale rebuilding projects. Saumarez Smith suggests that it was unusual for women to be actively involved in large scale architectural projects before 1750, and it is the latter half of the period studied where most examples of female led rebuilding date from in this survey. Women were becoming more associated with the home in the literature of the period, and it was increasingly seen as a space that they were empowered to reshape.<sup>43</sup> During the later eighteenth century Frances Irwin radically redesigned Temple Newsam in order to accommodate her family and their needs. The changes that she made included both practical improvements and embellishments for the purpose of display. Her marriage in 1758 had brought a great deal of wealth to the impoverished Irwins, so she and her husband, Charles, the ninth Viscount, were able to invest in order to correct years of financial neglect. Because of this wealth,

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<sup>41</sup> A. Wells-Cole, 'Some bedrooms and dressing rooms at Temple Newsam', in *Leeds Art Calendar* 112 (1993), p. 16.

<sup>42</sup> Borthwick Institute of Historical Research, Halifax Papers, A5.3.4, Catalogue of China, Old Chairs, etc., and Gallery Furniture, Chapel Furniture, China and Old Furniture at Temple Newsam in March 1863[?]

<sup>43</sup> Saumarez Smith, *Eighteenth-century Decoration*, p. 233.

many of the changes to the house were undertaken in her name, even before Charles' death. Her early redesigning of the house's interior was mainly to make it more fashionable; for example, she redecorated her bedroom with Gothic style 'pillar and arch' wallpaper. She also employed Capability Brown to landscape the park, therefore reasserting the public face of the house and promoted the family as fashionable, wealthy and influential members of the Yorkshire elite.<sup>44</sup>

After her husband's death, her work continued. She demolished most of the south wing, which featured an old, medieval-style hall and kitchens, and rebuilt it with a series of reception rooms, dressing rooms and, most importantly, bedrooms for her five daughters.<sup>45</sup> Frances was not simply a figurehead for the building work, but took an active role in the decisions and appears to have managed the building accounts herself.<sup>46</sup> Her work at Temple Newsam was centred on making the house a home, a comfortable, domestic location, ideal for bringing up her five daughters. However, she was also aware of the dynastic role of the house, as a symbol of the family name. She appreciated the importance of a fashionable house and landscape in order to attract suitable suitors, and matched the need for style with comfort, enabling Temple Newsam to be both a show-house and a home.

Familial concerns grew in importance during this period, as there was an increasing emphasis on the display and performance of domestic roles. In the mid-nineteenth century dynastic domesticity was central to the changes made by Louisa Harewood, wife to the third Earl of Harewood, to Harewood House. She and her husband had been married for many years before he inherited the building from his father in 1841. As soon as they moved into the property, Louisa was keen to remodel the interior, as she believed it did not suit the needs of herself and her family. Louisa dictated a programme of alterations in order to give herself and her thirteen children more accommodation space, radically altering the Adam design of the building in order to fulfil the ideals of aristocratic mid-nineteenth-century domesticity. Among the changes that she made to the interior was the addition of a whole new storey to the building, to accommodate the nursery and rooms for her children, placing

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<sup>44</sup> Unattributed, *Temple Newsam* (Leeds, 1999), p. 14.

<sup>45</sup> Wells-Cole, 'The Terrace Room', pp. 15-16.

<sup>46</sup> WYAS, Leeds, TN/EA/13/70 Building Account for Temple Newsam, 1795-1803.

the needs of her children central to the redesign.<sup>47</sup> The servants' requirements were also met, by improving the kitchens and altering their living arrangements, demonstrating her concerns for her staff. More private and pleasurable concerns shaped other changes; a special 'ladies' bathroom was included, along with the introduction of hot air heating and mahogany finished water closets throughout the family quarters. She also reconfigured a suite of state rooms for her own private use, which meant creating a new corridor in order to provide her with privacy; her own intimate concerns were met by the new design of the house. The zeal and dedication with which she applied herself to the reorganization indicates the delight that she took in leading the work. She played a key role too in choosing the cabinet makers and in organising the cleaning of the fabrics, books and other items in order to make Harewood a clean and ordered building.<sup>48</sup>

Although Louisa's main concerns were with changing the interior layout, by adding an extra floor she changed the design of the exterior of the building too. This alteration to the appearance of the house was further cemented by her introduction of formal gardens to the terrace. In the redesigning of the house, the nineteenth-century domestic concerns of cleanliness, order and comfort were met, and Louisa was able to make Harewood House a comfortable home for herself, her husband, children and servants. The changes to the exterior of the building, and the addition of the formal garden further enhanced the status of the structure, and it became a building suitable for Victorian elites. She was happy to perform publicly her role as a domesticated woman and to manage the work in her own name. Her success in presenting herself in this role can be identified in her 1855 portrait by George Richmond (plate one). This image presents Louisa, pointing proudly to the parterre terrace that she helped create; although she is shown wearing the shawl of the domestic woman, her jewels and hair decoration underline her status as an elite woman. By creating an elite home and by presenting herself as an accomplished woman the display of the dynastic and the domestic complemented one another, and her status was assured.

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<sup>47</sup> M. Mauchline, *Harewood House. One of the Treasure House of Britain*, Second Edition, (Ashbourne, 1992), chapter six; C. Kennedy, *Harewood. The Life and Times of an English Country House*, (London, 1982), chapter five.

<sup>48</sup> Mauchline, *Harewood House*, p. 141.

While it was relatively unusual for women to lead a major rebuilding project, many women had some opportunity to be involved in smaller redecoration of their houses or in the designing the landscapes. Women of the household were often actively involved if changes were to be made to the domestic interior, choosing wallpaper, paintings and other decorative items. Some women were willing to spend their own money to cover the costs of the items they ordered, as was the case at Burton Constable in the early nineteenth century. Marianne Chichester married her cousin Thomas Aston Clifford Constable in 1827, and moved to Burton Constable soon afterwards with her elder, unmarried, sister, Eliza. The sisters were both keen artists, and together they made a number of changes to the house and its furniture. Among the items they bought was a set of card tables that was shipped into the country on Marianne's request, indicating that she was willing to pay a considerable amount to find the 'right' items.<sup>49</sup> They sketched ideas for furnishing the house, and Marianne made some designs for the carpets in the gallery. Their ideas particularly influenced the Chinese drawing room and they ordered pagoda stands and dragons from local firms.<sup>50</sup> Chinese rooms were especially fashionable during this period, echoing the style used at the Brighton Pavilion. Marianne designed a dragon chair, which was carved by Thomas Wallis in 1841, probably the most expensive chair purchased for the house.<sup>51</sup> At Temple Newsam, the female owner of the house, Isabella Hertford, was also influenced by the fashion for chinoiserie. In 1827-8 she redecorated the Chinese Room with wallpaper that had been given to her by her friend, the Prince of Wales. This wallpaper was further embellished by a fret border, which included varnished silver and the addition of extra birds pasted onto the design, cut from a volume of James Audubon's *Birds of America*. Isabella did not simply copy the designs from the Pavilion, but enhanced them to create at Temple Newsam a dramatic and exotic room that reflected her status as a favourite of the future King. By designing chairs and redecorating rooms, Marianne and Isabella were both adding to the decorative arts of the house that many elite women were involved in during this period, including the Lennox sisters, who took great care in redecorating their marital

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<sup>49</sup> ERYARS, DDCC/144/9, Messrs. J. & R. M. Craken, London, to Ferdinand Ceroti, 8 December 1847.

<sup>50</sup> I. C. Bristow, *Architectural Colour in British Interiors 1615-1840* (London, 1996), pp. 171-2, 215-16.

<sup>51</sup> Hall and Hall, *Burton Constable*, pp. 85-7.



Plate One.

*Louisa Harewood.*

George Richmond, 1855.

homes.<sup>52</sup>

Single women could also play a role in designing their homes, especially when they played an important role in the household. Winifred Constable (1730-1772), sister to William, lived at Burton Constable throughout her life, and acted as housekeeper and female head of the household for her brother. She appears to have had some influence on the decoration of the house, commissioning furniture, landscaping and decorative items. These included a kidney-shaped dressing table from Chippendale, a waywiser from George Adams, and the marble relief of Aesculapius that appears above the fireplace in the dining room.<sup>53</sup> It is also thought that her lap dog was used as a model for a plaster sculpture group, which featured the dog with an infant satyr; this was also located in the dining room, suggesting a high degree of involvement in the redecoration of this space.<sup>54</sup> Single women could be involved in the decoration as young daughters, embroidering items that could be used in the house. A catalogue of the furnishings in Temple Newsam from the mid-nineteenth century identifies a 'fine set' of bed hangings in the crimson bedroom as the work of the five 'Miss Ingrams', the daughters of Frances and Charles, who lived in the house in the later eighteenth century.<sup>55</sup> By commissioning, creating, or changing items in the house, women were taking an active part in its history, influencing and shaping the collective memory of the building. In doing so, they helped to make the building their home, a place that they belonged to and shaped through their actions and needs.

While it was common for women to be involved in shaping the changes to the domestic interior, their role was not always encouraged. While Isabella Carlisle was involved in the renovation of the Carlises' London home at Dover Street in 1753, it appears that her opinions were only sought regarding the 'best' rooms; the service apartments,

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<sup>52</sup> Arnold, 'Defining femininity', p. 94; S. Tillyard, *Aristocrats: Caroline, Emily, Louisa and Sarah Lennox 1740-1832* (London, 1995).

<sup>53</sup> A waywiser consists of a large wheel that can roll along a level surface, and a dial that registers the distance travelled.

<sup>54</sup> Thanks must go to Geradine Mulcahy for sharing her research on Winifred Constable with me.

<sup>55</sup> Borthwick Institute of Historical Research, Halifax Papers, A5.3.4, Catalogue of China, Old Chairs, etc., and Gallery Furniture, Chapel Furniture, China and Old Furniture at Temple Newsam in March 1863[?]



offices, and upper floor were completed without consultation.<sup>56</sup> She was asked what should be done regarding the soft furnishings for the rooms, to specify how items from their previous London residence should be reused, and what needed to be ordered new. Even on these questions, though, it does appear that her husband's opinions had been sought first, and her ideas for some rooms were not requested if her husband was managing that space. Isabella's input was clearly limited by Mr Saimdey, who was managing the redecoration, who only sought her ideas when his client, the Earl, could not (or would not) provide satisfactory answers. She was largely sidelined by the process, and does not appear to have been able to have a real involvement in the project; it appears that she was only contacted out of a sense of duty, rather than because of any particular interest in her opinions

For other women, the redesigning of their home could be problematic. In the 1740s, Anne Carlisle had her dower home redecorated, and this caused her many worries. She related how the architects had left the house in pieces the previous year, and so was concerned about what she would find on her return this time. She was also troubled by paintings that had gone blotchy because the liquid used for revarnishing had gone bad.<sup>57</sup> She had separated from her husband, the third Earl, while he was building Castle Howard, and it appears as though architects troubled her in her later years too. Changes to the building could also make it inhospitable during the building process. In 1806 the Morpeths had to stay with her father in London until their new town house was thoroughly warm and comfortable, as they had a number of young children.<sup>58</sup> The changing of a house was not always conducive to domestic relations, and could have a serious impact on the household arrangements of the wider family, not just those directly affected.

Most women within this sample, though, were able to have a full role in the changes to the home, and were able to take real pleasure from their duties. The enjoyment that women took from shaping the house was central in forming their relations to it, to making it their home, not just the official house of the pedigree. Blanche Burlington used family

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<sup>56</sup> Carlisle MSS, J13/1/1, Letter concerning furnishings from P. Saimdey (?) to Isabella Carlisle, 25 August 1753.

<sup>57</sup> Carlisle MSS, J12/1/2, Anne Carlisle to Henry Carlisle, 12 August, n.y.

<sup>58</sup> Devonshire MSS, Letters of the fifth Duke of Devonshire, 1877, Georgiana Morpeth to Lord Hartington, 14 March 1806.

friend Ralph Sneyd in 1840 to help order items from Rome for her new house, Holker.<sup>59</sup> When these began to arrive, she became very excited, writing with delight about the pictures sent, especially a painting of St Cecilia. These were bought to complement the renovations taking place at Holker, with which she was pleased:

We are living in a corner of our house, watching with great interest the progress of the building. We are on the whole very much pleased with what has been done. The interior will be very comfortable, the exterior a very irregular assemblage of walls and bay windows will be at least respectable and I am now very glad we decided against building a new house, which you know we were on the point of doing.<sup>60</sup>

It is interesting that she appears to have placed the comfort of the interior over the appearance of the exterior, which she thought merely satisfactory, indicating that she appreciated the building as her home. Like Louisa Harewood and Frances Irwin, she was most concerned with the living space and its potential as a location for the family. The display element of the exterior was not a concern: she only aspired for it to be 'respectable'. She did not think of Holker as a powerhouse, but as a home for her and her family.

The gratification from redesigning the house could be heightened if a room was created in which personal pleasures could be indulged. In Burton Constable, Marianne and Eliza dramatically changed the domestic space by changing a bedroom and dressing room into a theatre for the family's in-house productions during the mid-nineteenth century.<sup>61</sup> Among the plays performed were *School for Scandal* and *The Sheriff of the County*; household members and their guests were the main participants, although professionals may have attended some performances. An existing sketch of the theatre from c.1850 indicates the permanence of the stage as well as the major alteration to the domestic space that its inclusion in the house would have brought.<sup>62</sup> By introducing a theatre into the structure, Eliza and Marianne radically altered the internal layout of the private rooms, and so shaped Burton Constable for their own needs and pleasures, controlling the space of their home.

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<sup>59</sup> Keele University Library, Sneyd MSS, SC7/275, The Earl of Burlington to Ralph Sneyd, 18 March 1840.

<sup>60</sup> Keele University Library, Sneyd MSS, SC7/273, Letter from Blanche Cavendish, Holker, to Ralph Sneyd, 25 November 1838.

<sup>61</sup> C. Wood, 'The musical world of the Clifford Constables', in *Burton Constable Hall: The Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries* (East Yorkshire Local History Series 51, 1998), pp. 61-2.

<sup>62</sup> Burton Constable Print Room, Box 86, LDS 482.

It was not just the interior of the buildings which concerned women; they could also be actively involved in the country-house garden and pleasure grounds. Gardening was seen as a suitable activity for women, as it was considered to be an extension of their domestic duties, and botany was an increasingly fashionable area of science for women to indulge in.<sup>63</sup> They enjoyed spending time in the gardens, walking, teaching their children, or taking in the sun. Winifred Constable appears to have had a small flower garden at Burton Constable, and her brother's plans for landscaping the grounds after 1755 appear to have been motivated by a desire to have gardens suitable for a wife.<sup>64</sup> By demonstrating their appreciation of the benefits of the country-house garden women highlighted their sensibilities. Elizabeth Lechmere recommended to her sister that she should spend her time reading in the grounds of Castle Howard as: 'what can be more Glorious when one lifts ones eyes, than the consideration of the heavens, and when they are cast down, what more delightful than the Ground laid out as if nature had designed it for a paradise'.<sup>65</sup> Some women played a central role in ensuring that the garden was 'a paradise', and that it had the necessary features of an elite landscape. The sixth Duke of Devonshire contacted Elizabeth Rutland (1780-1825) to ask her if she had any peacocks to add to his grounds. She replied:

I should be too happy to give you anything I have, but alas! I have not a single peacock belonging to me. I used to have some a long time ago, but they were so [rural?] as to sit in the trees in the woods and the Foxes were so rude as to pull them down by their tails and eat them, and I was obliged to give up having them.<sup>66</sup>

Elizabeth was clearly involved in the management of the gardens at Belvoir Castle, and was also responsible for designing Belvoir Farm that was built on the estate, indicating her direct

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<sup>63</sup> J. Christie and S. Shuttleworth (eds.), *Nature Transfigured: Science and Literature, 1700-1900* (Manchester, 1989). Thanks to Sam George for highlighting to me the importance of botany as a female pastime in the latter half of the eighteenth century.

<sup>64</sup> D. Turnbull, 'The making of the Burton Constable landscape', in *Burton Constable Hall: The Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries*, East Yorkshire Local History Series 51, 1998, pp. 11, 18.

<sup>65</sup> Carlisle MSS, J8/1/419, Elizabeth Lechmere, Paris, to Anne Irwin, 11 July 1731.

<sup>66</sup> Devonshire MSS, Letters of the sixth Duke of Devonshire, 848, Elizabeth, Duchess of Rutland to the sixth Duke of Devonshire, 10 October 1823.

involvement in the landscape of her country house.<sup>67</sup>

Edwin Lascelles' second wife, Jane Fleming, whom he married in 1770, was also interested in the estate, and had prolonged correspondence with the steward regarding its management. While Edwin was concerned with finishing the newly built Harewood House, Jane showed a real interest in the gardens, and wrote to ask about seeds and plants, including scarlet beans and evergreen roses.<sup>68</sup> She was closely involved in the redesigning of the land to the north of the house, which was developed into a pleasure ground during this period. Among the features that she is known to have been associated with in this area include the Root Arch and the Rotunda. She closely specified the position of the latter so that it had views over the ruins of Harewood Castle, indicating her appreciation of the importance of a dynastic past in order to assert the Lascelles' position in elite society.<sup>69</sup> It can be suggested that Jane was proud of her involvement with the designing of the estate, as a rotunda features in the background her 1795 portrait by Henry Singleton.

However, Jane's interests were not purely focused on the ornamental and idealized, and the garden was not simply a pleasurable hobby; as she played an active role in practical estate management too. Many of her concerns were domestic in nature; she requested butter to be sent to her from Harewood while she was away, as well as oranges, to make marmalade with.<sup>70</sup> She was also concerned with the health of the animals that formed part of the estate, and was saddened when lambs or cows were unwell. This was not simply a sympathetic response; she was well aware of the financial worth of animals, and it was on her instruction that the grey horses on the estate were sold.<sup>71</sup> She was also involved in

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<sup>67</sup> Arnold, 'Defining femininity', p. 85.

<sup>68</sup> She kept her title from her first marriage; both her and Edwin were widowed. WYAS Leeds, HAR/SC/4/3/36, Copy of a draft letter from Mr Popplewell to Jane Fleming, 19 May 1784; WYAS Leeds, HAR/SC/4/4/10, Letter from Jane Fleming to Mr Popplewell, 18 February 1782.

<sup>69</sup> M. Hay, 'The Northern Pleasure Ground of Harewood', MA Dissertation, University of York, 1993, pp. 30-33.

<sup>70</sup> WYAS Leeds, HAR/SC/4/4/13, Letter from Jane Fleming to Mr Popplewell, 8 March 1782; WYAS Leeds, HAR/SC/4/4/24, Letter from Jane Fleming to Mr Popplewell, 14 May 1782.

<sup>71</sup> WYAS Leeds, HAR/SC/4/4/10, Letter from Jane Fleming to Mr Popplewell, 18 February 1782; WYAS Leeds, HAR/SC/4/3/36, Copy of a draft letter from Mr Popplewell to Jane Fleming, 19 May 1784.

overseeing the staff who managed the land, and she led enquires into hiring a game keeper. She showed a good knowledge of what was necessary; as they did not have any deer, they only needed a keeper who knew about 'shooting and other things', but she argued that they ought to have a permanent member of staff to manage the game.<sup>72</sup> It is of note that she asked her staff to contact Lady Irwin's steward for further advice regarding a gamekeeper, rather than contacting other male landowners. The nature of the relationship between Frances and Jane is not clear, but the contact between stewards on the behalf of their female employers on estate matters, normally perceived as a male preserve, reflects how assumed gender patterns of behaviour and responsibility could be challenged by elite women.<sup>73</sup> Their class and wealth allowed them to be freed of the restrictions of their sex, and to deal with the issues and concerns that interested them.

Mark Girouard's idea of the country house as a 'powerhouse' has dominated studies of the building in recent years, and so its dynastic and political functions have been highlighted to the detriment of other understandings of the house. However, through the study of the domestic history of the house, and the role of women in shaping that history, it is clear that the country house was also a home. The family seat was not an oppressive or enclosing building, which prevented women from taking an active role in its history. Instead it could empower them, and reflect their important role in both the dynastic and domestic histories of the family. Women were able to change and shape the building to fulfil their needs and pleasures. They worked to enhance the family's position in society by improving the house and its landscape in order to reflect their status, or their aspirations. Their changes and interactions with the structure enabled it to become more than a house; it was a home, for themselves and their family. Being a home was of central importance to the domestic relations of the family, as it allowed them to share a location, a place, a memory, which unified them as a group and was the basis of their affectionate relations.

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<sup>72</sup> WYAS Leeds, HAR/SC/4/4/13, Letter from Jane Fleming to Mr Popplewell, 8 March 1782; WYAS Leeds, HAR/SC/4/4/10, Letter from Jane Fleming to Mr Popplewell, 18 February 1782

<sup>73</sup> A Mr Lascelles was an acquaintance of Lady Irwin, and complimented her on her building works in 1767. WYAS, Leeds, TN/C/23/29, Unsigned, London, to Frances Irwin, 23 March 1767.

The house as home was the stage for family life, and elite women were central to its design, direction and destiny.

## Chapter Three: Preparing for Power? Growing up in the Country House

*My dear Mama. I will do all I can to give Harriet good examples,  
but I won't be always correcting her neither be a little governess.*  
Caroline Lascelles, c. 1813.<sup>1</sup>

In the early nineteenth century Caroline, eldest daughter of Georgiana Carlisle, wrote this short note to her mother. It appears to be the result of a disagreement between mother and daughter, probably about the way that Caroline treated her younger sister. Her comments reflect the ideals of correct behaviour for the daughter of an earl; she was to be virtuous; able to give good examples; be loyal to her sister and family. However, she was also to know her place and not be over bossy or play the role of mother before her time. Most of all, and Caroline's distaste at the idea is palpable in the note, she was not to be a 'little governess'. She was an aristocrat, not a servant, and it was important for her to act according to her station. Her childhood years were to be part of a learning experience that would teach her how to become a respectable female member of society's elite class; she would learn how to perform.

The study of the youth of the aristocratic woman is an important way of understanding the factors that shaped their ideas and behaviour in adulthood. During the romantic age, the idea that 'the child is father to the man' was popular, and it can be seen that the daughter could also be mother to the woman.<sup>2</sup> This notion of the cycle of life, with emphasis on the child, was of particular importance to the aristocracy.<sup>3</sup> Dynasty meant that continuity of ideas and images were essential in order to maintain status. Childhood was therefore of particular importance; this was the time that the child learnt how to 'be' a Howard, Ingram, Lascelles or Constable. In order to understand the woman's position within wider society and in the family it is important to understand her childhood.

Over the last forty years, the significance of the history of childhood has been

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<sup>1</sup> Carlisle MSS, J18/11/7, Caroline Howard to Georgiana Morpeth. The letter is not dated but other evidence would suggest that Caroline was aged about ten years old at the time of writing.

<sup>2</sup> W. Wordsworth, 'My Heart Leaps Up When I Behold' (1802), l. 7, in S. Gill (ed.), *The Oxford Authors. William Wordsworth* (Oxford, 1984), p. 246.

<sup>3</sup> Wordsworth's understanding of the continuing cycle of life, and the importance of the child is discussed in A. Easthope, *Wordsworth, Now and Then. Romanticism and Contemporary Culture* (Buckingham, 1993), pp. 34-6.

recognized, and the nature and timing of changes in historical attitudes towards children continue to be debated.<sup>4</sup> However, there are still a number of areas that need further consideration. Many histories of childhood have treated the child as a non-gendered being, and have not examined the differences between male and female experiences. Most of the earlier histories concentrated on boys; as Calvert notes, Ariès' famous study: 'might better have been called *Centuries of Boyhood*'.<sup>5</sup> While more recent studies like Calvert's have acknowledged that the experience of the female child was often considerably different from that of her brother, large scale studies of the history of 'girlhood' in the eighteenth century are lacking. There has also been a tendency to concentrate on the ideologies of childhood, rather than the practice of being a child. The vast majority of sources that dealt with young people were written by adults, whether describing their own children, recollecting their own childhood, or advising others on how to deal with children. The difficulty in identifying evidence of the youthful experiences has meant that it has been difficult to find the child's voice.<sup>6</sup> It has been assumed that there are few documentary sources written by children, and that those that do exist were written under adult supervision. Material artefacts, including toys and artistic representations of children, were designed in recognition that it was the parents who chose and paid for them, and so reflect their wishes rather than the desires of the child. The didactic texts that dealt with raising children considered the issues that most concerned adults, and even children's literature was written to accommodate the needs, and sometimes the fantasies, of the parents rather than the child.<sup>7</sup> Despite these problems, it is not impossible to examine the experiences of elite childhood, and there are numerous records that can be used to study the experience of girls growing up within the country house. Bills from tutors, schools and booksellers suggest the educational

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<sup>4</sup> Key works include: P. Ariès, *Centuries of Childhood* (Harmondsworth, 1960); H. Cunningham, *Children and Childhood in Western Society since 1500* (London, 1995); L. A. Pollock, *Forgotten Children. Parent Child Relations from 1500 to 1900* (Cambridge, 1983); L. Stone, *The Family, Sex and Marriage In England 1500-1800* (Harmondsworth, 1979). For a recent historiography see H. Cunningham, 'Histories of childhood', *American Historical Review* 103 (1998), pp. 1195-1208.

<sup>5</sup> K. Calvert, *Children in the House. The Material Culture of Early Childhood, 1600-1900* (Boston, Mass., 1992), p. 14.

<sup>6</sup> Cunningham, *Children and Childhood*, pp. 2-4.

<sup>7</sup> Mitzi Myers argues that a number of children's books written by women used the genre in order to present women and mothers as powerful heroines. M. Myers, 'Impeccable governesses, rational dames, and moral mothers: Mary Wollstonecraft and the female tradition in Georgian children's literature', *Children's Literature* 14 (1986), pp. 33-4.



opportunities that the children enjoyed. Letters between children and parents, grandparents or governesses, which contain evidence of children's own opinions and descriptions of their day-to-day life, can illuminate our appreciation of children's understandings of their worlds. These are supported by documents created by children themselves, such as accounts of their school day and scrapbooks. These resources allow a mix of adult and child-based resources on which the study of elite girlhood can be based.

This chapter uses these sources in order to explore the female experience of growing up in the country house. It considers the way that young girls were shaped into elite women through their childhood experiences, especially their education. The extent to which their gender shaped their youth is explored, and the expectations placed on young girls to become and to perform the roles of aristocratic women is discussed. How they learnt these roles is examined through a survey of their formal and informal education. Using a schoolroom "register book" created by Georgiana Carlisle in 1798 as a basis, the different subjects and activities that girls undertook as part of their education are highlighted.<sup>8</sup> Young girls were trained in order to succeed in their social position, not just as wives and mothers, but as politically and socially active figures, therefore requiring charm, intelligence and networking skills. I demonstrate that education and childhood experiences enabled girls to become both aristocratic and feminine, and that they learnt how to combine these roles through practising dynastic domesticity, preparing them for 'power'.

### **Representations of Gender and Childhood**

When examining the childhood of the elite female, it is important to consider the degree to which their gender influenced their formative years. The desire for aristocratic families to have a son who survived into adulthood cannot be underestimated, as primogeniture meant that it was a key factor in ensuring the continuance of the family name. This yearning for sons may have manifested itself into an active dislike of daughters. On hearing he was to be an uncle, Edward, second Viscount Irwin wrote to his brother in 1685 that he was willing to be a godfather: 'if it be a son but I hate girls'.<sup>9</sup> When he became a father himself in 1688, he did not write immediately to say that his wife had

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<sup>8</sup> Carlisle MSS, J18/62/2, Register Book.

<sup>9</sup> WYAS, Leeds, TN/C/5/173, Edward, Viscount Irwin to his brother Arthur Ingram, December [1685?].

successfully given birth to a daughter as he thought: 'it was hardly worth the trouble for a girl'.<sup>10</sup> Catherine was his only child, and they both died soon afterwards. His brother Arthur inherited the title and was the father to nine sons, of whom he was clearly proud. On the birth of his fifth child in 1693 he wrote to his mother-in law that when the new baby joined his brothers at Temple Newsam they will all be in: 'the neste [sic] together, which will be five as fine boys as are in England'.<sup>11</sup> However, while the importance of sons was recognised, an active dislike of girls was unusual, especially as the eighteenth century progressed, and there was an increasing acceptance when daughters did arrive. In the 1750s, Anne Irwin wrote to her brother to note that she was:

sorry I can't congratulate you upon the birth of a grandson. But Lady Dye is so well, Mr Duncombe and her self so young, tis only the loss of a year or two, and perhaps twenty year hence they themselves may think it full as well - the females precede the males.<sup>12</sup>

It is important to note that women also recognized the importance of male children and the disappointment associated with the birth of a girl. There is some uncertainty in this note, as it was only a 'hope' that they *may* think it well in a large number of years; doubts about the pleasures of daughters were still expressed, even by a woman. It has even been suggested that women may have internalized attitudes regarding the importance of sons, and considered themselves to be less worthy, and so were willing to accept the lesser value they added to a family.<sup>13</sup>

However, this was not the case in many families, and the importance of daughters was increasingly recognized during the eighteenth century. Although Frances and Charles Irwin were in need of a male heir, they wrote that they greeted the birth of their third daughter in 1782 with as much joy as if she were a son. Daughters were cherished, especially by their mothers, and their education and leisure time was the focus of increasing care by the end of the eighteenth century. Daughters were often placed into the supervision of their mother

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<sup>10</sup> WYAS, Leeds, Pawson MSS, Ac 1038, Volume 6 (September 1642-April 1691), Edward Irwin to his brother Arthur Ingram [1688].

<sup>11</sup> WYAS, Leeds, Pawson MSS, Ac 1038, Volume 7 (April 1691 - December 1704), Arthur Viscount Irwin to Mrs Machell, Hills, 15 March 1693.

<sup>12</sup> Carlisle MSS, J12/1/53, Anne Irwin, Kew, to Henry Howard, fourth Earl of Carlisle, 7 June, n.y.

<sup>13</sup> In the mid-nineteenth century the three-year-old Lady Maud Cecil overheard guests express their delight that her new sibling was a boy; it was from that point that she began to 'look at life from a feminist standpoint'. Quoted in P. Horn, *Victorian Countrywomen* (Oxford, 1991), p. 40.

rather than a nurse; as they spent so much time with them and shared many activities, women began to favour the companionship of daughters, and lamented the lack of female children as they had previously mourned an absence of sons.<sup>14</sup> However, the desire for a son still ran deep, and while women seemed increasingly pleased with daughters, there were still men who expressed their disappointment with a female child. This sense of dissatisfaction, though, was considered to be something of an embarrassment and the subject of gossip. In the early nineteenth century Georgiana Carlisle wrote to her husband about a new father who was told by the midwife that his wife had given birth to a son, and was very pleased. Unfortunately, when: 'the Nurse came crying back with the discovery of it being a girl, he swore a great oath at her, but has behaved perfectly ever since'.<sup>15</sup>

Although daughters were more uniformly welcomed by parents in the nineteenth century than in the late seventeenth century, positive parent-daughter relations did not simply evolve over the eighteenth century. Affectionate parent-child relations exist through the period, and the idea of girls being 'hardly worth the bother' lasted well into the late eighteenth century.<sup>16</sup> In 1783, for example, the fifth Duchess of Devonshire was attacked by her husband's relatives for breast-feeding her daughter, later Georgiana Carlisle, because they thought she ought to be concentrating on producing a son rather than caring for her daughter.<sup>17</sup> Recent studies have indicated that an evolutionary approach in understanding the history of parent-child relations is misleading. Pollock argues that the main development during the eighteenth century was the increasing eloquence of language employed to talk about children rather than changes in the degree of affection itself. They did not love their children any less in 1650 than they did in 1800; they just lacked the vocabulary to describe their feelings.<sup>18</sup>

I would suggest that there was an awareness of the dynastic need for sons through the period, but that this co-existed with affectionate appreciation of the value of daughters.

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<sup>14</sup> J. S. Lewis, *In the Family Way. Childbearing in the British Aristocracy, 1760-1860* (New Brunswick, N.J., 1986), p. 65.

<sup>15</sup> Carlisle MSS, J18/2/38 (Book 42), Georgiana Morpeth to George Morpeth, Friday. The letter is unclear as to who the father was, but it was probably the Duke of Beaufort.

<sup>16</sup> The most affectionate of the father-daughter relationships studied within this sample, that between Anne Irwin and the third Earl of Carlisle, dates from the early eighteenth century.

<sup>17</sup> Lewis, *In the Family Way*, p. 61.

<sup>18</sup> Pollock, *Forgotten Children*, p. 107.

Once there was an heir, there seems to have been an increasing indifference regarding the gender of the other children, and there was less pressure on the mother to produce further sons as the child-mortality rate decreased in the later Georgian period.<sup>19</sup> The increasing hetero-social nature of elite sociability meant that women could be active and effective networkers forming useful business, political and social alliances. Daughters were not just an inconvenience to 'marry off', but an asset to the dynastic and domestic world of the elite family. Family sizes also increased too, not only buoyed by more children surviving, but also because the fashion for a domestic lifestyle meant that a large family was considered a source of great pleasure.<sup>20</sup> Aristocrats could be proud of their daughters, and even if their gender at birth was sometimes a disappointment, they could be cherished and loved during their childhood and as adults.

Within the country-house family, there was an expectation that daughters would fulfil the ideals of eighteenth-century femininity. In 1758 a new mother-to-be was reminded that:

two or three Girls will be a pretty amusement for you, and exercise your care to render them accomplish'd that you sh'll live in them, whilst Mr Ingram supports the noble Labour of training up his Boys to be an Honour to his family, a comfort and delight to their Parents.<sup>21</sup>

This contrast clearly reflects the different roles that male and female children were expected to play in the elite family. Boys were to make their parents proud with their sense of honour; the ideal daughter was to be charming, a source of both entertainment and pride because of their femininity. Even when they were too young to perform these gender roles, there was pleasure when they indicated the potential to fulfil these idealized attributes. Beauty was particularly praised and appearance of girls of all ages was subject to comment. The very young daughter of Georgiana Dover was described as 'lovelier than any Domina

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<sup>19</sup> Among the aristocracy, after 1750 the death rate among children decreased by 30% in less than 25 years. R. Trumbach, *The Rise of the Egalitarian Family. Aristocratic Kinship and Domestic Relations in Eighteenth-Century England* (New York, N.Y., 1978), p. 187.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 170.

<sup>21</sup> WYAS, Leeds, TN/C/23/46, George Ingram, Windsor, to Mrs Charles Ingram, 13 December [1758].

ever seen in the three ridings' in 1828.<sup>22</sup> They were also expected to be well behaved, and so any evidence of disobedience was treated with great concern. The young Mary Taunton (1823-92) was often troublesome when with her elder sister and governess; her mother, Georgiana Carlisle, felt compelled to keep a diary charting her behaviour until there was evidence of improvement.<sup>23</sup> Precociousness was also disliked, and even in adulthood those women with an interest in academia were encouraged to hide their enthusiasm in the name of decency.<sup>24</sup> Women were expected to be accomplished rather than knowledgeable, and daughters amusing rather than clever, although, in practice, they were often both.

For parents, being seen to have feminine daughters was, in many ways, more important than actually having 'ideal' offspring. The display of their virtues would demonstrate parental success in rearing a new generation of aristocrats that would be an asset to their own dynasty, as well as the family into which they would marry. Daughters were portrayed as fulfilling the ideals of femininity through portraits. Within the country houses in this sample there are a number of paintings of elite girls, many of which show an idealized image of childhood and youth. They also identify changing ways in which young women were represented in art. The painting of the *Three Daughters of the third Earl of Carlisle* by Antonio Pellegrini (plate two) presents the young girls as adults.<sup>25</sup> It is thought to have been painted between 1709 and 1712, which would have made the girls between eleven and seventeen years old at the date of its completion. Their youth and the diversity of their ages is not represented in the image; instead they have been presented as interchangeable young women. The artistic representation of girls in the early eighteenth century was similar to that of adult women, and they were often shown in similar clothes and poses.<sup>26</sup> In her study of artistic representations of childhood in early eighteenth-century America, Calvert argues that this similarity was due to the social position of the adult

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<sup>22</sup> Keele University Library, Sneyd MSS, SC9/208, Mr Ralph Sneyd to Georgiana Dover, Castle Howard, 26 October 1828. See also, for example: Keele University Library, Sneyd MSS, SC9/182, Georgiana Agar Ellis to Ralph Sneyd, Paris, November 1823; Devonshire MSS, Letters of the sixth Duke of Devonshire, 660, Georgiana Morpeth to sixth Duke of Devonshire, Park Street, 26 July 1822.

<sup>23</sup> Carlisle MSS, J18/62/9, Journal about Mary Howard, 19 October 1829 - 26 November 1820.

<sup>24</sup> Carlisle MSS, J8/1/257, Anne Irwin to the third Earl of Carlisle, London, 3 April, n.y.

<sup>25</sup> See plate two. The girls portrayed are Mary Howard (1695-1786); Anne Irwin (1697-1764), and Elizabeth Lechmere (1701-1739).

<sup>26</sup> Calvert, *Children in the House*, p. 44.



Plate Two.

*Three Daughters of the third Earl of Carlisle.*

Antonio Pellegrini, c. 1709-12.

female who was considered to be simply 'a more advanced child'.<sup>27</sup> Females were thought to have only a short period of infancy and then pass to a long period of lesser adult status, and so: 'the concepts of subordination, femininity, and childishness shared a common visual and sartorial vocabulary'.<sup>28</sup> The representation of the Howard sisters as mature beyond their years could therefore be symptomatic of this understanding of the immaturity of women. By prematurely ageing the girls it suggests that they were perceived as having reached adulthood in all but the physical sense, as the mental capabilities of a woman were considered to be not that different from that of an adolescent.

This argument, though, does not take into account the aristocratic status of the girls. Their position in society and their ambitious father may have been influential in presenting the young girls as adults. The third Earl had spent a great deal of money in building Castle Howard and the painting was part of the decorative scheme. The building of the house was clearly part of a wider aim to enhance the status of the family, and the girls would clearly have been part of this. The painting hung in the Grand Cabinet, a visible and high status room.<sup>29</sup> It would have been hoped that they would have married well, to improve the family's network, and their social position. The portrait can be seen as an advertisement for the girls, prematurely highlighting their marriageability. They are shown as very attractive, and accomplished in the feminine arts: music, singing, and reading. The fact that they are very similar in appearance suggests a degree of interchangeability; one sister would be as suitable a wife as another. Their status is enhanced by the setting, and the classical arch and their physical similarity may have been designed to remind the viewer of the three graces.<sup>30</sup> Through these artistic devices the girls are shown as performing the various roles of elite women: suitable wives, accomplished beauties, and feminine ladies. In their youth, their future roles as women were most important and so celebrated and preserved through portraiture.

Later in the eighteenth century, there was a move away from the representation of the

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<sup>27</sup> Calvert, *Children in the House*, p. 45.

<sup>28</sup> Calvert, *Children in the House*, pp. 44-5.

<sup>29</sup> C. Saumarez Smith, *The Building of Castle Howard* (London, 1990), pp. 94-104.

<sup>30</sup> The relationship between artistic representation of sisters and the three graces is discussed in M. Cohen, *Sisters. Relation and Rescue in Nineteenth Century British Novels and Paintings* (London, 1995), chapter one.

girls as beautiful mini-adults, and the 'youthfulness' of children was increasingly portrayed.<sup>31</sup> The circa 1770 painting of *The Five Daughters of Charles, ninth Viscount Irwin* by Benjamin Wilson (plate three) shows the young girls of the Temple Newsam house at play in the estate grounds.<sup>32</sup> The difference between this picture and the Pellegrini reflects the changing way in which society viewed and represented childhood. The girls each have their distinctive personalities, the differences in age are clearly marked, and their youth is celebrated. This painting reflects a pride in the children, and although they were all girls, and there was no brother, their parents wanted to mark the joy that their daughters had brought them. The portrait also reflects the importance of sisters within the elite family, an idea reflected in John Jackson's circa 1820 portrait of *The Four Daughters of the fifth Earl of Harewood* (plate four).<sup>33</sup> This picture is far smaller than the other two, and is an affectionate portrait of sisterly female friendship. During the adolescent years of a young elite woman's life the relationships that they built up with their sisters and other females would have provided them with a wide network of allies as adults. This network would not only provide emotional and practical support in times of crisis, but would also allow political and social opportunities for their new families; Queen Victoria's visit to Castle Howard was almost certainly a result of the seventh Earl of Carlisle's sister, Harriet Sutherland, having held a position in the Royal Household.<sup>34</sup> The shared experiences in growing up together, in play and in education, would have encouraged close relationships between sisters in this period, and help form the networks of support necessary for the advancement of themselves and their family.

These representations of elite daughters, though, only reflect part of the story regarding aristocratic girlhood. The girls are presented as beautiful and accomplished, and this emphasis on the ornamental in the rearing of elite children, especially girls, was criticized during the eighteenth century by writers such as Mary Wollstonecraft and

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<sup>31</sup> For a discussion of this see M. Benton, 'The image of childhood: representations of the child in painting and literature 1700-1900', *Children's Literature in Education* 27 (1996), pp. 35-60.

<sup>32</sup> See plate three. From the left are Louisa Ramsden (1766-1857); Harriet Aston (1765-1815); Isabella Hertford (1759-1834); Frances Gordon (1761-1841); Elizabeth Meynell (1762-1817).

<sup>33</sup> See plate four. From the left are Louisa Cavendish (1812-1886); kneeling is Emma Portman (1809-1863); standing is Frances Hope (1804-55) and seated and holding a sketch book, Harriet Sheffield (1802-89).

<sup>34</sup> V. Murray, *Castle Howard: the Life and Times of A Stately Home* (London, 1994).





Plate Three.

*The Five Daughters of Charles, ninth Viscount Irwin.*

Benjamin Wilson, c. 1770.



Plate Four.

*The Four Daughters of the fifth Earl of Harewood.*

John Jackson, c. 1820.

Catherine Macaulay.<sup>35</sup> However, to think that the children were brought up to become indolent aristocrats is to misunderstand the experiences of both children and adults. The representation of girls as beautiful does not mean that they were only beautiful. Instead it reflects the parents' pride in their children and their desire to celebrate their daughters. The elite girl was a source of pleasure for her family, and an important asset for their dynastic future. It was during their childhood that they were prepared for their complex roles as adults, and educated to be active and powerful aristocrats.

### Education

The education of the daughters of the aristocracy was central in ensuring that they were equipped for their adult roles in elite society. During the eighteenth century, there was a growing emphasis on educating elite daughters so that they could be useful adults, supporting their fathers, husbands, and brothers, running households, and educating their own children.<sup>36</sup> Their education, though, was not limited to the schoolroom; many elite girls had only limited experiences of formal teaching, and the role of informal education was of particular importance. This may have taken the form of sociable reading, educational visits, and even some leisure activities. Traditionally academic skills only made up part of the curriculum for young aristocratic women; arts such as dancing, singing and music were a necessary part of their education too.

The approaches to male and female education identify some of the major differences in attitudes towards male and female children in the period. When the children were young, they were educated at home, and parents, grandparents and aunts would take an active role; Georgiana Carlisle grew exasperated by all the relatives and tutors who were trying to help her eldest son with his reading, as they were confusing him terribly.<sup>37</sup> However, even at this age, boys and girls were often educated separately. The early nineteenth-century letters to Georgiana Carlisle from her daughters illustrate the way that their educational world was very separate from that of their brothers. During a stay at Chatsworth, Caroline, the eldest

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<sup>35</sup> K. M. Offen, *European Feminisms, 1700-1950: A Political History* (Stanford, Calif., 2000), pp. 37-41. See also the collection of writings discussing accomplishments in B. Hill, *Eighteenth-Century Women. An Anthology* (London, 1984), pp. 57-61.

<sup>36</sup> L. Wolff, 'When I imagine a child: the idea of childhood and the philosophy of memory in the Enlightenment', *Eighteenth-century Studies* 31 (1998), p. 391.

<sup>37</sup> Carlisle MSS, J18/52/49, Georgiana Morpeth to Selina Trimmer, n.d.

daughter, wrote in detail about their daily activities:

We get up at seven and learn our geography, our catechism and grammar and sometimes before breakfast but in general after, then after we write our verbs. Georgiana has finished hers and the verses of the History of France. While I play on the piano, Georgiana writes English and French dialogues and sometimes her Calligraphy. After dinner we either go out or play or it is Mrs Sterling's day, then after, history of England and France and repeat Roman history but not all in the same day. After tea we read.<sup>38</sup>

While the letter goes on to give an account of the lesson of her younger sister, there is no mention of what her brothers were doing, although they were of a close enough age to be with them at Chatsworth. In another letter of a similar date, written in French, she mentions that Frederick, two years her junior, was struggling with Latin, but indicates that she and her sisters were not party to his lessons.<sup>39</sup>

As they got a little older, boys nearly always went to school where they would have received a full academic education. Sons of both the Ingram and Howard families went to Eton, which Rich Ingram described in 1698 as a 'very easy school', and on to university, opportunities not available to their sisters.<sup>40</sup> Most young women were educated at home, normally by a governess or nurse, unless there was a specific reason to send the girls to school. As Catholics, the Constable family sent their daughters either to the Bar Convent School at York, or to be educated in Europe, in order that they could guarantee that the needs of their faith were met in their educational programme.<sup>41</sup> A great deal of money was spent on Lucy Clifford's education at Liège, where the bill for the costs of her board, pocket money and tuition in the period 1787-1792 came to more than £275.<sup>42</sup> This money may have been considered a worthwhile investment; she was a young woman whose parents had died, and so her guardian, Thomas Clifford Constable, would have considered it imperative

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<sup>38</sup> Carlisle MSS, J18/11/16, Caroline Howard, Chatsworth, to Georgiana Morpeth, n.d.

<sup>39</sup> Carlisle MSS, J18/11/1, Caroline Howard to Georgiana Morpeth, n.d.

<sup>40</sup> Historical Manuscripts Commission, *Reports on Manuscripts in Various Collections*, Vol. 8 (London, 1913), p. 83.

<sup>41</sup> H. J. Coleridge, *Saint Mary's Convent, Micklegate Bar, York, 1686-1887*, (London, 1887), pp. 393-4. The nature of education in the Bar Convent has been explored by Sister Gregory Kirkus, IBVM, in *Education in the Bar Convent in the Eighteenth Century*, Pamphlet published by the Institute of the Blessed Virgin Mary, York.

<sup>42</sup> ERYARS, DDCC/147/23, Guardianship account of Miss Lucy Clifford, 1792.

that she married. She was independently wealthy, having inherited thirteen hundred pounds, and so it was considered important that she would have been able to attract the right kind of (Catholic) husband.<sup>43</sup>

Educating daughters at school, though, did not need to be costly, and could be seen as a way of reducing expenses. Some of the Ingram girls in the early eighteenth century also went to school; their father was a Colonel, and so often away, and their mother appears to have suffered from poor health. Their relatively limited income may have meant that it was easier for them to be sent away, where the costs of raising them could be easily managed and contained. In 1737, for example, the bill only came to £12 12s. for a half a year's board, plus laundry and additional lessons.<sup>44</sup> For those parents who wanted to educate their children at home, the hiring of staff could be problematic; in 1831 Harriet Sutherland lamented her daughter's mechanical French accent and searched in vain for a decent governess from Europe.<sup>45</sup> Those who could afford it would bring in an army of specialist tutors; dancing, drawing and music masters were hired, along with language specialists, in order to complement the permanent tutor's skills. Even for those who were educated at home, a great deal of money could be invested in their education; it was not necessarily a sign of academic neglect not to send a daughter to school.

Although they were normally educated separately from their brothers, and many could not read the Latin and Greek expected of their brothers, most were given a relatively rounded education. They were taught not only reading, writing and arithmetic, but also foreign languages, history, classical literature, and other, less scholarly, skills. The rest of this chapter considers the aims of their educators. Through an exploration of the educational regime enjoyed by the young Georgiana Carlisle at the end of the eighteenth century, the nature of the education of the daughters of the aristocracy in this period is discussed. I will argue that their education was shaped to enable them to become successful and powerful aristocratic women as well as accomplished in the necessary domestic arts. They had the potential to be influential in politics, patronage and wider society, and so help promote the interests of their natal and marital families, as well as their own concerns. If

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<sup>43</sup> She became a nun.

<sup>44</sup> WYAS Leeds, TN/EA/12/17/1/11, The Hon. Col. Ingram's bill, 4 February 1737.

<sup>45</sup> M. Leconfield (ed.), *Three Howard Sisters. Selections From the Writings of Lady Caroline Lascelles, Lady Dover and Countess Gower, 1825 to 1833*, Completed by John Gore (London, 1955), p. 221.

they married well, they would have a position of power within the country house and estate, and so would need to be educated in key skills in order to fulfil the role of chatelaine. Ambitious parents would have recognized the importance of educating their daughters so that they could be successful aristocrats, not only benefiting their future in-laws, but also enhancing the opportunities for the future success of their natal family. It was therefore important that they were given the knowledge and experience in order to perform the role of the elite woman, to enable them to become a useful ally for their families. Their education was not about amusement and luxury, but an important investment in the futures of both the girls and the dynasties.

It is possible to explore the education of Georgiana Carlisle through her school book register.<sup>46</sup> It details the lessons and educational experiences that she encountered as a fifteen-year-old, as she was growing up in Chatsworth House. She made a daily log during 1798 of the tasks she undertook, placing them under headings such as 'music', 'reading', 'drawing', and 'company and conversation'. The book provides fascinating detail of the Devonshire school room and family life. She often notes the nature of the conversations that she had with her mother and grandmother; for example, both were keen to talk to her about Lady Jersey, and the nature of 'intimacies'. It also provides detailed information regarding her formal and informal education. Georgiana made notes of her education for the whole year, starting in January, although by autumn her handwriting became less neat, and there was an increase in blank spaces and weeks where she simply wrote 'I forget'. However despite this lack of resolve, it was clearly important to her to continue to write and keep an account of her lessons. That the schoolbook went to Castle Howard with her as a married woman, and that it survives, is of note. It suggests that she recognized the significance of her education, and that she felt it crucial that it could be assessed, either by herself or another, possibly her mother or grandmother. It is also possible that she used the book as a guide when educating her own children; she held her old governess in high regard, and so may have been keen to replicate her own educational experiences. The keeping of a record such as this was not uncommon during the eighteenth century, although few survive. Influenced by both the records kept by Clarissa in Samuel Richardson's novel, and the Methodist practice of recording their daily life, this regulation of behaviour through note-

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<sup>46</sup> Carlisle MSS, J18/62/2, Register Book.

keeping was considered to be the actions of the virtuous in this period.<sup>47</sup> Georgiana may have been aware of these cultural influences, and in keeping the record was performing the role of the diligent pious young woman. Through her own management of her learning, she indicated that she felt her education was more than simple window-dressing, forgettable and unimportant, but a shaping factor of both her teenage years and her adult life.

The first category in Georgiana's register was religion, under which was normally a comment about daily prayers or reading sermons printed in the newspaper. Religion appears to have been an important feature in the life of Georgiana, and she considered it central to both her own education and the later education of her own children. Georgiana Spencer had deliberately chosen Selina Trimmer to be her granddaughters' governess because they shared the same strong religious convictions, and she felt that granddaughters needed moral guidance to protect them in the confused world of the Devonshire set and the *bon ton*.<sup>48</sup> The young Georgiana clearly felt great pressure to be religiously minded too, and, aged twelve years old, she wrote to Selina that her time with her Grandmother 'has made me more attentive in my prayers, for tho' I hope I have always been religious I have not that settled devotion which of all things I most desire'.<sup>49</sup> This desire for devotion stayed with Georgiana throughout her life, and may be considered to be a contributing factor to the decline in her mental health in adulthood.<sup>50</sup> She felt it was important to give her own children a religious upbringing, and she ensured that the Bishop of London's Sermons were read regularly on Sundays for her family.<sup>51</sup> When in London, they visited Belgrave Chapel as a family, and she supported their charitable activities, both in her own name and on the behalf of her younger children.<sup>52</sup> Georgiana's daughters were famed for their religious devotion. Harriet Sutherland was an active Evangelical Christian and supported the anti-

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<sup>47</sup> Thanks to Emma Major for highlighting this point.

<sup>48</sup> A. Foreman, *Georgiana, Duchess of Devonshire* (London, 1998), p. 251.

<sup>49</sup> Devonshire MSS, Letters of the fifth Duke of Devonshire 1293.1, Letter from Georgiana Cavendish to Miss Selina Trimmer, 10 May 1795.

<sup>50</sup> Georgiana Cavendish's religious beliefs will be discussed further in chapters seven and eight.

<sup>51</sup> Carlisle MSS, J8/62/15, A case of books, Memorandum.

<sup>52</sup> Carlisle MSS, J18/74, Georgiana, sixth Countess of Carlisle, Writings on Religious Topics, Extracts from a sermon preached by Dr Thorpe at Belgrave Chapel, 3 May 1840; Carlisle MSS, J8/62/15, A case of books.

slavery movement, and it Blanche Burlington was described as having an almost angelic quality about her. Her uncle, the sixth Duke of Devonshire, was fascinated by her religious devotion; she encouraged him in his mid-life religious revival, and so he was greatly distressed by her premature death in 1840.<sup>53</sup>

The role of religion in the education of young women was very important, and would have shaped their lives as aristocrats, even if their beliefs were not particularly strong. The Evangelical leanings of the Howard girls in the early nineteenth century very much shaped their social circle as adults, and so their childhood experiences were central in controlling their opportunities in adult life. The role of religion was even more marked in the experiences of the Chichester Constable family. As a Catholic family the girls experienced very different educational and social opportunities to other girls in this sample when they were growing up. In the mid-eighteenth century Cecily and Winifred were educated at the Bar Convent at York, one of the few Catholic institutions in England.<sup>54</sup> As the girls who attended the school were nearly all Catholics, and largely of the lesser gentry, the social circle of friends of the Constable sisters was quite different to that of the Howard children, limited primarily because of their religion. In the nineteenth century, French schools were favoured by the family, which would again have led to a very different circle of friends for the girls. In a (possibly fictional) account of her schooldays, a young Eliza Chichester complained about how early she and her sisters were expected to rise in the morning. She noted that she was too delicate to get up at five o'clock, the school's appointed hour, and so she was allowed to stay in bed another half and hour.<sup>55</sup> While she may have been over dramatising the strictness of the school, it would be fair to suggest that she did experience a far harsher regime in her Catholic school than was normally enjoyed by those educated at home. Religion was a key factor in the way that a female's early years were shaped, and influenced their circle of friends, holiday destinations, and attitudes towards child-rearing and marriage in their adult life.

The most regular activity that Georgiana Carlisle undertook, according to her school book, was reading. In January 1795, her classical reading largely took the form of

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<sup>53</sup> She was considered to be gentleness and godliness personified. J. Lee-Milne, *The Bachelor Duke: a Life of William Spencer Cavendish 6th Duke of Devonshire 1790-1858* (London, 1991), pp. 127, 144-5.

<sup>54</sup> For a history of the school see Coleridge, *Saint Mary's Convent*.

<sup>55</sup> ERYARS, DDCC/150/73, Notebook for Eliza Chichester, 1813.

Shakespeare, when she read five of the plays, but she also read many newspapers too. The fact that she recorded these as part of her school regime suggests the importance placed on understanding the news, a crucial skill for the elite woman. As an adult she became a discerning newspaper reader, and bemoaned the lack of choice of 'papers available to her during a stay at St Leonard's.<sup>56</sup> She also encouraged her own family to read, and her brother later teased the Howard family for their commitment to reading the newspaper in the afternoon.<sup>57</sup> She also read a number of books in Italian, along with novels, and didactic texts. As a mother, she carefully managed what her own children read, and took notes from Harriet Martineau's 'Tales', as though to summarize it for her younger children.<sup>58</sup> A mid-nineteenth-century inventory of Castle Howard noted that books were only found in three locations: the Old Library, the Long Gallery (the new library) and in Georgiana's bedroom, where there were 175 volumes of differing sizes.<sup>59</sup> This not only suggests that she was an avid reader herself, but that she had spent many years controlling the reading material in the house, managing her children's education.

Frances Irwin also managed the reading matter for her children in the mid-eighteenth century. There are numerous bills for books ordered by Frances while her daughters were growing up, suggesting that she valued the importance of a wide range of literature in the education of her children. Among the books bought were Aesop's *Fables* and Thomas Boreman's *A Description of Three Hundred Animals* (1730), both traditional educational texts.<sup>60</sup> Not all the books that children read were formal educational texts, though. In the later eighteenth century Caroline Cawdor was clearly familiar with the Gothic novel, and wrote to her mother suggesting that she wrote a novel in that style while staying at Naworth

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<sup>56</sup> See, for example: Carlisle MSS, J18/2/19, Georgiana Carlisle, St Leonard's, to sixth Earl of Carlisle, Friday, n.d.; Carlisle MSS, J18/2/21, Georgiana Carlisle, St Leonard's to sixth Earl of Carlisle, n.d.

<sup>57</sup> Devonshire MSS, Letters of the sixth Duke of Devonshire, 90, sixth Duke of Devonshire to Georgiana Morpeth, April 1813. The regularity of Castle Howard was a constant source of fond amusement to Georgiana's siblings, and in this letter Hart declares that: 'Castle Howard is the only place where there are afternoons. Good place, how I shall like to be there'.

<sup>58</sup> Carlisle MSS, J8/62/15, A case of books, Memoranda. The 'Tales' were probably her *Illustrations of Political Economy*, which were published over the period 1832-34.

<sup>59</sup> Carlisle MSS, H2/11/3, Inventory of fifth Earl of Carlisle.

<sup>60</sup> WYAS, Leeds, TN/EA/12/18 Bills for Books, stationery, etc.



Castle in Northumbria, the second Carlisle seat.<sup>61</sup> In 1821 Harriet Sutherland wrote to her grandmother to tell her that she had been enjoying Austen's latest novel, noting: '*Emma* interested me excessively, the characters of the numerous personages are so well kept up and her bones are so well painted that one feel delighted with the cleverness of the author that can put such appropriate stuff in their mouths'.<sup>62</sup> Harriet appears to have shared her enthusiasm for the novel with her sisters, as their eldest brother wrote a poem about the 'Lady and the Novel', apparently based on his own comic observations of his female relatives:

Yet still, whate'er the tale, fond maid take heed  
How seldom ill-assorted loves succeed  
Mark well what crosses wait the trusting fair  
List not too rashly to the suitors prayer  
Calm the wild tumult, probe thy vain desire  
And - more than all - don't set the bed on fire.<sup>63</sup>

These letters and the poem suggest an openness about reading, even if the book was a novel rather than a worthy text. Reading, from novels through to newspapers, to texts and classics, was actively encouraged among elite daughters. The books they read would have shaped their knowledge and, in turn, their ideas that would have formed attitudes in later life. By becoming comfortable and confident readers they would have been able to maintain conversations with potential husbands, as well business and social acquaintances of both sexes. They would also have been able to read the advice literature of the period, which may have guided them through their marriages and parenthood. It would also give them opportunity to fulfil their elite duties of patronage. Frances appears to have supported Anna Gomersall, a female novelist in Leeds, who dedicated her 1789 novel *Eleonora* to her, and Marianne Clifford Constable had a play dedicated to her in 1847.<sup>64</sup> A wide literary knowledge was an increasingly important requirement for the elite woman, which would

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<sup>61</sup> Carlisle MSS, J15/1/38, Caroline Campbell (later Cawdor) to Caroline Carlisle, n.d.

<sup>62</sup> Carlisle MSS, J15/1/64, Harriet Howard to Caroline Carlisle, Sunday, 20 [May] 1821.

<sup>63</sup> 'The Lady and the Novel' from George Carlisle, *Poems by George Howard, Earl of Carlisle. Selected by his Sisters, in memoriam matri* (London, 1869).

<sup>64</sup> A. Gomersall, *Eleonora, A Novel, in A Series of Letters; Written by A Female Inhabitant of Leeds in Yorkshire*, Two Volumes (London, 1789); ERYARS, DDCC/144/33, Letters to Marianne, Lady Clifford Constable, Robert Stanley, Hull, to Lady Clifford Constable, Burton Constable, 19 August 1847. For a discussion of Mrs Gomersall's career see J. Raven, *Judging New Wealth. Popular Publishing and Responses to Commerce in England, 1750-1800* (Oxford, 1992), chapter six.

have marked her apart from her middle-class sisters, and highlighted the pedigree of her education.

Traditional accomplishments also formed part of Georgiana's education. Accomplishments were central to the performative nature of elite life, especially for young women; they confirmed their femininity and their aristocratic status, as well as suggesting that they were gifted, and therefore 'special'. Georgiana was a keen artist, and there is an entry under the 'drawing' category for most days. She continued to draw as an adult, and she particularly enjoyed sketching on her travels.<sup>65</sup> Drawing teachers were in regular demand among the elite families of eighteenth-century England, and many travelled around the country seeking the patronage.<sup>66</sup> Young women were expected to be able to draw, and women were often depicted in portraits around a sketch book.<sup>67</sup> At Temple Newsam, the daughters of Frances Irwin were educated at home, and a sum of forty-eight guineas was paid to their drawing tutor to visit in 1774.<sup>68</sup> Tutors could also visit schools, and during her time in Liège, Lucy Clifford had regular drawing lessons.<sup>69</sup> Ability to draw was often among the accomplishments attributed to women after their death; the *DNB* notes that Isabella Byron 'etched with ability, and made several copies of work by Rembrandt'. The works of women artists were often preserved by their families; the drawings by Marianne, Eliza and Mary Barbara Chichester still survive at Burton Constable. Among their collection of line and ink drawings is a programme for an exhibition of drawing and sketches by amateur artists, in which they may have been planning to exhibit their work, and examples of printed images to copy for sketches.<sup>70</sup>

Drawing was not just a sign of feminine refinement as it also had some practical uses.

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<sup>65</sup> Carlisle MSS, J18/62/10, Journal of expedition, 1838.

<sup>66</sup> For example, a Miss Osborne offered her services as a drawing teacher to Marianne Clifford Constable at Burton Constable; ERYARS, DDCC/144/33, Miss Osborne to Lady Clifford Constable, 17 October 1836.

<sup>67</sup> For example see the Lascelles Sisters portrait (plate four).

<sup>68</sup> WYAS, Leeds, TN/EA/12/17/1/11, Received of the Rt. Hon. Viscount Irwin, July 22 1774. It is not explicit that the tutor is a drawing teacher, but as the author bills the family for drawing materials too, it is the most likely conclusion.

<sup>69</sup> ERYARS, DDCC/147/23, Guardianship account of Miss Lucy Clifford, 1792.

<sup>70</sup> Burton Constable Print Room, Box 97, Sketches and Watercolours by Mary Barbara, Box 89, LDS 1593; Box 64, LDS 41189, Eliza Chichester's Scrapbook; ERYARS, DDCC/144/31, Letters to Eliza Chichester.

The ability to draw was useful in the education of children, as it could be used to illustrate books and ideas more clearly. Georgiana Carlisle was particularly fond of drawing while her children read aloud, something that her daughters often asked her to do.<sup>71</sup> Drawing could be used as a way of creating records of excursions abroad, and Mary Barbara Chichester's drawings, for example, illustrate her trips around Europe in the early nineteenth century.<sup>72</sup> An ability to draw was also central to becoming proficient at embroidery. This not only required an artistic eye, which could be developed through drawing lessons, but plans for handkerchiefs or other items needed to be drawn up first, a duty often performed by the eldest sister.<sup>73</sup> Embroidery was a necessary skill for a wife and mother, and even those women who could afford to pay others to make their clothes and soft furnishing used the skill for special items or projects. Isabella Ramsden enjoyed embroidery, and boasted about the chair she was finishing in 'pea green and purple'.<sup>74</sup> While she was pregnant she wanted to make bed sheets for her baby from older material, so that the cotton would be soft enough for a newborn's skin.<sup>75</sup> The skill of drawing was therefore not just a simple accomplishment to demonstrate an aristocratic training, but also a practical skill that enabled women to fulfil their duties as a mother.

To be an accomplished musician was also an important skill throughout the eighteenth century; it emphasized the sensible and feminine qualities desired in young women by their peers and suitors alike, as the Pellegrini painting of the *Three Howard Sisters* illustrates. In her school book it is noted that Georgiana Carlisle practised the piano most days, sometimes for several hours, and collected a great deal of sheet music.<sup>76</sup> In the later eighteenth century, music was an important part of the education of the daughters of Frances Irwin, who was regularly billed for the hire of musical instruments, such as guitars, and for the cost of

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<sup>71</sup> PRO 30/29/17/5/8, Letter from Georgiana Morpeth, Castle Howard, to Harriet, Countess Grenville, [1813?].

<sup>72</sup> For example Burton Constable Print Room, Box 61, LDS 4118.

<sup>73</sup> Horsham Museum, Machell Ingram MSS, 794.6, Elizabeth Ingram, Hills, to her sister, 7 November 1758.

<sup>74</sup> WYAS, Leeds, TN/C/23/55, Isabella Ingram, Hills, to Mrs Charles Ingram, Temple Newsam, 26 November [1761?].

<sup>75</sup> WYAS, Leeds, TN/C/19/30, Isabella Ramsden to Isabella Irwin, 29 December 1761.

<sup>76</sup> Devonshire MSS, Letters of the fifth Duke of Devonshire, 1335.1, Georgiana Cavendish to Miss Selina Trimmer, 18 May 1796; C. Ridgway, pers. comm.

music.<sup>77</sup> Her sister-in-law, Elizabeth Ingram, also learnt how to play the harpsichord, a skill she maintained throughout her life.<sup>78</sup> An appreciation of music as an adult was an important way to form social networks and gain prestige within local society. In 1781 Caroline Carlisle and her husband, who held the position of Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, commanded a performance of Paisiello's opera, *L'Innocente Fortunata* in Dublin, thus raising their profile within the local social scene.<sup>79</sup> Music was important to life at Burton Constable in the nineteenth century; Marianne Clifford Constable could play the piano, and her sister Eliza the harp.<sup>80</sup> Together they devised musical plays for the in-house theatre, which was a central attraction to invited guests. There is some evidence that Marianne used her musical skills in order to promote the family, as some minor composers, both local and from overseas, dedicated work to her. Her influence meant that Burton Constable was able to host a grand ball in October 1845 as a prelude to the Hull Musical Festival, of which she was a patron.<sup>81</sup> Here, the skills she learnt as a child allowed her to have a profile distinct from that of her husband, and to be placed in a position of power and influence in the local community.

It was important for young women to be able to maximize their social circle, as networking and forming links to other families was crucial if an aristocrat was going to be powerful. Many features of their youthful activities would have provided them opportunity to develop these skills. Letter writing was the most useful way of making and maintaining allies, and the young Georgiana included 'letters received' and 'letters sent' in her schoolbook register. Georgiana appears to have taken letter writing seriously, and wrote many letters from an early age, mainly to her grandmother and to her governess Selina, informing them that she and her sister Harriet were keeping up with their educational

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<sup>77</sup> WYAS, Leeds, TN/EA/12/5. 1762-3, Bill to Hon. Lady Irwin from Thomas Haxby, n.d.; WYAS, Leeds, TN/EA/12/18 Bills for Books, stationery, etc., Bill to Frances Irwin from George Goodchild, 1770.

<sup>78</sup> WYAS, Leeds, TN/C/19/20, Elizabeth Ingram, London, to Isabella Irwin, 19 November 1761.

<sup>79</sup> T. J. Walsh, *Opera in Dublin 1705-1797. The Social Scene* (Dublin 1973), p. 204.

<sup>80</sup> C. Wood, 'The musical world of the Clifford Constables', in *Burton Constable Hall: The Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries*, East Yorkshire Local History Series 51(1998), p. 57.

<sup>81</sup> Wood, 'Musical World', pp. 57, 63.

activities and their prayers.<sup>82</sup> She also created a notebook during a trip to Bagmir Rock in 1797, aged fourteen which she may have used to help her to write amusing letters. Entitled 'Anecdotes, Bagatelles and Bon mots' it contained a collection of aristocratic humour and anecdotes, largely based around tales of ignorant English women in France and jokes at the expense of George III's illness.<sup>83</sup> The fact that she created an aide memoire of this sort and that, most importantly, it survived, suggests that she felt awkward in fashionable society, and was aware that she lacked the natural grace and wit to feel confident to write without support. She recognized her duty as an aristocrat to remain in contact with those who might be of importance in future requests for support and patronage, and saw letters sent and received as central to her education in becoming a successful, elite woman.

In order to meet people who could become part of one's letter writing set, one needed to socialize with the wider elite circles, and features of the female education would equip them with the skills to network effectively. Exercise was a category in Georgiana's schoolbook, which mainly comprised of walking, dancing and horse riding. These activities would not only have ensured good health, but they were also crucial skills for the aristocratic woman to have. Many of the girls in this sample learnt to ride; Blanche Burlington was particularly keen, and enjoyed riding with her father and male guests who came to visit Castle Howard in the early nineteenth century.<sup>84</sup> Riding was often part of the country-house weekend, and so being a competent horsewoman would allow young ladies to take a full part in the events, maintain links and form networks. Walking was a more genteel form of exercise, and it was common to take walks in the large estate grounds. At the start of the nineteenth century Harriet Gower used to entertain her nephews and nieces at the grounds at Castle Howard and Chatsworth, and the circa 1770 painting of the daughters of the ninth Viscount Irwin reflects the idea of the country-house landscape as a location for play.<sup>85</sup> As an adult, the walk was often a precursor to the marriage proposal,

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<sup>82</sup> For example see Devonshire MSS, Letters of the fifth Duke of Devonshire 1290.1, Miss Georgiana Cavendish to Miss Selina Trimmer, 3 May 1795.

<sup>83</sup> A large number of the jokes relating to the illness of the King are at the end of the book, suggesting that these were added during his second bout of ill health in 1801.

<sup>84</sup> She thanked Ralph Sneyd for a whip that he sent her and noted that: 'it will remind me of our best rides, and I hope be my companion on many such still to come'. Sneyd MSS, SC7/270, Blanche Howard to Ralph Sneyd, Thursday 25 August, n.y. (probably 1825).

<sup>85</sup> Cavendish, *Hary-o*, p. 201; see plate three.

as was the case with Georgiana and George Dover, and so learning how to behave was crucial to encouraging potential suitors.<sup>86</sup> Dancing was often a more formal part of a girl's education, and those girls who went to school were often taught it for an extra fee. The 1737 school bill for 'Miss Ingram' included dancing tuition, and during her time in Liège in the 1790s, Lucy Clifford had regular dancing lessons too.<sup>87</sup> As a great number of decisions in aristocratic life were made near a dance floor, it could be considered a worthy investment. Assemblies, balls, and parties were not only important arenas for attracting husbands, but a location for identifying political and social allies. A lack of talent for the minuet could have significantly limited one's social circle, and therefore the opportunities available to women and their families.

Another skill taught in childhood that would have maximized young women's social circles was the ability to speak French. Direct evidence of French lessons is notable by its absence, although the vast majority of women wrote the occasional letter in French, showing they were competent. The bills from the school attended by the daughters of Colonel Charles Ingram in the 1730s included requests for payments for French lessons and a vocabulary book.<sup>88</sup> Lucy Clifford had regular Italian lessons while at Liège, but there is no mention of being taught French.<sup>89</sup> It appears that French was normally taught before the onset of adolescence; Charles Ingram's daughters were less than ten years old at the date of the bill. After that age, there appears to have been an expectation that girls would have mastered French sufficiently to use it regularly. Caroline Lascelles sometimes wrote to her mother in French, and there were regular trips to France where they would have needed to use the language.<sup>90</sup> It was on these trips that the girls would have had the opportunity to develop friendships that would have been important for their long-term success as elite women. Without the language it would have been very difficult for the Cliffords to visit the Duc D'Aumbrer and Prince of Orange, and for the Howard children to thrive in the French

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<sup>86</sup> Northamptonshire Record Office, White MSS, Accession 1945/16, Diaries of Lord Dover, George Agar Ellis, Volume 21.

<sup>87</sup> WYAS Leeds, TN/EA/12/17/1/11, The Hon. Col. Ingram's bill, 4 February 1737; ERYARS, DDCC/147/23, Guardianship account of Miss Lucy Clifford, 1792.

<sup>88</sup> WYAS Leeds, TN/EA/12/17/1/11, The Hon. Col. Ingram's bill, 4 February 1737.

<sup>89</sup> ERYARS, DDCC/147/23, Guardianship account of Miss Lucy Clifford, 1792.

<sup>90</sup> Carlisle MSS, J18/11/1, Caroline Howard to Georgiana Morpeth, n.d.

embassy run by their aunt and uncle Gower in the early nineteenth century.<sup>91</sup>

Other entries in Georgiana's School Register were 'Company and conversation' and 'public amusement', which were also central in the widening of the social circle. Entries under these headings included details of trips to dances at nearby towns and other country houses. The visits to houses sometimes took the form of day trips. In 1797, for example, the twelve-year-old Harriet Cavendish took a trip around Nottinghamshire and visited Welbeck Abbey, Thoresby Hall and Clumber House in a single day.<sup>92</sup> The large amount of time that they spent on the road would have prepared children for their future lives as aristocrats. They not only travelled with their parents, but also with other relatives, and were often separated from their close family for long periods of time. The children did not always enjoy the trips; Caroline Lascelles was a particularly poor traveller, and in 1806, aged only three years old, she disliked her journey to Chiswick so much that she declared she would never make the return trip back home to Castle Howard.<sup>93</sup> Letters to parents were often full of requests to know when they were coming to collect them from whichever set of relatives they had been left with. They sometimes tried to persuade them to return earlier than they had planned. On one occasion Caroline Lascelles wrote to her mother Georgiana: 'I hope we will see you sooner than the middle of next month which is a very long time'.<sup>94</sup> However, as the absences were often caused by mothers going to London for their confinements, only nature and the midwife could dictate when they could return to their other children.

Country-house travelling was an important part of elite life, and in the same way that it allowed adults to build up friendships and meet influential people, so too did it allow the children to make acquaintances that may have been important for their future lives. It was often the case that there was more than one set of children in the house, and so friendships

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<sup>91</sup> ERYARS, DDCC/150/278, Lady Clifford Constable's Diary 1829; V. Surtees (ed.), *A Second Self. The Letters of Harriet Granville 1810-45* (Salisbury, 1990), passim.

<sup>92</sup> Cavendish, *Hary-o*, p. 6. At that time these were the houses of the Duke of Portland, Lord Newark and the Duke of Newcastle.

<sup>93</sup> Cavendish, *Hary-o*, p. 155.

<sup>94</sup> Carlisle MSS, J18/11/15 Caroline Howard, Chatsworth, to Georgiana Morpeth, n.d.

between cousins and other children of a similar age could be formed.<sup>95</sup> They could also make alliances with the adults, who may have a degree of obligation to the children when they became adults if they had been in their care in the past. Even if the circle of friends was limited, the experience of visiting, being a guest, and generally living in the aristocratic world beyond one's home would have been the route to further confidence as adults.

The childhood years of Yorkshire elite women can be considered as a training ground for their roles in adult life. Through formal and informal patterns of education they would have learnt the skills necessary in order to fulfil the duties of female aristocrats, including becoming a wife, mother, an effective networker, and confidant for their fathers, brothers and husbands. The youthful years were a fertile time for making friendships and alliances that would have been useful throughout their lives; some of these may have been within the home, such as their sisters, and others may have been friends they met at schools or at a country-house weekend. They would have developed skills in order to perform the roles of elite women, from the ability to dance and woo a husband, to the more practical domestic skills of embroidery. For some women, their education prepared them for significant power. Frances Irwin, for example, held great influence in the political borough of Horsham, Sussex at the end of the eighteenth century.<sup>96</sup> Harriet Sutherland was a high society hostess and mistress of the robes to Queen Victoria; the Queen was very fond of Harriet and considered her opinion highly.<sup>97</sup> However, her mother, Georgiana Carlisle, had only limited power on the traditional model, despite being the daughter of the fifth Duchess of Devonshire. She was not a great hostess, but she excelled in the other areas of her training; an accomplished artist, musician, and reader, she was able to fulfil the role of mother. She and her husband had a very happy marriage, and together they raised twelve children who all led successful lives, including the heir who played an important role in national politics. She successfully managed Castle Howard, and her local and national social commitments. Her influence and

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<sup>95</sup> It is interesting to speculate that perhaps the large number of marriages between cousins may have been less due to families engineering suitable matches and more a reflection of childhood friendship, and therefore may be affectionate matches.

<sup>96</sup> E. Chalus, 'Women, electoral privilege and practice in the eighteenth century', in *Women in British Politics, 1760-1860: The Power of the Petticoat*, ed. K. Gleadle and S. Richardson (London, 2000), pp. 28-9.

<sup>97</sup> K. D. Reynolds, *Aristocratic Women and Political Society in Victorian Britain* (Oxford, 1998), pp. 112-13, 122-7, 206.



power were centred on her family, and should not be devalued because of that. Other women, though, were not so successful; some did not marry, and lived quiet lives, caring for their relatives, while others had unhappy marriages, and suffered the shame of separation. Although they may have received an education designed to shape them into powerful elite women, the training did not always work. Their education did not necessarily make them successful, but it gave them the chance to be so. They could use the basic skills in order to form political networks, influential families, or patronage circles, so that they could be powerful aristocratic women.

## Chapter Four: 'Love' and Marriage

*On Thursday dear madam I am to exhibit my sweet self at the ridotto, where I intend to put on all my charms to see what swain will take notice of me.*

Elizabeth Ingram, 1763.<sup>1</sup>

Marriage and courting in the eighteenth century have been associated with the language of exhibition, display, and sale.<sup>2</sup> It has been depicted as a simple business arrangement among the wealthy, where daughters were seen as 'assets' to be traded for the advancement of the family. Mary Wortley Montagu noted that: 'people in my way are sold like slaves. And I cannot tell what price my master will put on me'.<sup>3</sup> Those women who did not marry when still youthful had to work harder to be noticed; Elizabeth Ingram was aged twenty-nine when she wrote to her grandmother (above) to describe her plans for the dance. Elite daughters may have felt obliged to marry while still young, in order that the 'market value' of their fertility was not questioned or reduced by advancing age.<sup>4</sup> The skills that they learnt during their childhood needed to be employed, and it appears that a return on the investment of the education was expected by some parents; the pressure to get married and stay married could be intense. Marriage was the crucial medium for both dynastic and domestic concerns among the elite of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Through marriage, families could form new networks and consolidate land ownership and political ties. It also represented the future of the family, as without marriage there could not be legitimate heirs, and the dynasty would be unable to proceed.

Because of these pressures, the marriages of the elite have often been perceived as unloving. Adultery among the richest and most fashionable circles has been presented as

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<sup>1</sup> WYAS, Leeds, Pawson MSS, Ac 1038, Volume 10 (January 1748-December 1776), Elizabeth Arthur Ingram to Isabella Irwin, Windsor, 1 March 1763.

<sup>2</sup> I. H. Tague, 'Love, honour and obedience: fashionable women and the discourse of marriage in the early eighteenth century', *Journal of British Studies* 40 (2001), p. 78.

<sup>3</sup> Quoted in R. Trumbach, *The Rise of the Egalitarian Family. Aristocratic Kinship and Domestic Relations in Eighteenth-Century England* (New York, N.Y., 1978), p. 75.

<sup>4</sup> S. S. Lanser, 'Singular politics. The rise of the British nation and the production of the old maid', in *Singlewomen in the European Past, 1250-1800*, ed. J. M. Bennett and A. M. Froide (Philadelphia, Pa., 1999), p. 308. For a further discussion of this, see chapter six.

common, with Royalty thought to be particularly indulgent in affairs.<sup>5</sup> However, the degree of adultery may have not been significantly higher among the elite classes; their affairs have simply been recorded more, either in the scandalous press of the period, or in their letters, which have survived in larger numbers than those of other social groups. The fashionable circles where this type of behaviour was tolerated by husbands and wives may have been small, as it appears that most Yorkshire aristocrats within this sample favoured the domestic marriage during this period. The activities of the fashionable few have shaped the perception of elite marriages of both contemporary commentators and modern historians; the different experiences of marriage among the elite studied here suggest that the aristocracy should not be perceived as monolithic, but that a wide variety of emotions and beliefs shaped their activities. The language of the period shaped and encouraged marital felicity; sentiment, romance and domesticity were all part of the aristocratic cultural world and would have promoted the ideal of a loving marriage. Although affection and rank were important ideas in previous centuries, the eighteenth century saw the sustained secular celebration of domesticity and marriage, encouraged by the development of the marriage market at the London season and at other resorts.<sup>6</sup> Outhwaite has stressed the difficulty of using the term 'love' within historical studies, as, without strict definition, it can be more of a handicap than a help.<sup>7</sup> However, the term was used frequently by the elite of eighteenth-century Yorkshire to describe their own emotion, and a pragmatic 'love' was considered the ideal basis for marriage by commentators such as Samuel Richardson.<sup>8</sup> Love was seen to encourage each partner to accept their complementary roles within the marriage, and to serve as a guard against husbandly authority turning to tyranny.<sup>9</sup>

This chapter explores how the apparently conflicting concerns of dynastic enhancement and marital happiness were reconciled within the aristocratic family. The

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<sup>5</sup> O. Hufton, *The Prospect Before Her. A History of Women in Western Europe*, Volume 1 (London, 1995), p. 145.

<sup>6</sup> A. Vickery, *The Gentleman's Daughter. Women's Lives in Georgian England* (London, 1998), p. 285.

<sup>7</sup> R. B. Outhwaite, 'Introduction: problems and perspectives in the history of marriage', in *Marriage and Society: Studies in the Social History of Marriage*, ed. R. B. Outhwaite (London, 1981), pp. 15-16.

<sup>8</sup> Vickery, *The Gentleman's Daughter*, p. 86.

<sup>9</sup> Tague, 'Love, honour and obedience', pp. 85, 105.

nature of courting is examined in order to consider the ways that the social structures of the period allowed the needs of both the individual and their family to be met in the choice of a spouse. The importance of display within the courting and betrothal process is discussed, and the public functions of marriage considered. The chapter then moves on to consider the nature of elite marriage and to explore the role of affection. By focusing on the emotional aspects of wedlock, the importance of 'love' between aristocratic spouses is highlighted. Numerous historians have identified this period as one of change in the nature of spousal relationships. A triumvirate of works published between 1976 and 1978 by Lawrence Stone, Randolph Trumbach and Edward Shorter all argued that the growth of domesticity made a crucial impact on the degree of affection in marital relationships, although they differed regarding the timing of the change.<sup>10</sup> While I agree that the role of domesticity in marriage was crucial in encouraging loving relationships, this is not to say that marriages in previous periods were not 'domestic' nor affectionate; historians have identified the importance of fondness in marriage in earlier periods.<sup>11</sup> Instead, the marriages from this period show surprising continuity in the degree of affection, and only subtle changes in use of language can be identified.<sup>12</sup> Of course, not all elite marriages were happy, and what happened when they failed is studied through a survey of marriages that lacked tenderness and those that resulted in formal separations. In many cases, though, marriage was a positive experience for both husband and wife, which could fulfil the affectionate needs of the individual while providing the potential for future success for the legacy of the aristocratic family.

### Courting

The period of courting was a crucial time when the possibly conflicting concerns of affection and pedigree had to be managed. The ideal was for a person to find someone who would fulfil both their dynastic and emotional desires. The role of parents and the wider

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<sup>10</sup> E. Shorter, *The Making of the Modern Family* (London, 1976); L. Stone, *The Family, Sex and Marriage In England 1500-1800* (London, 1977); Trumbach, *The Rise of the Egalitarian Family*.

<sup>11</sup> For example A. Laurence, *Women in England 1500-1760. A Social History* (London, 1994), pp. 56-60; J. R. Gillis, *For Better, For Worse. British Marriages, 1600 to the Present* (Oxford, 1985), pp. 11-12.

<sup>12</sup> J. S. Lewis, *In the Family Way. Childbearing in the British Aristocracy 1760-1860* (New Brunswick, N.J., 1986), p. 56.

family in finding a spouse for a young person was of central importance; their ideals and hopes shaped the choice of a partner in many different ways. If a child married well, the parents and the wider dynasty could benefit significantly; marriage allowed networks to be formed and consolidated, enhancing political connections and prestige. The focus of these connections changed during this period, and aristocratic families moved away from building up regional support and protection in unsteady times at the end of the Civil War, and towards central power at Westminster.<sup>13</sup> Political parties rather than religious affiliations began to be more important, and the circle of support at the high levels of Westminster was increasingly shaped by familial networks. By the early nineteenth century, for example, “Grand Whiggery” had fully matured, shaped by the intermarriage of the Carlisle, Devonshire, Granville and other families.<sup>14</sup>

These concerns meant that parents would play an active role in suggesting partners. Even before a child was in his/her late teens, suitable future spouses may have been discussed, and even chosen. In the late seventeenth century, Anne Capel and Charles Carlisle were married at a young age. As she was only thirteen years old, due to the ‘greenness of their years’ they did not cohabit at first.<sup>15</sup> Instead, she stayed with her parents while he travelled around Europe until they were considered old enough to live together. Within this study, this is the only example of a ‘forced’ marriage, prearranged without much care for either party, and it is of note that the couple separated in later life. The arranged marriage can be seen as reflecting older ideas, which were on the wane by the eighteenth century, and affection became increasingly important. However, parents did still take an active role in identifying suitable spouses, especially ideal husbands. In 1798, fifteen-year-old Georgiana Carlisle was aware that her mother, the Duchess of Devonshire had identified the Duke of Bedford as a suitable son-in-law and Georgiana’s younger sister teasingly wrote: ‘my dear sister, when you are D-s of B-d, will you invite me to W-n?’<sup>16</sup> Because it was expected that aristocrats would marry other aristocrats, parents would be aware of

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<sup>13</sup> R. Houlbrooke, *The English Family 1450-1700* (London, 1984), pp. 65-6.

<sup>14</sup> P. Mandler, *Aristocratic Government in the Age of Reform: Whigs and Liberals, 1830-1852* (Oxford, 1990), pp. 16, 45-6.

<sup>15</sup> C. Saumarez Smith, *The Building of Castle Howard* (London, 1990), pp. 1-2.

<sup>16</sup> H. Cavendish, *Hary-O. The Letters of Lady Harriet Cavendish, 1796-1809*, ed. Sir G. Leveson Gower and I. Palmer (London, 1940), p. 4; A. Foreman, *Georgiana, Duchess of Devonshire* (London, 1998), pp. 333, 353-4.

the range of possible mates for their children even when they were very young. The offspring that accompanied their parents to country-house visits would be appraised, and their potential as a future in-law assessed. Parents were expected to be aware of suitable suitors, and even in the nineteenth century, they played a lead role in finding husbands for their daughters. This role was often seen as something of a chore. Sydney Smith, for example, wrote to Lady Grey in the early nineteenth century: 'why should not all your sons marry all Morpeth's daughters and all your daughters his sons? It would save a great deal of trouble'.<sup>17</sup> Sometimes, siblings did intermarry with other siblings, as was the case in the early eighteenth century when two Scarborough sisters married two of the Ingram brothers.<sup>18</sup> The two couples lived together in Temple Newsam and were later joined by a third Scarborough sister, the widowed Henrietta. However, this was not ideal for the ambitious family, as it reduced the number of in-laws and therefore networking options, and meant that future success was dependent on smaller number of people.

Networking, wealth and political power were not only the concerns of parents, and it is inaccurate to assume that an individual did not have any input into choosing their spouse. While parents often had strong ideas regarding suitable in-laws, children frequently had a certain degree of freedom regarding their future spouses and younger sons were normally able to choose very much as they pleased. However, children were also aware of the benefits of marrying for money, and daughters, in particular, appear to have acknowledged the problems they faced in marrying a poorer husband. They had considerably more to lose than their brothers by marrying someone of a lower social status, as they assumed the rank and the wealth of the husband.<sup>19</sup> This may have acted to cultivate the endogamy of elite marriages as, in purely practical terms, there was little to stimulate marriage outside the aristocratic circle.

Marriage was not a purely practical and emotionless transaction and I would strongly disagree with Vickery's claims that during the eighteenth century: 'the length of a man's

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<sup>17</sup> N. C. Smith (ed.), *The Letters of Sydney Smith* (Oxford, 1953), p. 395. One Morpeth child did marry a Grey when Elizabeth married Frances in 1840.

<sup>18</sup> Elizabeth Scarborough (c. 1700-1739) married Charles Ingram in 1726; her sister Anne married Henry in 1728.

<sup>19</sup> Trumbach, *Rise of the Egalitarian Family*, p. 71; Lewis, *In the Family Way*, p. 18.

rent-roll remained the ultimate aphrodisiac'.<sup>20</sup> It was considered important to see evidence of affection between a couple before they became engaged, and parents were often keen to see their children happy. In 1780 Harriet Spencer believed that her proposed marriage to Lord Bessborough would be at least 'reasonably happy'; she wished she knew him a little better, but she knew that she would please her parents by accepting his proposal.<sup>21</sup> The advice literature of the period encouraged this rather pragmatic attitude towards a marriage and argued that a relationship needed to be based upon stable emotions, such as friendship, rather than passion.<sup>22</sup> It was this realistic attitude towards affection that meant that there were opportunities to find relationships to satisfy a woman's emotional and practical concerns.

The apparent dichotomy between the arranged and the romantic marriage is misleading, as they were both idealized types. Most marriages fell between the two, and the practical and the affective functions of the partnership would have been considered by both the parents and the children.<sup>23</sup> Both appear to have taken a practical approach to marriage, hoping for love and money, but settling for respect and comfort. The spirit of compromise shaped many engagements, even among those couples who later developed very affectionate marriages. During 1821 George Agar Ellis, later Lord Dover, had set out on a tour of the north of England, which he had planned to finish at Badminton, where he intended to propose to Lady Georgiana Somerset. However, during the journey he stayed at Castle Howard and: 'found a girl who saved him the trouble of going any further'.<sup>24</sup> He was quick in deciding that another Georgiana, the second daughter of the sixth Countess, (1804-1860) would be a suitable wife, and his proposal was formally accepted by her within five days of

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<sup>20</sup> Vickery, *The Gentleman's Daughter*, p. 82.

<sup>21</sup> Lewis, *In the Family Way*, p. 18.

<sup>22</sup> Gillis, *For Better, For Worse*, p. 136.

<sup>23</sup> Lewis, *In the Family Way*, pp. 19-20.

<sup>24</sup> M. Leconfield (ed.), *Three Howard Sisters. Selections From the Writings of Lady Caroline Lascelles, Lady Dover and Countess Gower, 1825 to 1833*, Completed by J. Gore (London, 1955), p. 12. It may be that he had changed his plans when he stayed with Harriet Granville at Trentham, aunt to the young Morpeth girls. Harriet wrote of her concern that Dover may have gone to 'try his chance' with the second Morpeth girl, Georgiana. V. Surtees (ed.), *A Second Self. The Letters of Harriet Granville 1810-45* (Salisbury, 1990), p. 161.

his arrival.<sup>25</sup> Despite the speed of the engagement, both appear to have displayed signs of affection. He noted in his diary that after she accepted him, he: 'passed the rest of the day in her society, in very great happiness - if the whole of life was made up of such bits as this, how heavenly it would be'.<sup>26</sup> Although they acted the role of the devoted couple, George's approach to the marriage was pragmatic, based on the appeal of the family connection. It was still important, though, to display signs of affection, even if the partnership was shaped by practical concerns. As one contemporary commentator noted of the match: 'There never was a less romantic attachment or more business like engagement, nor was there ever a more fortunate choice or happier union'.<sup>27</sup> The couple married in March 1823, and appear to have a happy marriage until George's premature death in 1833.

This mixture of pragmatism and affection shaped the way that many marriages were made during the long eighteenth century, especially through the formal courting practices. Because of the structures in which courting took place, both dynastic and domestic concerns could shape the choice of a spouse. For girls, the courting circuit was much more tightly managed than it was for their brothers who were granted greater personal freedom and the opportunity to meet girls at a range of public locations. For the daughters of the elite, the traditional way of meeting a future husband was at a dance in London, most especially their coming out ball. Coming out marked the commencement of a girl's journey into adulthood, highlighted her marriageability, and so acted as the start of her search for a spouse.<sup>28</sup> The balls normally followed the presentation to Court of the debutante, a crucial moment for a young girl, as it was the first moment when she was on 'display'. Her success in performing the rituals of the Season would determine whether she had the skills to be an influential member of the higher echelons of Court society. A series of balls were often held to mark the introduction to the public world of the daughters of the high aristocracy. The parties for Georgiana Carlisle, daughter of the fifth Duke and Duchess of Devonshire, were large

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<sup>25</sup> Surtees, *A Second Self*, p. 162.

<sup>26</sup> Northamptonshire Record Office, White MSS, Accession 1945/16, Diaries of Lord Dover, George Agar Ellis, Volume 21, 14 December 1821.

<sup>27</sup> Grenville, quoted in Surtees, *A Second Self*, p. 295.

<sup>28</sup> Lewis, *In the Family Way*, p. 20.



and lavish affairs; a grand supper ball held in June 1800, for example, cost up to £1,000.<sup>29</sup> These parties were successful for Georgiana; she had only one season as an eligible maiden, and began the following season as the wife of the next Earl of Carlisle, pregnant with their heir. She had been able to perform the role of the young aristocratic lady with success, and by marrying into another Whig family, was able to continue to promote the aims of her natal family, as well as enhancing her new family's status too.

Family parties were an easy way to control potential suitors as by only inviting those who would make suitable partners, problems and conflicts could be avoided. Those who were particularly favoured could be advantageously seated and privately encouraged so that the parents could engineer a relationship without the daughter being fully aware of their involvement. However, not all young women had balls held in their honour, and even those that did may not have found a suitable partner at them. These young women faced a London-based life full of balls, assemblies and parties that would place them in the public arena and allow potential spouses to be found. The capital was established as the centre of the 'marriage market' by the end of the seventeenth century, as it represented an opportunity for families to consolidate national interests through marriage. Increasingly, people married into families whose rural seats were often a great distance from the country house in which they had grown up, and so a central marriage market was important.<sup>30</sup> By the start of the eighteenth century, there was a growing sense that love could be found only in London; Mary Wortley Montagu joked about the courtship between John Vanbrugh and Henrietta Yarbrough, noting: 'I can't forbear entertaining you with our York Lovers (strange monsters you think, Love being as much forc'd up here as melons)'.<sup>31</sup> The growing reputation of the London season meant it was considered as the only way of finding a partner; it began to attract larger numbers, thus increasing the degree of choice.

The size of the London market, though, meant that it had to be managed and

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<sup>29</sup> Foreman, *Georgiana*, p. 334; V. Murray, *Castle Howard: the Life and Times of A Stately Home* (York, 1994), p. 132.

<sup>30</sup> The families into which the Yorkshire elite women married into had their seats in locations as distant as the Scilly Isles, Dunrobin in Sutherland, and Shannon, Ireland. This had been a feature of the London market for many centuries: V. Brodsky Elliot, 'Single women in the London marriage market: age, status and mobility, 1598-1619', in *Marriage and Society: Studies in the Social History of Marriage*, ed. R. B. Outhwaite (London, 1981), pp. 81-100; S. E. Whyman, *Sociability and Power in Later-Stuart England. The Cultural Worlds of the Verneys, 1660-1720* (Oxford, 1999), pp. 124-5.

<sup>31</sup> Quoted in C. R. Saumarez Smith, 'Charles Howard, third Earl of Carlisle, and the architecture of Castle Howard', PhD Thesis, University of London, Warburg Institute, 1987, p. 187

controlled. Most unmarried young women had chaperones with them, and admission to the events was regulated through high costs and invitations. It could be an expensive time for the parents of young women. Mrs Chaloner, mother of Anne Harewood and Elizabeth Hale, doubled her daughters' allowances during 1760-61, the years that they were looking for eligible husbands, so that they could enjoy the London season.<sup>32</sup> Clubs such as Almack's allowed only the 'socially fit' to become members and buy tickets for their balls and suppers. The 'Lady Patronesses' of Almack's determined who was allowed to join, enforcing a strict social hierarchy in allowing only the most fashionable to enter their aristocratic world.<sup>33</sup> The architectural space of the surroundings could also allow the actions of the dancers to be monitored. A number of assembly rooms had upper galleries that could be used to examine the events on the dance floor, as was the case at Lord Burlington's York Assembly Rooms.<sup>34</sup> This regulation of location and access did not necessarily mean that young people were forced into choosing specific partners; it actually opened up their freedom. Within the controlled space they were normally able to choose a suitable spouse, and decide from a select list. Through careful management of people and place the domestic ideals of affection as the basis of a marriage could be fulfilled without damaging a family's dynastic ambitions.

The courting rituals were often about identifying a partner; gaining their long-term commitment was a difficult second stage. Parents were often closely involved in this stage of the relationship, and their encouragement, or lack of it, would have a significant impact on its success. If an ideal match appeared, they would encourage their child, and could be disheartened by any signs of failure. In 1775 Isabella Ingram-Shepherd and her mother were keen to ensure that her suitor, Francis Hertford, would retain an interest in her following his journey abroad.<sup>35</sup> They were both anxious to maintain correspondence with Hertford and so were perplexed when he complained of not receiving letters from them, due to a mistake

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<sup>32</sup> M. Pointon, *Strategies for Showing. Women, Possession and Representation in English Visual Culture 1650-1800* (Oxford, 1997), p. 181.

<sup>33</sup> J. Rendell, 'Almack's Assembly Rooms - a site of sexual pleasure', *Journal of Architectural Education* 55 (2002), p. 142.

<sup>34</sup> Due to Burlington's desire for the Assembly rooms to be architecturally balanced, the view from the upper gallery was not very good, and Sarah Marlborough complained that one could only see the heads of the dancers. G. Scott Thomson (ed.), *Letters of a Grandmother 1732-35. Being the Correspondence of Sarah, Duchess of Marlborough with her granddaughter Diana, Duchess of Bedford* (London, 1943), p. 41.

<sup>35</sup> British Library MSS, Hertford Papers, Egerton MSS 3260, f. 56, Isabella Anne Ingram, Temple Newsam, to Francis Seymour Conway, 6 November 1775.

with the post. Isabella was pleased at the affection reflected in his concern, noting: 'your anxiety is too flattering not to merit every acknowledgement, especially when directed to an object so little deserving of it.'<sup>36</sup> Her mother, though, was concerned about Hertford's loyalty to her daughter due to his reputation for infidelity, and so she entered into direct correspondence with him in order to confirm that he still intended to marry Isabella.<sup>37</sup> Both mother and daughter were willing to work at the relationship in order to secure its success; the couple married the following year.

Young men recognized that they need to woo both the potential bride and her parents. In 1685 Arthur Ingram had real trouble convincing Isabella Machell and her parents that he was of a good character in spite his roguish image.<sup>38</sup> He enlisted the support of servants to vouch for his integrity and wrote directly to Isabella to beg her to consider him as a future husband:

Ah madam could my condition but equal him [his brother, the second Viscount Irwin] in one respect, in how many more should I exceed him and soon satisfy you father it was not for show I courted but your ladyship, at whose feet I would lay all my fortune which I now do, but alas too poor an estate for your ladyship to value. If pity does not make you take notice of the companion of my fortune which is a heart so truly yours that it is not in the power of chance or time to alter or change.<sup>39</sup>

He was aware that it was his financial position that limited his prospects in persuading Isabella's ambitious father to allow the marriage and so he needed to persuade both of them that love would bring Isabella more happiness than financial security. His persistence was rewarded and they married that year. By 1688 he also gained a more favourable 'condition' when he inherited Temple Newsam and the title Viscount Irwin following his brother's unexpected death.

Other relationships failed to succeed; parental objections, a lack of attraction, or the

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<sup>36</sup> British Library MSS, Hertford Papers, Egerton MSS 3260, f. 57, Isabella Anne Ingram, Temple Newsam, to Francis Seymour Conway, 8 November 1775.

<sup>37</sup> William Combe married Hertford's discarded mistress for payment only four days before Hertford married Isabella. A. F. Hughes and K. Knight, *Hills. Horsham's Lost Stately Home and Garden* (Horsham, 1999), p. 35.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 10.

<sup>39</sup> Spelling standardized; WYAS, Leeds, Pawson MSS, Ac 1038, Volume 6 (September 1642-April 1691), Arthur Ingram to Miss Isabella Machell, Hills, 25 July [1685?].

absence of shared ideals could cause a partnership to falter. Anne Fairfax rejected William Constable in 1760 because of his lack of religious faith; she was a staunch Catholic, and although the Constables were a papist family, William was not a believer.<sup>40</sup> Rejections could be harsh in the case of unrequited love. Ralph Sneyd, a Tory gentleman was heartbroken by his rejection in 1819 by Louisa Thynne, daughter of the Marquess of Bath, who later married the second Earl of Harewood. He wrote to his friend, George Agar Ellis, later Lord Dover:

To be deep in love, for a man who cannot marry, would be only to be deep in the trough of despondency ... marry her, my dear Ellis - I give you my dispensation nay I exhort you - for such a pearl should not be cast among swine, and I protest to you I think her character and intellect too superior that besides yourself I do not know two marriageable men who I should not grudge her.<sup>41</sup>

Sneyd's plea highlights how he recognized that a woman like Louisa must have a husband, and so he desired that she would find someone worthy of her. He was aware that he did not have the finances to become a married man, as he could barely support himself as a gentleman, never mind a wife and children. When Louisa did marry in 1823, he wrote a letter to her mother, probably an acceptance of 'defeat'. Lady Bath noted that it reflected the: 'perfections and amiability of your character and feelings'.<sup>42</sup> In the age of sensibility, Sneyd portrayed himself as the wounded lover, acting with reason in the understanding that he was an unsuitable spouse while able to acknowledge his beloved's marriage while remaining truly devoted to her. Sneyd's chivalric actions meant that his love for Louisa would not be considered as a threat to her virtue or his dignity, but motivated by modest sensibility.

Some determined suitors would marry without the goodwill of the parents. While family were often involved in the identifying of potential spouses, the systems of control were not infallible, and 'inappropriate' matches could be forged. Although younger sons just needed to marry happily, the importance of daughters forming networks for the family's

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<sup>40</sup> ERYARS, DDCC/145/7, Letters to William Constable, Lord Fairfax to William Constable, 'Monday Evening', n.d.; ERYARS, DDCC/144/9, Bound Letters, William Constable, Burton Constable, to Mrs Elizabeth Constable, Holles Street, nr. Hanover Square, London, 29 June 1760.

<sup>41</sup> He did not fulfil his friend's request, and married Georgiana Howard instead. Keele University Library, Sneyd MSS, SC9/30, Ralph Sneyd to George Agar Ellis, 21 January 1819.

<sup>42</sup> Keele University Library, Sneyd MSS, SC3/164, Isabella, Lady Bath to Ralph Sneyd, 27 June 1823.

benefit meant that parents could be angered if the daughters married unsuitably. Charles Carlisle had two daughters who married against his wishes in the early eighteenth century; as Sarah Marlborough noted 'none of his children are easy', and they caused their devoted father much trouble.<sup>43</sup> His fifth child, Elizabeth, was eighteen when she married Nicholas Lechmere in 1719. When her father told Elizabeth that he disapproved of the match, she reminded him that he had given her 'liberty to doe [sic] as I pleased, and if my Grandmother would act in it, you should not be disoblged'.<sup>44</sup> She worked closely with her grandmother to gain her acceptance, and eventually the couple married. Her father eventually consented to the marriage, as she was granted a portion of £6,000 and a yearly £800 for her jointure.<sup>45</sup> Charles, who had just built Castle Howard, must have been disappointed that his daughters did not marry more prestigious partners. His second daughter, Anne, had married Rich Irwin in 1718, and while he was a suitable husband, the Irwins offered little added prestige. Anne was widowed when still young, and her choice of second husband in 1737 also caused Charles consternation. He felt that the groom, Colonel Douglas, was not able to support Anne financially and refused to give the couple his approval.<sup>46</sup> Anne was keen to gain her family's blessing, though. She had been very close to Charles, and wrote that her: 'fear of disoblging you for whom I have the highest regard had kept me this long from concluding an affair in which both my honour and inclination are nearly concerned'.<sup>47</sup> She used her connections in order to try and persuade her father, asking the Prince of Wales to write to Charles, confirming his support of the marriage. She was keen to stress how her marriage to Colonel Douglas was important to her future happiness, and reminded Charles of the embarrassment that would be caused if she did not marry, as she was: 'too far engag'd to retreat with honour'.<sup>48</sup> They did marry without his blessing, although he appears to have

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<sup>43</sup> Thomson, *Letters of a Grandmother*, p. 58.

<sup>44</sup> Carlisle MSS, J8/1/308, Elizabeth Howard to the third Earl of Carlisle, n.d.

<sup>45</sup> It is not clear why her grandmother was given such an important say in this event, but it may be that she acted in a maternal role after Charles' wife left him. Carlisle MSS, A5/52, Articles on the marriage of the Rt. Hon. Nicholas Lechmere Esq., with the Rt. Hon. Elizabeth Howard, 11 April 1719.

<sup>46</sup> Carlisle MSS, J8/1/163, Mary Howard to the third Earl of Carlisle, 4 June 1737.

<sup>47</sup> Carlisle MSS, J8/1/281, Anne Irwin to the third Earl of Carlisle, 30 April [1737]; Carlisle MSS, J8/1/282, Anne Irwin to the third Earl of Carlisle, 12 May [1737].

<sup>48</sup> Carlisle MSS, J8/1/284, Anne Irwin, London, to the third Earl of Carlisle, 7 June [1737].

eventually forgiven Anne, as the correspondence between them remained friendly after this event. That he was so concerned about the match to risk losing the affection of his favourite daughter reflected how strongly he felt against the marriage, and his expectation that children would listen to his concerns.

It is notable that two of these cases are from the same family, and may reflect a continuation of familial ideas; Charles and Anne Carlisle had an arranged marriage, and so he may have expected the same degree of duty from his children. Although planned marriages became increasingly uncommon, there is evidence throughout this period of parents being disappointed by their children's choice of a spouse. In the 1820 the Duke and Duchess of Rutland asked their daughter, Elizabeth, and her sweetheart, Andrew Drummond, to wait two years before they married to see if their affection would last. The Duchess had high hopes regarding her children's marriages, but Drummond was the son of a banker.<sup>49</sup> When the couple's romance had passed the test of time they did marry in 1822, but only after Andrew's father provided the couple with an annual £2,500 income. Later, in the mid-nineteenth century Harriet Sutherland wrote that she was 'so agitated that I can hardly fix my thoughts and fingers to write' when her daughter became engaged to someone she considered to be unsuitable.<sup>50</sup> Parents sometimes disinherited their children if they married unsuitably, as was the case with Isabella Irwin's sister at the end of the seventeenth century; failing to adhere to the wishes of a parent could cause strong emotions.<sup>51</sup> However, most parents did not reject suitors because of their own ambitions, but because of their affection for their children. Charles Carlisle, for example, was concerned that his daughter Anne would be impoverished by her second marriage, and therefore could not support it. In the case of a disagreement, if the marriage did go ahead, often solutions would be sought to try and allow the partnership to work, and the relationship between parent and child resolved.

The importance of parental affection can be seen through the arrangements made in the marriage settlement. It was through the negotiations for the settlement that parents

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<sup>49</sup> Lewis, *In the Family Way*, p. 29. When the couple's romance had passed the test of time they did marry in 1822, but only after Andrew's father provided the couple with an annual £2,500 income.

<sup>50</sup> Keele University Library, Sneyd MSS, SC13/139, Harriet Sutherland, Stafford House, to Ralph Sneyd, n.d. (1843?).

<sup>51</sup> WYAS, Leeds, Pawson MSS, Ac 1038, Volume 7 (April 1691-December 1704), Nicholas Best to John Roads, Temple Newsam, 16 January 1692.

could ensure that their children would be well provided for, and that any concerns that they had regarding financial security could be resolved. The settlement detailed the provision for the couple promised by their parents, in the hope that they could start married life together financially secure. This would include the money offered by the father of the bride, and the size and nature of the widow's jointure or dowry. The marriage settlement has often been used as evidence for the mercenary nature of elite marriages in this period and as betrothals could fail due to arguments over financial details, it has been argued that affection played a lesser role to money in shaping engagements.<sup>52</sup> However, the marriage settlement should be viewed as an opportunity for parents to give their children the best start to their relationship, while still managing to safeguarding the inheritance; the concerns of dynastic domesticity could be met in the settlement.

As the combination of attraction, common social background and financial security were seen as the basis of a happy and emotionally secure marriage, the economic details of the settlement were considered important.<sup>53</sup> The bride was expected to bring money to the marriage, and her cash portion was normally so large that it was paid in instalments.<sup>54</sup> This money was provided by her family to ensure financial security for the couple. This was matched by an allowance from the groom's father to give them an income and a portion of the estate. When the groom was the eldest son, a new document of strict settlement would be signed, so that the estate was passed on to the unborn eldest son of the new couple. Like his father before him, the groom would be a life tenant of the estate once his father had died in order to prevent the sale of the land and to ensure inheritance and continuation of the dynasty.<sup>55</sup> The document also specified an allowance for the bride, normally taking the form of 'pin money'. It would set out the money that the wife would receive if she was widowed, normally her 'jointure', Some documents discussed the provision of a house for

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<sup>52</sup> For example Trumbach, *Rise of the Egalitarian Family*, p. 75.

<sup>53</sup> Lewis, *In the Family Way*, p. 35.

<sup>54</sup> E. M. Craik, 'Introduction', in *Marriage and Property. Women and Marital Customs in History*, ed. E. M. Craik (Aberdeen, 1984), p. 2; L. Stone, 'Marriage among the English nobility in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries', *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 3 (1961), p. 187.

<sup>55</sup> L. Bonfield, 'Marriage settlements, 1660-1740: the adoption of the strict settlement in Kent and Northamptonshire', in *Marriage and Society: Studies in the Social History of Marriage*, ed. R. B. Outhwaite (London, 1981), p. 103.

the couple too.<sup>56</sup> Not all young couples lived in houses of their own, as some moved in with the groom's family after the marriage if it was thought that they were too young to set up their own house; Georgiana Carlisle and her daughter Caroline Lascelles both lived with their in-laws in the main family seats in the early nineteenth century.

Marriage settlements were concerned with ensuring the future financial security of both the couple and the estate, and can be considered as a positive feature of elite marriages. Settlements could bring distinct benefits for the bride; by agreeing before the marriage the money due to her during her marriage and her widowhood, she was able to be fully aware of her future circumstances. Of course, husbands could refuse to pay pin money or other amounts. However, although she was legally a *femme covert*, as the settlement was made between her father, her spouse and her father-in-law, her male representatives would be able to take action on her behalf. If a father took his daughter's future happiness seriously, he was in a position to ensure her economic felicity in her married life and widowhood.<sup>57</sup>

Trumbach estimates that women who married peers normally brought dowries of £25,000, although this is considerably larger than the amounts allocated to most women in this group.<sup>58</sup> Caroline Lascelles and Georgiana Dover had only £3,000 each, a small amount for the children of a future Earl.<sup>59</sup> In the early nineteenth century the third Earl and Countess of Harewood had considerable wealth, but they only allocated £10,000 for each of their children, with the exception the heir. This money could be increased when necessary. When there was concern that a future son-in-law had only a limited income, the bride's father may have added to the settlement. On the marriage of his daughter Frances Hope in 1835, Henry Harewood, for example, settled £30,000 on her new husband's family.<sup>60</sup> Most settlements also included details of the money to be available to the new couple's future children. It was normal to specify an amount to be shared among those

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<sup>56</sup> Stone, 'Marriage among the English nobility', p. 187.

<sup>57</sup> For a discussion of the role of the marriage settlement and the widow see chapter seven.

<sup>58</sup> Trumbach, *Rise of the Egalitarian Family*, p. 81.

<sup>59</sup> WYAS, Leeds, Harewood Title Deeds, 728, Appointment of the sum of £3000 for George Viscount Morpeth to Hon. Caroline Howard, 1 August 1823.

<sup>60</sup> WYAS, Leeds, Harewood House Accounts, 117, Draft copy of the will of Edward Earl of Harewood, 1819; WYAS, Leeds, Harewood Title Deeds, 739, Settlement on the Marriage of John Thomas Hope Esq. with the Hon. Lady Frances Anne Lascelles, 28 February, 1835.



children who were not heirs; in 1768 John and Frances Radcliffe, daughter of the fourth Earl of Carlisle, arranged for a total of £10,000 to be shared among all their children if they had at least three children.<sup>61</sup> As details of portions to be provided to the daughters and young sons were decided before they were born, the children may have had more freedom in their choice of a spouse, as the risks of losing the portion were reduced.<sup>62</sup> If properly drafted, the settlement provided financial security to the couple, to the bride as a widow, and to their children. The dynastic concerns of the elite could be met, while providing an income to encourage a happy domestic family life.

Once the legal niceties of the settlement were concluded, an engagement would be announced, a date for the wedding set, and a honeymoon planned.<sup>63</sup> This would be the start of the public life of the couple, as they would begin to work with one another to demonstrate the start of a new relationship and to claim their joint position within elite society. They would receive congratulatory letters from friends and relatives, many of whom wanted to form a relationship with the new couple. Elizabeth Rutland, who had been trying to cement links with the influential Devonshire family for a number of years, was delighted when her elder brother married the young Georgiana Cavendish in 1801. She wrote to congratulate them, noting how: 'happy the thoughts of having so amicable a sister made me; allow me, my dear Georgiana, to ask for your friendship. I flatter myself when we are better acquainted, we shall be very good friends'.<sup>64</sup> The servants would often send their congratulations too; the Steward at Harewood House sent his best wishes to Edwin Lascelles following his engagement to Jane Fleming, adding that he had heard that she had a very good character.<sup>65</sup> It was important to be seen to welcome the new member of the family, in order to establish a relationship that could be used in order to further one's social

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<sup>61</sup> HRO, D/ER/F185, Copy of Settlement made in the marriage to John Radcliffe Esq. with the Hon. Lady Frances Howard, 13 April 1768, f. 8.

<sup>62</sup> Stone, 'Marriage among the English nobility', p. 184.

<sup>63</sup> On his engagement, George Dover was very dismissive of the congratulatory letters he received, describing them as 'all stupid flattery except Lady Granville'. Northamptonshire Record Office, White MSS, Accession 1945/16, Diaries of Lord Dover, George Agar Ellis, Volume 21, 24 December 1821.

<sup>64</sup> Carlisle MSS, J18/48/6, Duchess of Rutland, Belvoir Castle, to Georgiana Morpeth, 18 January [1801].

<sup>65</sup> WYAS, Leeds, Harewood Archives, Steward's letter book, p. 233, Samuel Poppleton to Edwin Lascelles, n.d.

position.

Marriage was a significant rite of passage, and a woman's social status was significantly altered. Being a wife was considered by many as the ultimate goal for a woman, and so her marriage would be celebrated as movement to a new stage. Marriage gave woman a 'job', and using the social studies idea of the 'incorporated wife', it can be argued that she gained a number of the duties of her new husband, as well as his identity.<sup>66</sup> She moved away from the authority of her father, and became an adult; this new role was often celebrated in portraiture, creating a permanent record of her passage to maturity.<sup>67</sup> Elite wives, though, were also aristocrats within their own right, and while the status of their husband did have a major impact on their position within society, their own activities, strengths and networks enabled them to act as independent elites too. Marriage was not about losing their individual identity, but about gaining a second one.

The marriage ceremony was also an important time of display, as the wedding could be a lavish affair, celebrating the beginning of the next stage of the dynastic legacy of both families. The father of the bride was normally responsible for paying for the wedding, and providing the bride with her trousseau. It was the latter that was often the most expensive; Georgiana Carlisle's bill for the clothes and materials alone, including silk, muslin and ruffs, came to £3368 9s. 6d. in 1801.<sup>68</sup> Jewels were also normally given at the wedding; some of Lord Dover's family diamonds were set and arranged in 1822 for his new wife, and Georgiana Carlisle received a pearl necklace that was made from a bracelet owned by Marie Antoinette as a wedding present from her mother.<sup>69</sup> These gifts symbolized the sharing of inheritance, and confirmed the woman's position within a dynastic heritage. Although a great deal of money could be spent in preparing the bride, wedding celebrations were not

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<sup>66</sup> For a discussion of the notion of the incorporated wife see: H. Callan, 'Introduction', in *The Incorporated Wife*, ed. H. Callan and S. Ardener (London, 1984); K. D. Reynolds, *Aristocratic Women and Political Society in Victorian Britain* (Oxford, 1998), pp. 6-7.

<sup>67</sup> L. Davidoff, M. Doolittle, J. Fink, and K. Holden, *The Family Story. Blood, Contract and Intimacy 1830- 1960* (London, 1999), p. 61; Pointon, *Strategies for Showing*, p. 59.

<sup>68</sup> Devonshire MSS, Letters of the fifth Duke of Devonshire, 1592.1, Bill to his Grace Duke of Devonshire for Rt Hon. G. Cavendish's Trousseau from Messers Nun and Barber, Haberdashers to the Princess of Wales February - March 1801.

<sup>69</sup> Northamptonshire Record Office, White MSS, Accession 1945/16, Diaries of Lord Dover, George Agar Ellis, Volume 21, 21 January 1822; Carlisle MSS, A5/166, Probate of the will and codicil of the Rt Hon. Georgiana Dorothy Countess of Carlisle, 15 June 1859.

on the scale of modern marriages. In the majority of eighteenth-century weddings it was normal for only a few people to attend. Once the legal details were settled the couple often married swiftly. This meant that arrangements were left to the last minute, meaning that it was only practical to invite the close relatives of the bride and groom. When Harriet and Granville Leveson-Gower married in 1809, only her mother, stepmother and brother attended. They did not appear to consider postponing the wedding for a month so that Harriet's sister, Georgiana Carlisle, could be involved in the celebrations; she had given birth the day before the wedding.<sup>70</sup> In the Victorian period marriages did get more lavish, as the engagements got longer, and the time to prepare increased. The marriage of one of Harriet Sutherland's daughters was the social event of 1852, with one hundred and fifty guests, including Queen Victoria.<sup>71</sup>

Although the wedding itself may have been a quiet affair, the details of the ceremony would be widely reported, through newspapers periodicals, and letters.<sup>72</sup> Once married, the new couple needed to declare their married status publicly, and would be involved in a range of parties, visits, and celebrations.<sup>73</sup> It was expected that the bride would visit important relatives, friends and contacts in the weeks after their marriage; Georgiana Devonshire called on five hundred people in the three weeks after she married in 1774.<sup>74</sup> Family were keen to visit newly married relatives in order to assess their happiness. During his 1823 stay at Harewood, for example, George Dover was pleased to find that his sister-in-law, Caroline Lascelles, was: 'very happy in her husband and with her situation'.<sup>75</sup> Young brides would often write to their family to reassure them of their marital felicity. Harriet Sutherland told her uncle in the same year that marriage had made her and her sister 'very happy women', and that she was delighted with what she had seen during her Scotland tour, liking Dunrobin

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<sup>70</sup> PRO 30/29/17/5/6, Georgiana Morpeth to Harriet Cavendish, Christmas Day 1809.

<sup>71</sup> Lewis, *In the Family Way*, pp. 32-4.

<sup>72</sup> For example, wedding announcements appeared in the *Gentleman's Magazine* through this period.

<sup>73</sup> Gillis, *For Better, For Worse*, p. 138; Stone, *Family Sex and Marriage*, p. 335.

<sup>74</sup> Foreman, *Georgiana*, p. 23.

<sup>75</sup> Keele University Library, Sneyd MSS, SC9/64, George Agar Ellis to Ralph Sneyd, 10 October 1823.

in particular.<sup>76</sup>

It was important to show that one was happily married in order to prevent any doubts about the relationship, and to stress the conjugality that confirmed the marriage as official. One way that this was done was by having a honeymoon. In the 1718 the newly-married Rich and Anne Irwin took a lodging in Windsor, and he wrote to his brother Harry about their conjugal happiness: 'I had a lodging in the middle of a garden. Fuck'd immoderately in fresco and to some tune for the nightingale diverted us every night with their harmonious notes'.<sup>77</sup> He stressed their happy union, and ensured that there would be no doubt that he would be the father of any child. Couples sometimes started their marriage with a long trip abroad. Following their wedding in 1823 Louisa and Henry Harewood undertook a European tour, although they had to reconsider their plans to go to Northern Italy due to Henry's illness.<sup>78</sup> For others, the start of the honeymoon was a period of time together alone at their new home. George and Georgiana Dover spent their first few days of marriage alone together at his home in Roehampton. The day after their 1822 wedding he noted in his diary: 'Rainy day. Stayed at home all day and passed the whole day with Georgiana, who is the greatest of angels'.<sup>79</sup> They spent their time reading, riding, walking, and, after a few days alone, receiving visitors, and visiting their neighbours. They began their married life following the ideals of domestic happiness, and the neighbours and visitors would have been assured by their performance of marital felicity that theirs was a happy marriage.

### **The Affectionate Marriage**

In the same way that parents and children compromised in finding suitors who fulfilled both dynastic and romantic ideals, married couples also needed to manage their relationship so that the concerns of both the individual and the pedigree were met. Many young women were aware of the duties of elite marriage, including setting up costly establishments,

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<sup>76</sup> Devonshire MSS, Letters of the sixth Duke of Devonshire, 877, Harriet Gower to the sixth Duke of Devonshire, 22 December 1823.

<sup>77</sup> Quoted in Saumarez Smith, 'Charles Howard', p. 185.

<sup>78</sup> Keele University Library, Sneyd MSS, SC3/164, Isabella, Lady Bath to Ralph Sneyd, 27 June 1823; Keele University Library, Sneyd MSS, SC3/165, Isabella, Lady Bath, Longleat, to Ralph Sneyd, n.d.

<sup>79</sup> Northamptonshire Record Office, White MSS, Accession 1945/16, Diaries of Lord Dover, George Agar Ellis, Volume 21, 8 March 1822.

extending familial influence and assuming social and political obligations.<sup>80</sup> While this meant that they often took a pragmatic view of their relationship and were willing to have a partnership based on prudence and affection rather than love, there was a desire for women to be happy in their marriage. Georgiana Carlisle wrote to her sister, Harriet, on the day of her wedding wishing her the best of luck for the future, and hoping that she: 'will know as I do there is no happiness like that of possessing the affection of a beloved husband'.<sup>81</sup> Many of the marriages within this sample did show signs of being loving in nature, with companionship and cooperation at the heart of the partnership. Both men and women appear to have longed for a happy relationship, and the lucky couples did celebrate their affection. Below is an examination of how affection was expressed in the letters of Yorkshire aristocrats through this time period. The language that was used to describe the relationship is remarkably consistent, and illustrates that there is little evidence to show that elite marriages became more affectionate during this period; they were as caring in the seventeenth century as in the nineteenth century.

At the end of the seventeenth century, the letters between Arthur and Isabella Ingram reflected their affectionate relationship. Arthur disliked being separated from his wife, and when he was required to spend long periods in London in his role as an M.P., especially following Queen Mary's death in 1694, he wrote to her every other post. He lamented being parted: 'I long to be with my Dear penny and I hope it will not be long before I get leave if not I desire to take a house and then my Dearist Dear I hope will come to towne [sic]'.<sup>82</sup> Arthur's use of a pet name for his wife, Isabella, also illustrates that the devotion he claimed when courting her continued into their marriage, and he often finished his letters 'I am, my Dearest, thine for ever'.<sup>83</sup> Their son and his wife, Rich and Anne Irwin, were also very fond of one another, and willing to work together when they faced financial problems following heavy losses through the South Sea Bubble. In 1720 he was offered the position of Governor of Barbados, and she agreed to go with him, although she was discouraged by

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<sup>80</sup> K. Gleadle, *British Women in the Nineteenth Century* (Basingstoke, 2001), p. 80.

<sup>81</sup> PRO 30/29/17/5/6, Georgiana Morpeth to Harriet Cavendish, Christmas Day 1809.

<sup>82</sup> WYAS, Leeds, TN/C/7, Lord Arthur's Letters to his wife, Isabella, undated, c. 1694; WYAS, Leeds, TN/C/7/282, Arthur Irwin, to Isabella Irwin, 24 December 1696.

<sup>83</sup> Historical Manuscripts Commission, *Reports on Manuscripts in Various Collections*, Volume 8 (London, 1913), pp. 78-9. See above for a discussion of their courting.

her friends and her affection for her birth family:

Most of the women of my acquaintance are in great surprise that I should be willing to do what is both my duty and pleasure to go along with my Lord. It will certainly be a disagreeable change since the leaving of your Lordship and the rest of my friends will be a great concern, But I'm sure you will think it right to sacrifice every other consideration to follow a husband who has been in every action of his life perfectly kind to me. However, I will hope the best for some turn or other may happen to keep us with you.<sup>84</sup>

Her belief that being with Rich was both her 'duty and pleasure' reflects how she viewed the nature of elite marriage. She recognized that it was her role as an aristocratic wife to support her husband, although it meant being a great distance away from her family. 'Some turn of other' did happen to keep Anne in Britain, as Rich contracted small pox and died in 1721, before they could leave the country. Anne did not remarry for a number of years afterwards, but, as noted above, when she did remarry, it was with her father's disapproval. She clearly felt that marriage was the best way of finding felicity, and noted that her happiness depended on marrying Colonel Douglas.<sup>85</sup> She did not need to remarry; she had her own income, and explicitly stated that she did not want children, but the marriage was for her own personal needs, indicating how the partnerships could be based on the ideal of emotional happiness.<sup>86</sup>

The 1758 marriage between Frances Shepherd and Charles Ingram, ninth Viscount Irwin, was an ideal match for the Irwin family. Burdened by costly mortgages and the debts of a succession of Viscounts who died intestate, the dynasty needed a rich heiress. Frances, the illegitimate daughter of Samuel Shepherd, M.P., was independently wealthy, as her father had left his fortune to her, to be released on her marriage.<sup>87</sup> It is not clear how the couple met, but their relationship caused some concern to her trustees. It had been stated in her father's will that she was not to marry a peer, but it was clear that she had become quite determined to marry Charles. She continued to visit Temple Newsam, although she

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<sup>84</sup> Historical Manuscripts Commission, *Fifteenth Report, Appendix, Part 6: the Manuscripts of the Earl of Carlisle, formerly Preserved at Castle Howard*, ed. R. E. G. Kirk (London, 1897), p. 25; Carlisle MSS, J8/1/169, Anne Irwin to Charles Howard, third Earl of Carlisle, 17 November 1720.

<sup>85</sup> Carlisle MSS, J8/1/282, Anne Irwin to the third Earl of Carlisle, 12 May [1737].

<sup>86</sup> Carlisle MSS, J8/1/163, Mary Howard to the third Earl of Carlisle, 4 June 1737.

<sup>87</sup> Hughes and Knight, *Hills*, p. 31.

was told not to, and was welcomed there by Charles and his sisters.<sup>88</sup> A private bill had to be brought to Parliament, so she could marry Charles. It was argued that as his uncle, the present Viscount Irwin could still have fathered a son, Charles was not necessarily the heir elect. The legal difficulties at the start of their relationship meant that a long and detailed marriage settlement was produced that protected the interests of Frances' inheritance.<sup>89</sup>

These legal concerns did not appear to hinder the affectionate nature of the Irwins' marriage. Although no letters between Frances and her husband survive, it is clear in her correspondence with others, and relatives' descriptions, that they were a devoted couple. When Charles visited his sister after the marriage, she noted how he was: 'much pleased with his wife ... and both in his Conversation and Behaviour appears what his best friend would wish him'.<sup>90</sup> Frances was clearly very fond of him too, and depicted their relationship as a romantic ideal in letters to her friend, Susan Stewart.

I think Miss Lowther and lord Buckingham a very proper match as the world goes, where Fine Equipage and fine Cloathes [sic] are esteemed essentials in happiness, but I don't suppose they have those sentiments for each other that will give them very delicate sensations. You fine folks may despise us homely ones as you please, but think ... without the extremist envy on a party my husband and I had yesterday Evening by moonlight, we harried in pursuit of Nightingales and to our inexpressible happiness heard the tuneful lags of the little animal, the place we went through is full of violets and primroses ...'.<sup>91</sup>

Frances used the language of nature in order to elevate her relationship with her husband, and championed rural marital affection against the mores of polite London society. She argued that her relationship was not based on the fine show that shaped marriages such as the Buckinghams, but instead on more 'delicate' sensations. Frances was willing to demonstrate her sensibility, and how this was shaped by her relationship with her husband, in order to show that their love was true and real, unlike modern metropolitan affectation. Their rural romanticism brought some criticism from her elite London friends, particularly

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<sup>88</sup> WYAS, Leeds, Pawson MSS, Ac 1038, Volume 10 (January 1748-December 1776), John Ware to Miss Shepherd, 26 April 1756.

<sup>89</sup> WYAS, Leeds, TN/F/18/2, Marriage Settlement of Charles Irwin and Frances Shepherd.

<sup>90</sup> WYAS, Leeds, TN/C/23/33, Isabella Ingram, London, to Mrs Charles Ingram, 18 November [1758].

<sup>91</sup> PRO 30/29/4/2/2, Frances Shephard, Temple Newsam, to Susan Stewart, March 16, n.y.

as her role as a domestic wife and mother made her increasingly unhappy to travel to the capital.<sup>92</sup> However, others saw the virtues of her unfashionable romanticism. Her former guardian noted her devotion, writing that her 1759 letter to him:

has convinced me that you are not to be reckoned amongst Modern Wives but are in Love after more than 12 months of Marriage, for you sent me four Half Sheets of Paper which you called franks, but they were not licensed by Mr Ingram, so unwilling are you to part with any thing belonging to him.<sup>93</sup>

This image of the forgetful young woman, distracted by her affection for her husband and even reluctant to send her husband's franks, as she was attached to everything that belonged to him, portrays how adoring the relationship between husband and wife could be in this period.

The importance of simple unaffected love also shaped the way that the fifth Earl and Countess of Carlisle described their affection. Frederick Carlisle travelled to France a year after their 1770 marriage, and left the anxious Caroline at Castle Howard. He was keen to reassure his wife that he was both safe and thinking of her. He wrote:

My absence from you tells me how terrible it is to live without you, and every woman that I see how much more charming, modest and beautiful you are than a whole nation of these painted dolls. So you see a little travelling does one no harm.<sup>94</sup>

Like Frances, Frederick stressed the importance of 'nature' in affection, describing the simple charms of his wife as the basis of his devotion, preferring her modest beauty to the Parisian 'painted dolls'. He demonstrated his loyalty by comparing her against a 'whole nation' of women, and arguing that she was the most suitable wife. In his letters, Frederick was remarkably candid about his affection for his wife. He noted that: 'I love you to a degree that few, very few, can understand, and to own the truth, more that I myself had any ideas of'.<sup>95</sup> While they were apart, he continued to try and show his affection for her

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<sup>92</sup> See for example the unsigned letter that lamented Frances' loss of taste for public places; WYAS, Leeds, TN/C/23/21, Unsigned letter to Mrs Charles Ingram, 18 February 1760.

<sup>93</sup> WYAS, Leeds, TN/C/23/133, John Waple, Ripley, to Mrs Charles Ingram, 30 November 1759.

<sup>94</sup> Carlisle MSS, J15/1/2, Frederick Carlisle to Caroline Carlisle, Paris, [1771-3].

<sup>95</sup> Carlisle MSS, J15/1/6, Frederick Carlisle to Caroline Carlisle, Wednesday, n.d.



through romance, such as the inclusion of poetry.<sup>96</sup> He was aware of the sentimental language of the late eighteenth century, used this in his letters, and even encouraged her to read Sterne's *Sentimental Journey* (1768).

However, both Frederick and Caroline were aware of the practical elements of their relationship too, and did not rely on just romantic ideals. Frederick offered praise to his wife's domestic qualities, describing her as 'the best of mothers', and was reassured that his children would be safe in her care as 'with that copy before their eyes they must imitate her virtues'.<sup>97</sup> He held Caroline's more practical distinctions in high esteem, and it was her company that he missed, her domestic qualities he respected. She also appears to have admired him and his status, especially during his diplomatic mission to Revolutionary America.<sup>98</sup> She noted that she loved Castle Howard because it belonged to her 'cher mari', reflecting how his dynastic inheritance shaped the nature of their affection and her regard for her husband.<sup>99</sup> Their relationship was defined by the practical roles that they both needed to fulfil, as diplomat and mother. However, this pragmatism was tempered by a real affection, and by using the language of love within their letters, they were able to display their attachment to one another.

The Carlises' eldest son and heir, George, was a devoted husband and he and his wife, Georgiana, were a close and affectionate couple who fulfilled many of the ideals of a domestic lifestyle, as both partners and parents. They were married for nearly fifty years (1801-1848), and a great many letters between the couple survive, testaments to their affection.<sup>100</sup> Daily letters became an expected part of their routine when they were apart, and so it was a 'black day' when the post failed and no letter arrived.<sup>101</sup> They used informal

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<sup>96</sup> For example he quoted lines from Matthew Prior's love poem 'Henry and Emma'. Carlisle MSS, J15/1/2, Frederick fifth Earl of Carlisle to Caroline Carlisle, Paris, [1771-3]; M. Prior, *Henry & Emma. A poem. Upon the model of the nut-brown maid* (Manchester, 1793).

<sup>97</sup> Carlisle MSS, J15/1/5, Frederick fifth Earl of Carlisle to Caroline Carlisle, Portsmouth, n.d.

<sup>98</sup> When she heard that he may be delayed in his return from America, she wrote that 'it will be most certainly a very great mortification to me, and the only consolation I can have in that case will be that you gave some chance of making Peace with the Americans'. Carlisle MSS, J14/1/14, Caroline Carlisle, Trentham, to Frederick, fifth Earl of Carlisle at New York, 30 September [1778].

<sup>99</sup> PRO 30/29/4/2/66, Caroline Carlisle, Castle Howard to Lady Gower, 1770.

<sup>100</sup> Over five hundred letters still survive, with more correspondence alluded to in extant papers.

<sup>101</sup> See, for example, Carlisle MSS, J18/1 (28, Book 41), George Morpeth to Georgiana Morpeth, n.d.

forms of address; he always addressed her as 'dearest G', and she called him either 'dearest M' or 'beloved husband', reflecting the affection they had for one another.<sup>102</sup> They used their letters to express their feelings clearly. For example Georgiana noted that she loved her husband with 'the most devoted affection', and he often described how much he missed her when they were separated, calling it: 'quite odd and uncomfortable'.<sup>103</sup> They appear to have had an equal relationship, based on mutual respect and trust, shaped by their domestic role as parents. They saw each other as a mother and a father, and Georgiana's expressions of affection for her husband in the later years of their marriage were often based on her respect of his prowess as a father and patient husband.<sup>104</sup> She was grateful for George's affection, and tried to show her loyalty to her husband and the Carlisle name. However, she also considered herself to be an unworthy wife. Her poor mental health meant that she often needed reassurance and support from George, and that she was not always able to be as dutiful as she felt that she ought to be. He provided this support by encouraging her to get well, and to do whatever would make her feel fit.<sup>105</sup> She thought him the 'the kindest, the best, the most faithful of Husbands', and so was 'grieved' for him that her melancholia made her unwell.<sup>106</sup> That he remained true to her during her poor health reflects the affectionate nature of their relationship, and that their devotion to one another could face being tested.

These partnerships illustrate how important affection was in some elite marriages, and the willingness of couples to express their feeling in explicit terms. There are a great number of similarities in how this fondness was expressed, and all five couples appear to have been aware of the cultural debates regarding marriage, and used the language of the

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<sup>102</sup> For examples see: Carlisle MSS, J18/1 (9, Book 40), George Morpeth to Georgiana Morpeth, n.d.; Carlisle MSS, J18/2/1, Georgiana Morpeth, Bishopthorpe, to George Morpeth, 1808; Carlisle MSS, J18/2/11, Georgiana Carlisle to sixth Earl of Carlisle, Grosvenor Place, n.d.; Carlisle MSS, J18/2/10, Georgiana Morpeth to George Morpeth, Castle Howard, 2 September 1819.

<sup>103</sup> Carlisle MSS, J18/2/10, Georgiana Morpeth to George Morpeth, 2 September 1819; Carlisle MSS, J18/1 (Book 40, 18), Earl of Carlisle to Georgiana Carlisle, 18 September 1827.

<sup>104</sup> For example, Carlisle MSS, J18/2/4, Georgiana Carlisle to sixth Earl of Carlisle, n.d.

<sup>105</sup> For example, although he missed her greatly he encouraged her not to return to Castle Howard if she felt to unwell to travel; Carlisle MSS, J18/1 (32, Book 40), Earl of Carlisle to Georgiana Carlisle, Castle Howard, 1 September 1833.

<sup>106</sup> Carlisle MSS, J18/2/10, Georgiana Morpeth to George Morpeth, Castle Howard, 2 September 1819. For a further discussion of Georgiana's ill health see chapter seven.

period to shape their own writings.<sup>107</sup> They often thought that their 'love' was unique, and that their partners were the 'best' husband or wife. They also used the language of nature to elevate their relationship, and to describe their partner's qualities. 'Modern' marriages were criticized as lacking true sentiment and the artificiality of other romances were censured to stress how they were conscious of their true feelings. Just after they married, for example, George Carlisle complimented his new wife's letters for being: 'so free from all affectation, so like yourself'.<sup>108</sup> The relationships were also clearly based on companionship, as they disliked being apart, although it was an expected aspect of elite life. Reynolds argues that because aristocrats had so many duties to fulfil, as well as homes and relatives, once a sufficient number of children had been born an unhappy couple could remain married for many years while living separated lives.<sup>109</sup> For happy couples this lifestyle was not favoured, and the periods of time apart were often resented. They considered themselves to form a partnership, strengthened by mutual respect and affection, and through dynastic domesticity were able to fulfil their duties as aristocrats, partners and parents.

### Separation

Although the majority of marriages within this survey appear to have been happy, and evidence of companionship and trust can be found in relationships throughout this period, there were failing partnerships. Some bad relationships were simply tolerated, and did not lead to any separation. Elizabeth Lechmere's first marriage was very unhappy, although she had implored her father for permission to marry Nicholas Lechmere. He was described by his nephew as 'an excellent lawyer, but violent and overbearing', and so Elizabeth appears to have taken to gambling and drink as a way of escaping her daily life. In February 1726 she deliberately took a large dose of laudanum, but failed to kill herself; Nicholas died the

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<sup>107</sup> In her study of early eighteenth-century marriage, Tague also finds that elite women used the language of conduct writers to shape their ideas regarding marriage; Tague, 'Love, honour and obedience', pp. 84-6.

<sup>108</sup> Carlisle MSS, J18/1 (6, Book 40), George Morpeth to Georgiana Morpeth, n.d.

<sup>109</sup> Reynolds, *Aristocratic Women*, p. 6.

following year.<sup>110</sup> Elizabeth's parents also had a failing marriage. In June 1698 a friend of the Charles Carlisle wrote: 'we heare [sic] from London that matters are very ill between my Lord Carlisle and his Lady, and the discourse is they will part, my Lord coming speedily into the countrey [sic]'.<sup>111</sup> Charles subsequently fathered an illegitimate daughter, and his infidelity upset his wife.<sup>112</sup> She returned to London to live with her mother while her husband continued to build Castle Howard, without the traditional "my ladies' apartments".<sup>113</sup> However, it does appear that he may have missed his wife, or at least performed the role of the harshly rejected suitor. In a regularly reworked poem written after their separation, he wrote of a 'milk white heifer, darling of my herd', who had strayed away:

Far from these fields my darling Heifer roves  
Nor will she ever to thy folds return &  
By too much fondness, & indulgent care, loved  
Lost, & undone ...<sup>114</sup>

He portrayed himself as a caring husband, whose indulgence led to his ungrateful wife leaving him. Through their daughters they continued to be kept informed of each other's news and health, but there is little evidence of any lasting fondness, Charles' poem appears to have been an imagined response to the absence of an idealized wife; although they had seven children together, there is little evidence of affection through their relationship or their separation and it is not clear that she was ever his 'darling'.

Marital breakdowns can be seen as reflecting the importance of happiness in a marriage; if unloving relationships were the norm, there would be little reason to seek separation except in violent marriages. In the later eighteenth century, another Howard woman endured an unhappy marriage. Following the death of her first husband, Isabella Carlisle married Sir William Musgrave in 1758. This was a short marriage; his grave,

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<sup>110</sup> DNB entry for Nicholas Lechmere; Saumarez Smith, *The Building of Castle Howard*, pp. 186-7. See chapter seven.

<sup>111</sup> Quoted in Saumarez Smith, 'Charles Howard', p. 21.

<sup>112</sup> Historical Manuscripts Commission, *Manuscripts of the Earl of Egmont. Diary of the first Earl of Egmont*, Volume 2, ed. R. A. Roberts (London, 1923), p. 399.

<sup>113</sup> Saumarez Smith, 'Charles Howard', p. 152.

<sup>114</sup> Quoted in Saumarez Smith, *The Building of Castle Howard*, p. 151.

austere and studious temperament was apparently too much for Isabella.<sup>115</sup> She sought a formal deed of separation that ensured that she was financially protected, and maintained control of the property that she brought into the relationship.<sup>116</sup> However, this was different from a divorce, as it did not allow her to remarry. Couples used private deeds to sort out the legalities of separation. The documents usually assured a life income to the wife, gave parties permission to cohabit without either partner launching a law suit, and formalized access to children. Although the document was not fully enforceable by court, if both parties agreed and upheld it, it was a simple way for a couple to move on.<sup>117</sup>

Occasionally, a couple would feel compelled to take legal recourse. While very few people sought divorce there were other ways of creating a legal separation.<sup>118</sup> Criminal conversation cases would be used when husbands wished to sue an adulterous wife's lover for damages, claiming compensation for the loss of their partner's virtue; such a case was also the first stage of the divorce process.<sup>119</sup> Seymour Dorothy Worsley, the eldest daughter of Jane Fleming, Lady Harewood was involved in a criminal conversation trial in 1782, when her husband, Sir Richard, brought an action against one of his fellow officers for adultery with his wife. However, Sir Richard was awarded only a shilling damages on the grounds that he had encouraged the flirtation (see plate five).<sup>120</sup> The couple lost a great deal of social prestige, as he and his wife were the subject of numerous satirical prints and pamphlets, and

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<sup>115</sup> A. I. M. Duncan, 'A study of the Life and Public Career of Frederick Howard, fifth Earl of Carlisle, 1748-1825', DPhil Thesis, University of Oxford, 1981, p. 1.

<sup>116</sup> Carlisle MSS, J13/2/1, Deed of separation of Sir William Musgrave and Countess dowager of Carlisle, 15 March 1769.

<sup>117</sup> L. Stone, *Broken Lives: Separation and Divorce in England 1660-1857* (Oxford, 1993), pp. 19-20.

<sup>118</sup> From 1765-1857 less than three hundred divorces were passed. J. Perkin, *Women and Marriage in Nineteenth-Century England* (London, 1989), p. 23.

<sup>119</sup> If a criminal conversation case was successful they could take their case to the Ecclesiastic Court for a separation agreement, and then on to parliament, which alone had the authority to make divorce final. *Ibid*, p. 22.

<sup>120</sup> L. Stone, *Road to Divorce: England, 1530-1987* (Oxford, 1990) pp. 281-2; N. Penny (ed.), *Reynolds* (London, 1986), p. 289-90, 389.



*Sir Richard Worse-than-ty,  
Exposing his Wife's Bottom. O five!*

**Plate Five.**

*Sir Richard Worsley and G. M. Bisset.*

**Artist unknown, 1773.**

she was part of the Devonshire House set satirized in Sheridan's *School for Scandal*.<sup>121</sup> She married Mr J. Louis Couchet a month following her husband's 1805 death, which left her in control of a £70,000 jointure. For women, the formal separation process could cause a great deal of harm; they were often socially ostracized, and family would sometimes break links with their erring offspring.<sup>122</sup> Women could also be denied access to their children, as they were legally the property of the father. However, although an unhappy marriage could cause real distress for a woman, and a separation could lead to the loss of a status, it could also be the start of a happier chapter for a woman, as they could be with family and friends, rather than subjected to loneliness of a failing relationship.

The concerns of dynastic domesticity shaped elite marriage through the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. The long-term effects that an alliance could have on a family's future success shaped the ideas of both parents and children when identifying suitable spouses, so both parties often desired fortune, prestige and social status in a partner. However, the main concern was that individuals would be happy in their marriages. Although the courting system was controlled, especially for daughters, within those controls there was a degree of freedom. The ideal for relationships based on love was present through this period and worked alongside dynastic concerns to create happy marriages, based on partnership, respect, and real affection. Through their letters and actions, Yorkshire aristocrats often displayed their love; it was not an emotion to be hidden but celebrated. Many presented themselves as virtuous lovers, arguing that their feelings were unique and true, not the affections of the fashionably sensible. Although not all partnerships were happy, those who were in failing relationships could try to escape them, either through separation or suicide, indicating that an unhappy marriage was not to be tolerated. Influenced by both their own personal desires and those of the wider lineage, aristocratic women were keen to have a successful marriage that would allow them to create a happy family, for their own joy and to ensure a future for their dynasty.

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<sup>121</sup> Foreman, *Georgiana*, p. 50. Among the satires produced were: Anon., *Memoirs of Sir Finical Whimsy and his lady. Interspersed with a variety of authentic anecdotes and characters* (London, 1782); Anon., *Variety, or, which is the man? A poem. Dedicated to Lady W\*\*sl\*y* (London, 1782); Anon., *The whim !!! or, the Maid-Stone bath. A Kentish poetic. Dedicated to Lady Worsley* (London, 1782).

<sup>122</sup> For example, in the early nineteenth century Marchioness Wellesley excluded from her will her daughter Anne, who had divorced Sir William Abdy and remarried Lord Charles Bentinck. Lewis, *In the Family Way*, p. 42.

## Chapter Five: Motherhood

*I cannot bear to think of untwisting the two little tendrils which  
twine round my neck as well as my heart*

Frances Irwin, 1767.<sup>1</sup>

The dynastic needs of the aristocratic family meant that it was expected that a wife would also be a mother. Children were needed in order to ensure the future success of the pedigree, and the desire for a family was often a factor in deciding to get married. During the eighteenth century, the reluctant aristocratic mother was a common theme in literature and art. Images such as Gilray's *The Fashionable Mother* (plate six) portrayed elite mothers as distant uncaring figures, more concerned with fashion than family. Didactic and radical writers of the period criticized elite women for their lack of interest in caring for their children, and their general tendency towards either neglect or foolish overfondness. Mary Wollstonecraft noted: 'Woman ... a slave in every situation to prejudice, seldom exerts enlightened maternal affection; for she either neglects her children, or spoils them by improper indulgence'.<sup>2</sup> In his *Essay upon Nursing and the Management of Children* (1743) William Cadogan also accused aristocratic mothers of indulgence, and described an elite child who lay: 'languishing under a load of finery, that overpowers his limbs, abhorring and rejecting the dainties he is cramm'd with, 'till he dies a victim to the mistaken care and tenderness of his fond mother'.<sup>3</sup> The luxurious food and fancy dress given to elite children was considered fatal, and the symptoms of a fashionable society concerned with fashion, not domesticity.

Some historians have also taken on this language in their representations of the elite mother. Stone and Trumbach both argued that most elite fathers and some mothers cared relatively little for their children, especially before 1750, although there is strong evidence of parental kindness in the early modern period. Elizabeth Grymeston wrote in 1604, for

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<sup>1</sup> PRO 30/29/4/2/23, Frances Shephard to Susan Stewart, Temple Newsam, 5 February 1767.

<sup>2</sup> M. Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (Oxford, 1993), p. 233.

<sup>3</sup> W. Cadogan, *An Essay upon Nursing and the Management of Children from their Birth to Three Years of Age* (London, 1743), reprinted in M. and J. Rendle-Short, *The Father of Child Care. Life of William Cadogan (1711-97)* (Bristol, 1966), p. 7.





Plate Six.

*A Fashionable Mama, or the Convenience of Modern Dress.*

James Gillray, 1796.

example: 'There is no love so forcible as the love of an affectionate mother to her naturall childe' [sic].<sup>4</sup> Feminist historians have highlighted the difficulties faced by some infertile elite women, and have argued that the main role of the aristocratic wife was to provide children.<sup>5</sup> However, not all families were so demanding for children nor all mothers as neglectful as those criticized in popular satires. Frances Irwin's description, above, of the tight hold that her children had on her affection reflects the very real devotion that parents could feel during this period. She would not leave her two daughters in order to travel to London, as she was unwilling to be separated from them. She was so attached to her children that she rejected London society and preferred to stay in Yorkshire, leading a quiet life with her family. Frances was not unusual in her dedication to her children, and to present the elite mother simply as a disinterested incubator of future aristocrats is to overlook the possibility, or even the likelihood, of her deep affection for her children. The wider roles of elite mothers as educators, carers and advisors need to be understood, as motherhood was a role that many women fulfilled from their late teens until their death; it shaped their domestic world for the majority of their lives.

By becoming mothers aristocratic wives could fulfil both their domestic and dynastic duties.<sup>6</sup> However, it was not a constraining role that oppressed women. Recent feminist studies have rejected the traditional idea that, in Firestone's words: 'the heart of woman's oppression is her childbearing and child rearing roles'.<sup>7</sup> Instead, they have highlighted the power and pleasure that women could gain from motherhood.<sup>8</sup> These twin concerns shaped

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<sup>4</sup> Quoted in M. E. Wiesner, *Women and Gender in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge, 1993), p. 73. See also examples in: P. Crawford and L. Gowing (eds.), *Women's Worlds in Seventeenth-century England* (London, 2000), pp. 187 ff.; L. Stone, *The Family, Sex and Marriage In England 1500-1800* (London, 1977), esp. pp. 405, 449-70; R. Trumbach, *The Rise of the Egalitarian Family. Aristocratic Kinship and Domestic Relations in Eighteenth-Century England* (New York, N.Y., 1978), esp. pp. 187-90; 238-42.

<sup>5</sup> See, for example, B. Smith, *Changing Lives. Women in European History since 1700* (Lexington, Mass., 1989), p. 29.

<sup>6</sup> L. M. Klein, 'Lady Anne Clifford as mother and matriarch: domestic and dynastic issues in her life writing', *Journal of Family History* 26 (2001), p. 21.

<sup>7</sup> S. Firestone, *The Dialectic of Sex. The Case of Feminist Revolution* (London, 1971), p. 81.

<sup>8</sup> See for example: D. Bassin, M. Honey and M. M. Kaplan, 'Introduction', in *Representations of Motherhood*, ed. D. Bassin, M. Honey and M. M. Kaplan (New Haven, Conn., 1994), pp. 2-3; C. Garland, 'The Power and Pleasure of Motherhood: An Exploration of Feminist Theoretical Contributions', MA Dissertation, University of York, 1997, passim; E. Ross, 'New thoughts on "the oldest vocation": mothers and motherhood in recent feminists scholarship', *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 20 (1995), pp. 397-99.

elite responses to motherhood in the eighteenth century. Because of the importance of offspring to the elite family, women who could bear children were in a powerful position; they provided the biological means to forward the dynasty. They were also empowered by their roles as educators of the children, with considerable authority over male and female offspring.<sup>9</sup> The knowledge that the role of motherhood gave to women meant that they had wider authority too, as their experiences and social position as mothers meant that they were able to intervene within the household and in the wider world. They could express informed opinions on domestic and social problems, either by advising their own extended family or writing advice literature for publication, as Isabella Carlisle did in 1790.<sup>10</sup> Motherhood gave women status.

Women could also gain a great deal of pleasure from motherhood, and this was especially the case for elite parents who had the leisure time to enjoy being with the children, and could leave the chores of parenthood to their paid staff.<sup>11</sup> As many elite marriages within this period were affectionate, parenthood could be shared with the father. This would allow elite mothers to undertake a wide range of social duties away from their families, leaving the children with their husbands.<sup>12</sup> Motherhood could therefore be about partnership, a joint effort between husband, wife and the country-house household in ensuring the future dynastic success of the family.

Elite motherhood in this period was essentially affectionate, shaped by women's concerns and desires for their children. This chapter demonstrates this fondness through exploring the different stages of motherhood. Firstly pregnancy is examined, and the significance of loving relationships within the elite family explored. The influence of dynastic concerns is also considered, and it is argued that the safety of the mother was as

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<sup>9</sup> N. J. Miller, 'Mothering others: caregiving as spectrum and spectacle in the early modern period', in *Maternal Measures. Figuring Caregiving in the Early Modern Period*, ed. N. J. Miller and N. Yavneh (Aldershot, 2000), p. 7. For a discussion of the power of women as educators see M. Myers, 'Impeccable governesses, rational dames, and moral mothers: Mary Wollstonecraft and the female tradition in Georgian children's literature', *Children's Literature* 14 (1986), pp. 33, 36.

<sup>10</sup> P. Crawford, 'The construction and experience of maternity in seventeenth-century England', in *Women as Mothers in pre-Industrial England. Essays in Memory of Dorothy McLaren*, ed. V. Fildes (London, 1990), p. 29; I. Carlisle, *Thoughts in the Form of Maxims Addressed to Young Ladies on Their First Establishment in the World* (Dublin, 1790).

<sup>11</sup> L. A. Pollock, *Forgotten Children. Parent Child Relations from 1500 to 1900* (Cambridge, 1983), p. 104.

<sup>12</sup> J. Gerard, *Country House Life. Family and Servants, 1815-1914* (Oxford, 1994), p. 70.

important as the desire for a future pedigree. The role of a woman as a carer of young children is discussed in the next section on mothering, and the emphasis placed on motherly love is highlighted. As John Parsons and Bonnie Wheeler argue, mothering is a practice, separate from the biological role of maternity that only women can undertake. Both men and women can be ‘motherers’, those who fulfil maternal practices, and so the roles of carers who were not the biological mother, especially fathers, are considered too.<sup>13</sup> The final section explores the long term role of the mother as a parent of adult children. The powerful role that mothers held within the elite family is discussed, and the importance of lasting affection between parent and child considered. Throughout the chapter I demonstrate that motherhood was an empowering role for elite women to perform, which enabled them to promote the family interest. It was also a role that they enjoyed, and one that was shaped by their deep affection for their children. Most elite women in this survey were not disinterested ‘fashionable mamas’ but were committed to their role, empowered by the dynastic function it gave them and by their affection for their children.

### **Becoming a Mother**

The pregnancy and childbirth stages of motherhood could be negative and distressing times for elite women. Their fertility could be scrutinized by untrusting in-laws, their ill health during pregnancy dismissed as unimportant, and they could face real fears over losing their baby, or even dying themselves. Frances Irwin was closely watched by her sisters-in-law, who thought that she spent too much time away from her husband for a woman who did not yet have a son.<sup>14</sup> When she fell unwell in 1763 her in-laws were concerned, but not out of any affection for Frances. Instead, they hoped: ‘for the future she will take more care of herself’.<sup>15</sup> However, the idea of expectant mothers being at the mercy of nature and interfering in-laws allows only a limited understanding of the experience of elite mothers in the eighteenth century. The pregnancy and childbirth stage of motherhood has been subject to a number of historical studies that have shown that it

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<sup>13</sup> J. C. Parsons and B. Wheeler, ‘Introduction: medieval mothering, medieval motherers’, in *Medieval Mothering*, ed. J. C. Parsons and B. Wheeler (New York, N.Y., 1996), p. x.

<sup>14</sup> WYAS, Leeds, TN/C/19/23, Mrs Isabella Ramsden to Isabella Irwin, 1 December 1761.

<sup>15</sup> WYAS, Leeds, TN/C/19/87, Sam Keeling, Temple Newsam, to Isabella Irwin, 15 July 1763.

could be an empowering time.<sup>16</sup> Judith Lewis' work has focused on elite experiences of childbirth in the later eighteenth century, and considers the role of both sentimental and dynastic concerns in shaping the nature of pregnancy among upper-class society and notes that: 'quivers full of children were a part of the ostentatious display that characterized aristocratic life'.<sup>17</sup> However, the study does not contextualize the experiences of the birth within the wider roles of the mother and she pays less attention to the degree of pleasure and autonomy that motherhood gave to elite women.

The first section of this chapter argues that many women had significant power and independence during their pregnancies, and while the demands of biology and dynasty did have a significant effect, mothers had the opportunity to shape their pregnancies and experiences of childbirth. Motherhood could both empower and bring joy to elite women through their control of their pregnancies, their management of childbirth, their selection of medical staff, and the churching and christening ceremonies that marked the end of their confinement. Their needs, rather than the needs of the pedigree, were central to their experiences of pregnancy as the affection of their husbands and wider families meant that it was a woman's safety and future that were most important, not that of the lineage. Mothers, especially experienced mothers, were not passive during their pregnancies, but could have a significant impact on their own experiences of biological maternity, shaped and supported by the affectionate family.

The newly married aristocratic woman was normally expected to become pregnant as soon as was seemly, and provide her new family with an heir. Although there was some concern that younger brides should not have children too soon if they were still considered 'delicate', the new bride would ideally provide a son and heir within the first two years of the marriage, as Georgiana Carlisle did in 1802.<sup>18</sup> When a pregnancy was not forthcoming, doubts could be raised as to whether the new bride was able to become a mother, and a

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<sup>16</sup> See: Crawford, 'The construction and experience of maternity'; L. F. Cody, 'The politics of reproduction: from midwives' alternative public sphere to the public spectacle of man-midwifery', *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 32 (1999) pp. 477-95; A. Wilson, 'The ceremony of childbirth and its interpretation', in *Women as Mothers in pre-Industrial England. Essays in Memory of Dorothy McLaren*, ed. V. Fildes (London, 1990), pp. 68-107.

<sup>17</sup> J. S. Lewis, *In the Family Way. Childbearing in the British Aristocracy 1760-1860* (New Brunswick, N.J., 1986), p. 218.

<sup>18</sup> Georgiana Carlisle gave birth to her first son, George, just less than thirteen months after her marriage.

wide range of medicines and activities might be recommended to 'barren' women. Taking the waters was a favoured 'cure' among the aristocracy. Going to Bath or the other fashionable spas of the eighteenth century can be seen as part of the performance of the potential mother, and demonstrated her commitment to fulfilling her wifely duties.<sup>19</sup> Not all marriages, though, sought to produce children; a fifth of the aristocratic marriages in this period were childless, and infertility alone cannot explain these high numbers. Some couples were simply too old to have children when they married, while others made an active choice not to have a family.<sup>20</sup> When Anne Irwin married in 1737, although it was possible that she could still have children, her and her new husband decided that they would remain childless as their finances would not support a family.<sup>21</sup> While dynastic concerns were at a premium for those women who married into wealthy peerage families, the wife of a younger brother in financial difficulty may not have faced the same pressure to have children. Although preventive contraceptives were fairly crude, women could avoid pregnancies, either through the use of barrier methods, *coitus interruptus* or abstinence.<sup>22</sup> If a woman fell pregnant, it was implicitly recognized that women could choose whether to continue with that pregnancy. Linda Pollock has argued that from the seventeenth century women were using abortifacients if they became pregnant before they had recovered their health from a previous labour.<sup>23</sup> Women could have some degree of choice in their family planning, and could maintain control over their own bodies and family size.

For those women who wanted to become mothers, the news of a pregnancy was often celebrated. Congratulations would be shared among the family, and sisters, in particular,

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<sup>19</sup> Although there was some teasing of the husbands too (for example by Walpole who thought men were in too much of a hurry and not 'vigorous' enough) the emphasis was on female infertility. Trumbach, *Rise of the Egalitarian Family*, pp. 168-9.

<sup>20</sup> For example, when William Constable married Catherine Langdale in 1775 he was fifty four years old. As he had suffered from ill health for many years it was unlikely that he was going to father any children.

<sup>21</sup> Carlisle MSS, J8/1/165, Mary Howard, London, to the third Earl of Carlisle, 16 June 1737.

<sup>22</sup> For contraception methods see Stone, *Family, Sex and Marriage*, pp. 422-4.

<sup>23</sup> L. A. Pollock, 'Embarking on a rough passage: the experience of pregnancy in early-modern society', in *Women as Mothers in pre-Industrial England. Essays in Memory of Dorothy McLaren*, ed. V. Fildes (London, 1990), pp. 57-8. For examples in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries see: Trumbach, *Rise of the Egalitarian Family*, pp. 171-2; Lewis, *In the Family Way*, p. 230.

would delight in each other's good news.<sup>24</sup> It would also become public gossip, and details of the latest pregnancies were regular features of letters. Because of the dynastic importance of a new addition to the family there was little sense that the condition of the woman was a private affair. The continuation of the pedigree was not just the concern of the immediate relatives, but was important for the future of the aristocracy as a whole, and so the wider elite community would keep one another informed of a woman's condition. The language surrounding pregnancy became a regular feature of letters. When Isabella Ramsden was pregnant in 1762, it was commented that she was 'surprisingly big, but as well as most people are in her circumstance', indicating that the average size of pregnant women was well understood.<sup>25</sup> For those less concerned with the well-being of the mother, large pregnant women were often the source of fun. As one woman wrote in 1727: 'Mrs Hyde has come to Town as big as she can Tumble'.<sup>26</sup> As discussions of pregnancy were such a regular part of the letter-writing rhetoric, men would sometimes mimic the style. Henry Ingram wrote in 1735 that his brother Charles: 'is breeding and longs for some Pork. I told him I was afraid he must miscarry this year, as it was too late to save his longing'.<sup>27</sup> Because of the physical manifestations of pregnancy and the aristocratic duty that it represented, it became a public issue, and the concern of a wider society, not just the mother and father.

The health of the pregnant woman was of great concern to her relatives. They understood that pregnancy had common ailments, such as morning sickness, and saw these as signs that the pregnancy was progressing well, although some side effects could be serious.<sup>28</sup> When an heir was needed, there was particular concern about a mother's health during pregnancy, and some women were reminded of their duty to stay strong so they

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<sup>24</sup> The letters between Harriet Granville and Georgiana Carlisle reflect this. V. Surtees (ed.), *A Second Self. The Letters of Harriet Granville 1810-45* (Salisbury, 1990), passim

<sup>25</sup> Horsham Museum, Machell Ingram MSS, 794.9, Letter from Elizabeth Tayluer [sic] to Isabella Irwin, 16 January 1762.

<sup>26</sup> Mary Pendle, London, to her sister Anne Granville, Gloucester, 1727; Francesca Wilde, pers. comm.

<sup>27</sup> WYAS, Leeds, TN/C/14/92, Henry Ingram to Isabella Irwin, 16 April 1735.

<sup>28</sup> For example, excessive morning sickness, *hyperemesis gravidarum*, could be fatal, and appears to have been the cause of Charlotte Brontë's death in 1855. A. Dally, *Inventing Motherhood. The Consequences of an Ideal* (London, 1982), p. 34.

could provide a son.<sup>29</sup> Much of the concern was affectionate, and there was relief when a pregnancy continued safely. Isabella Carlisle, for example, was pleased in 1772 when her daughter-in-law, Caroline, had progressed far enough in her first pregnancy to mean that she and the baby were likely to be safe.<sup>30</sup>

Most women took control of their own pregnancies, and tried to guard against miscarriages. When Caroline Lascelles was pregnant again in 1826 following the death of her baby son the previous year, she became upset when, 'in spite of all precautions', she lost the second baby.<sup>31</sup> A miscarriage was recognized as a real risk, and medicines both to prevent and treat the after-effects of premature deliveries were common. A recipe for medicine to be taken after a miscarriage was included in Isabella Carlisle's mid-eighteenth-century recipe book, and Harriet Granville was given a 'blue pill' after a suspected miscarriage in 1821.<sup>32</sup> It was thought that social and cultural factors could cause miscarriages. Frances Irwin was of the opinion that the Duchess of Grafton was to blame for losing her baby in the mid-eighteenth century. The Duchess had endured a difficult pregnancy and Frances thought that she had not taken sufficient care of herself: 'I am sure having cards at her home the eleventh day after so much danger is proof of the utmost negligence'.<sup>33</sup> The need for care in pregnancy was considered crucial, and so there could be a lack of sympathy for those who were so 'negligent' as to have an 'accident'. It was important to perform the role of the careful mother-to be, as it reflected a woman's commitment to the dynasty and her family.

The idea that women could act in such a way as to cause or prevent a miscarriage meant that it was acknowledged that women had a certain degree of control over their own bodies. Although the success of a pregnancy was often reliant on issues of nature, because of their access to medical advice and apothecaries, elite women felt that they could manage

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<sup>29</sup> For example WYAS, Leeds, TN/C/23/33, Isabella Ingram, London, to Mrs Charles Ingram, 18 November [1758].

<sup>30</sup> Carlisle MSS, J13/1/3, Copy books of letters to Julia Howard from Isabella Carlisle, 1771-2, Letter 25, f. 88, 10 February 1772.

<sup>31</sup> M. Leconfield (ed.), *Three Howard Sisters. Selections From the Writings of Lady Caroline Lascelles, Lady Dover and Countess Gower, 1825 to 1833*, Completed by John Gore (London, 1955), pp. 60-1.

<sup>32</sup> Carlisle MSS, J13/1/4, My Book of Receipts; Surtees, *A Second Self*, p. 157.

<sup>33</sup> PRO 30/29/4/2/2, Frances Shephard to Susan Stewart, Temple Newsam, 16 March, n.y.



themselves and the baby during the pregnancy. In the early eighteenth century, the power of the mother during pregnancy was believed to be so considerable that it was thought that her actions and behaviour could shape and deform the foetus, which could create 'monsters'.<sup>34</sup> While this idea began to be discredited by the mid-eighteenth century, the assumption that women could control their own bodies continued.<sup>35</sup> By managing their own bodies and actions they were seen as responsible for the success of the pregnancy. Although this could be a negative experience for those whose pregnancies failed, or if the child suffered any deformity, in the majority of cases it could be empowering. Women were thought to have control over the development of their own babies, and therefore the dynastic future of their families.

A healthy pregnancy could be a joyful experience for women and their families. If it heralded a new generation, the birth would be greatly anticipated and the mother-to-be could be given items to welcome the new baby into the dynasty. Isabella Irwin was particularly excited when her grandson's wife was pregnant in 1760, as she hoped that the long awaited Irwin heir would be provided. She therefore took it upon herself to ensure that all the needs of the baby were fulfilled, according to the family's dynastic standards. Isabella Irwin's granddaughter wrote to the expectant Frances on her behalf:

Lady Irwin desires me to tell you that the woman who makes the child bed linen knows well what is proper for you to have for yourself and what the Nurse you will have will expect, that she has bespoke everything that is necessary for you and hopes will do her the favour to accept them with other things. They will be all sent together and are the prettiest playthings I ever saw, I hope if you approve of them you will continue the women for coats. ... My Grandmamma desires leave to present her Grandsomething with a Cradle which I am to bespoke and will likewise be sent with the rest.<sup>36</sup>

By sending these gifts Isabella Irwin was ensuring that the new members of the dynasty

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<sup>34</sup> P-G. Boucé, 'Imagination, pregnant women, and monsters in eighteenth-century England and France', in *Sexual Underworld of the Enlightenment*, ed. G. S. Rousseau and R. Porter (Manchester, 1987), p. 89; S. Mendleson and P. Crawford, *Women in Early Modern England 1550-1720* (Oxford, 1998), p. 151.

<sup>35</sup> Doctors were still discussing the idea of the relationship between women's imagination and monsters as late as 1782, when John Leake rejected the idea, arguing that women were so mentally weak that if the mother's brain did affect the child, then there would have been many more monsters than had been recorded. A. Digby, 'Women's biological straitjacket', in *Sexuality and Subordination. Interdisciplinary Studies of Gender in the Nineteenth Century*, ed. S. Mendus and J. Rendall (London, 1989), p. 199.

<sup>36</sup> WYAS, Leeds, TN/C/23/231, Isabella Ingram to Mrs Charles Ingram, 6 March [1760?].

were being cared for, and that familial traditions were being upheld. The family's network of staff and skilled workers were used by Isabella, and it was hoped that Frances would continue this patronage. As Frances did not have a significant 'mother figure' to guide her through her first pregnancy nor the benefit of an aristocratic upbringing, Isabella was also acting in an advisory role.<sup>37</sup> Within the cultural world of the aristocracy, where continuation and tradition were central, the presenting of gifts was an important way of ensuring that women felt part of the family and supported in her pregnancies.

It is clear from her letters that Frances Irwin enjoyed her pregnancies during the mid-eighteenth century. She wrote to her close friend that: 'my invisible is I conjecture in good health, for I am so, and feel many a comfortable grump for the little mortal, which gives me great pleasure'.<sup>38</sup> Discussing the movements of the unborn baby was relatively common between female friends and relatives, as it was welcome news that the pregnancy was continuing successfully, as well as giving women the opportunity to perform the role of the attentive mother-to-be.<sup>39</sup> Sometimes the child could be rather restless, and Harriet Granville described her baby as: 'a little Hercules kicking me'.<sup>40</sup> Giving a personality to the unborn child was common, and reflects the affectionate language that mothers used to describe their unborn children. Through the letters of elite women in this survey it appears that many mothers formed close bonds with their children before they were born, and that they wanted to share their joy in this new relationship with their wider family. Women presented themselves as happy and affectionate mothers from the earliest possible stages in order to demonstrate to their family, and possibly to themselves, that they were going to be successful and caring mothers.

Because of the close bond that women felt for their unborn child, many expectant mothers were concerned that everything was properly organized for the birth. They had both a dynastic and emotional investment in the child, and they did not want the baby to be put in danger during childbirth. The affectionate nature of many marriages, and the

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<sup>37</sup> Frances was the illegitimate daughter of an M.P., and although there is some evidence that money was paid to her mother from her Drummond's bank account, this is the only evidence of contact in her adult life. Julie Day, pers. comm.

<sup>38</sup> PRO 30/29/4/2/2, Frances Shephard, Temple Newsam, to Susan Stewart, 16 March [1759].

<sup>39</sup> For example, Isabella Ramsden described her unborn son as moving about 'very briskly' in WYAS, Leeds, TN/C/19/11, Mrs Isabella Ramsden (née Ingram) to Isabella Irwin, 13 October 1761.

<sup>40</sup> Surtees, *A Second Self*, pp. 22-3.

concerns of dynastic domesticity, meant that husbands were willing to do what was best for both the mothers and the children. This often meant ensuring that mothers had a great deal of autonomy in making the preparations so that they could ensure that arrangements were made to secure the well-being of themselves and their babies. The marriage between George and Georgiana Dover was particularly loving, and the way that they responded to her pregnancies show how both affectionate and dynastic concerns could empower the pregnant woman.<sup>41</sup> In 1825 George Dover wrote to Ralph Sneyd to inform him that: ‘two days ago all my schemes were overthrown by a communication from Georgiana of which you may guess the import. Of course I have been obliged to give up all ideas of travelling this winter and am only anxious to convey her safely to the neighbourhood of London’.<sup>42</sup> Georgiana’s impending pregnancy meant that he was going to have to cancel plans to travel to Italy with Ralph and friends until she had safely given birth; her needs were the priority and he wanted to be with her and ensure that she was well cared for. In 1830, another pregnancy reshaped their London household. George had just bought Melbourne House, and while she arranged who was to be assigned which room, she also planned which rooms were to be used during her forthcoming confinement: ‘Muzy is to have what was George Lamb’s bedroom and Mrs Lamb’s room is to be the study; from which however I shall turn them out to put in the Griff, as I mean to inhabit the rooms at that time’.<sup>43</sup> Her pregnancy was of central importance, and so the internal space of the house was reshaped by her needs, empowering her to reclaim the ‘male’ spaces of the house, the rooms used by the tutor and the study, in order to perform her female role.

Georgiana did not only have autonomy regarding reshaping the house, but also in the choices regarding the medical staff who would assist her. Although there were significant changes in the medical responses to childbirth in their period, moving from an all-female environment in the seventeenth century to a male-led medical event in the mid-Victorian

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<sup>41</sup> Their first child, a son, was born 25 February 1825; Leconfield, *Three Howard Sisters*, p. 41.

<sup>42</sup> Keele University Library, Sneyd MSS, SC8/69, Letter from George Agar Ellis to Ralph Sneyd, 30 August 1824.

<sup>43</sup> Leconfield, *Three Howard Sisters*, p. 207. Mr Muzy was her eldest son’s tutor and Griff was the Nurse who attended her and her sisters for the births of their children.

era, this does not mean that the position of the mother was marginalised.<sup>44</sup> The influence of the elite mothers remained strong, and they used their financial power and influence to gain access to a high level of specialist health care. The preservation of the life of the mother and child was important to elite families, and the future of both was central to dynastic domesticity. Through their choice of medical staff, women were empowered to try to ensure the future of themselves, their unborn child, and the success of their aristocratic family. Women turned to their network of female relatives and friends in order to guide them in their choice of medical staff, and to support them through childbirth and lying-in.<sup>45</sup> Georgiana Dover was influenced by family tradition in her choice of medical staff. Her mother, Georgiana Carlisle, had followed family tradition by using Dr Croft for her early pregnancies, and she remained loyal to him following the death of Princess Charlotte, who was in his care when she died following a long labour in 1817.<sup>46</sup> This event led to Dr Croft's suicide, but still Lady Dover, like her aunt and sisters, followed Georgiana Carlisle's lead and used Dr Croft's nurse, Mrs Griffiths, until her retirement in 1832.<sup>47</sup> Georgiana Carlisle not only guided her relatives in their choice of the medical team, but was keen to be with her sister and daughters during their confinements, and her experience as the 'parent of countless babes' was sought after.<sup>48</sup> Her daughters also supported one another in their births, and by sharing their knowledge and experiences of childbirth, women could offer a supportive network that celebrated the importance of the role of motherhood, and the affectionate nature of female friendship.

Most elite women gave birth in London, as the capital offered the widest range of

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<sup>44</sup> For discussions of the changing nature of medical responses to childbirth see: Cody, 'The politics of reproduction'; B. Blackwell, 'Tristram Shandy and the theater of the mechanical mother', *English Literary History* 68 (2001), pp. 81-133; Wilson, 'The ceremony of childbirth'; Lewis, *In the Family Way*, chapter three.

<sup>45</sup> Cody, 'The politics of reproduction', p. 478; Wilson, 'The ceremony of childbirth', p. 70.

<sup>46</sup> Lewis, *In the Family Way*, p. 207. Georgiana argued the death was not the responsibility of Doctor Croft, but that Princess Charlotte had died from exhaustion: she did not seem to think that the doctor was to blame for allowing her to become so tired by not interfering with the birth. British Library MSS, Berry Papers, Volume I, Additional Mss 37726., f 142-3, Georgiana Carlisle, Castle Howard, to Miss Berry, 23 November (1817).

<sup>47</sup> Lewis, *In the Family Way*, pp. 164-5; Leconfield, *Three Howard Sisters*, p. 252.

<sup>48</sup> For example, Harriet Granville was most anxious when the fifth Earl of Carlisle desired the company of his son and Georgiana thus delaying Georgiana's departure to be at Harriet's first birth in October 1810. Surtees, *A Second Self*, pp. 35-41.

medical expertise possible, as well as providing sufficient dwelling space for the woman's relatives to stay in if they wanted to be with her. The needs of mother and child could mean that whole families would move from Yorkshire down to London for the birth. Historians have highlighted the importance of childbirth as a ritual.<sup>49</sup> During the early modern period the birth and the period of 'lying-in' (the month following the birth) would have been spent indoors in the company of only women, including female relatives who would travel significant distances to be there.<sup>50</sup> This time has been described as 'empowering' for women and Wilson argues that these practices led to a temporary power shift in the household, as the mother was 'on top' during this period.<sup>51</sup> Although the female-only atmosphere was in decline after the early eighteenth century, the importance of childbirth as a time when family came together continued. Lewis argues that the actions of elite women in the late eighteenth century followed the patterns of a 'rite of passage', with the move to London marking the 'separation' stage, the birth the 'transition', and the postnatal visitors the 'incorporation'.<sup>52</sup> While it is clear that these stages did exist, the large numbers of children that women had meant that each birth cannot be considered as a rite of passage. Instead, the 'rituals' of childbirth in the late eighteenth century can be seen to be traditions designed to ensure the well-being of the woman, rather than a private ceremony that granted a woman temporary status. Within the domestic elite family, the importance of the woman was recognized both before and after a birth, and so she did not need to be temporarily 'on top'.

Many of the traditions associated with the birth were designed to ensure the safety of the mother and baby. There were many ideas in relation to what was best for a woman, especially regarding how much activity new mothers could safely undertake during her confinement. Women were not supposed to read and write in this period, although they often ignored the rules. In the nineteenth century, Elizabeth Rutland wrote to her daughter four days after she had become a grandmother, but added a note to her son-in-law that he

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<sup>49</sup> See for example: Crawford, 'The construction and experience of maternity'; Cody, 'The politics of reproduction'; Wilson, 'The ceremony of childbirth'.

<sup>50</sup> For example, Klein, 'Lady Anne Clifford', p. 29.

<sup>51</sup> Wilson, 'The ceremony of childbirth', esp. p. 86. Wilson bases this idea on the work of Natalie Zemon Davis in *Society and Culture in Early Modern France* (London, 1975), pp. 124-51.

<sup>52</sup> Lewis, *In the Family Way*, pp. 156-7.

should read the letter aloud to the new mother as 'it is *not proper* to read too soon'.<sup>53</sup> For most of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries etiquette insisted that men should not to visit the women within the chamber for a few days after the birth. This was not only a reflection of the early modern tradition of the birth taking place in a female only environment, but also a way of limiting the number of visitors that a tired new mother had to endure. Georgiana Carlisle thought these rules too avidly enforced in 1809, as Lord Granville was prevented from seeing her the day before he was to marry her (motherless) sister.<sup>54</sup> In her daughters' generation, visitors of both sexes were much more welcome, as the desire of the family to be with the new mother overtook concerns about her strength. During her 1831 confinement Blanche Burlington was attended by her mother, two sisters, husband, bachelor brother and two brothers-in-law on the actual day, and her unmarried Uncle Hart, sixth Duke of Devonshire visited the following day. Not everyone welcomed these changes, particularly when the new mother was not fully recovered. Georgiana Dover was concerned by the number of visitors that Blanche had to endure, as there were: 'a good many of his relations and all the boys, who think they have a right to see her'.<sup>55</sup> After Harriet Sutherland had given birth to her first son, her mother-in-law, Lady Stafford, paid her a long visit: 'talking on all the most agitating subjects'. Afterwards, Lady Stafford was very embarrassed about her actions, and had to ask all those who had witnessed her unseemly behaviour not to tell others in fear that they would 'shew her up'.<sup>56</sup> Although the fashion of the period had made visiting more acceptable, the well-being of the mother continued to be the central concern.

Many of the ideas regarding visitors and the birth were shaped by etiquette. Men were normally kept separate from the actual moment of birth itself, and most relatives were closed off by a screen from the mother, although immediate female relatives expected to

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<sup>53</sup> Quoted in Lewis, *In the Family Way*, p. 197.

<sup>54</sup> PRO 30/29/17/5/6, Georgiana Morpeth to Harriet Granville, 25 December 1809.

<sup>55</sup> The boys were the younger Howard sons, William, Charles and Henry. Leconfield, *Three Howard Sisters*, pp. 230-1.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 251.

be in the room with her.<sup>57</sup> However, social niceties would be overturned in the case of an emergency when fathers and others may have been called upon for help. The doctor was too late for the birth of Frances Irwin's third child in 1762, for example, and so the nurse had to play midwife, and the husband, nurse.<sup>58</sup> Although this would have been unusual behaviour, the unpredictable nature of childbirth meant that social norms and realms of acceptable behaviour would have had to have been disregarded on some occasions. The needs of the mother could mean that they had the power to cause the abandonment of proper etiquette.

The period of the birth and lying-in also allowed the dynastic concerns of her role to be fulfilled too, and there was a public role to the childbirth traditions. By being in the capital, it was easier for the public function of childbirth to be fulfilled. The expectation of a birth would be marked by the placing of straw on the street outside the house of a parturient woman, and messages could be quickly sent out to relatives and acquaintances to celebrate the arrival of a new member of the family.<sup>59</sup> Letters of congratulations could also be sent, allowing the birth to be another networking opportunity. The birth would be a form of news, the currency of London society, and would create a series of visits both to the mother and her relatives. The birth of a child was an important stage in the life of an aristocratic family, as it embodied new opportunities and the future for the dynasty. This needed to be marked publicly, and so the private and intimate action of giving birth was also a significant public event.

Not all family relatives could attend all births, and during October 1827 Lord Harewood and William and Caroline Lascelles waited eagerly for news from London where Harriet Sheffield, Lord Harewood's eldest daughter, was due to give birth to her first child. Lady Sheffield's sister and mother attended the event, and were expected to write immediately with the news. However, the post was delayed, making the days: 'very long and tedious owing to this state of suspense'. When the news came that a boy had been

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<sup>57</sup> As the nineteenth century progressed some men stayed with their wives the whole time, including William Burlington and Prince Albert. Lewis, *In the Family Way*, pp. 171-3; Leconfield, *Three Howard Sisters*, p. 251.

<sup>58</sup> Frances' letter to Susan Gower indicates that he had been taking close care of her, and notes that 'you never saw so good a nurse' as her husband, Charles. As Frances does not appear to have a close relationship with any female relatives it is not surprising that she was reliant upon her husband. PRO 30/29/4/2/8, Frances Shephard to Countess Susan Gower, 4 October 1762.

<sup>59</sup> Lewis, *In the Family Way*, p. 157.

safely delivered, there was much relief, although Lord Harewood continued to feel nervous, and Caroline 'quite faint'.<sup>60</sup> This case indicates how the family of the mother were still concerned for their relatives; although Harriet was part of a new dynasty, her pregnancy was a real worry for her parents. While marriages and childbirth confirmed a woman's position in a new family, the ties to the natal family were still strong. Parenthood was a lifelong role, and the worries and concerns for a child did not stop at an eighteenth birthday, but lasted into their adult life, especially in times of danger, such as childbirth.

It was common for families to feel anxious at the time of a birth, and the letters of the Yorkshire elite indicate that many feared the death of the mother or child. Although the actual risks were fairly low, the fear of death was very real to women, especially following the high profile death of Princess Charlotte in 1817.<sup>61</sup> These fears tended to arouse religious feelings in women, and some wrote wills and farewell letters to their husbands.<sup>62</sup> In August 1843 Mary Howard (1822-1843), wife of Charles, fifth son of Georgiana Carlisle, died a few days after giving birth to George James, later ninth Earl of Carlisle. The women of the Howard family wrote of their sadness at her death. Caroline Lascelles took it upon herself to care for the grieving husband, her younger brother, while her sisters and mother sent letters of condolence to Mary's family.<sup>63</sup> Georgiana Carlisle wrote: 'when I do think of the loss of happiness to my poor Charles and to you, her excellent Parents, I do feel indeed the deep sorrow with which this event had filled me'.<sup>64</sup> The shared fear of death in childbirth united the women in the family, and heightened their nervousness during subsequent pregnancies.

It was not only the mother's life that was at risk during childbirth; stillborn children or deaths soon after birth were also real possibilities. While the death of a mother was grieved, a newborn's passing was normally met by a mixture of sadness and acceptance.

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<sup>60</sup> Leconfield, *Three Howard Sisters*, p. 95.

<sup>61</sup> In the seventeenth century the rate was one per hundred, although the fear of death was more significant than the risk. Records of the death rates for the eighteenth century are incomplete, but from 1838 through to 1935 the rate was fairly static, averaging at 4.7 deaths per thousand live births. Crawford, 'The construction and experience of maternity', p. 22; Dally, *Inventing Motherhood*, p. 38.

<sup>62</sup> For example, Lady Jersey wrote three such letters in as many years; she lived to be 82 years old; Lewis, *In the Family Way*, pp. 75-6.

<sup>63</sup> Northumberland Record Office, Ridley Mss, ZRI/31/2-30.

<sup>64</sup> ZRI/31/2-30, Georgiana Carlisle, Castle Howard, to Lady Parke, 30 August 1843.



In 1840 the Earl of Burlington wrote about his wife, Blanche:

She was confined about a fortnight ago, and though the loss of the child who only lived a few minutes was a great disappointment to her, she has since been going on well. I am now writing at her dictation as it will be probably be some time before she will be allowed to write herself.<sup>65</sup>

Blanche's health was the real concern of her husband, who did not appear to grieve for the baby himself. The death was described as a 'disappointment' rather than a tragedy, suggesting an acceptance of fate.<sup>66</sup> The fragility of the life of newborn children was accepted, and so only a certain degree of grief was expected, even for those children who lived a number of months. For mothers, though, the grief could be overwhelming, and other women recognized the sadness caused by a stillbirth; some even thought that the death of a child could result in the mother's sudden death, caused by the sorrow caused by the loss of a child.<sup>67</sup>

Women who survived childbirth with a healthy child would often celebrate their achievement with a pair of ceremonies that marked the end of her confinement: the 'churching' ceremony and the christening. Formally named 'Thanksgiving of Women after Childbirth', churching was not a purification ceremony, but a service to allow a woman to thank God for her full recovery. It recognized the dangers of childbirth, and asserted that women gave birth as part of their duty to God rather than in the service of men.<sup>68</sup> Although there had been long-term resistance to the service, because of its Jewish and Catholic roots, the ceremony was popular among many women. They appear to have, over time, made it a female service, and while they may not have fully agreed with the letter of the litany, they enjoyed it because it was a 'woman's ritual' that recognized their position as mothers.<sup>69</sup> The christening ceremony also stressed the importance of the mother, and was normally her first public appearance after the birth. The christening usually took place immediately after

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<sup>65</sup> Keele University Library, Sneyd MSS, SC7/275, Earl of Burlington to Ralph Sneyd, 18 March 1840.

<sup>66</sup> Keele University Library, Sneyd MSS, SC7/281, Sixth Duke of Devonshire to Ralph Sneyd, 10 March 1840.

<sup>67</sup> See, for example, British Library MSS, Berry Papers, Volume I, Additional Mss 37726, f. 142-3, Georgiana Carlisle, Castle Howard, to Miss Berry, November 23 (1817).

<sup>68</sup> Crawford, 'The construction and experience of maternity', p. 11; Lewis, *In the Family Way*, pp. 201-2.

<sup>69</sup> Wilson, 'The ceremony of childbirth', pp. 91-2.

churching, or in the following few days, and it could be a lavish affair.<sup>70</sup> At her christening, Georgiana Carlisle was given many extravagant gifts, including a board of different coloured stones, including diamonds, from the Prince of Wales, later George IV.<sup>71</sup> It was at this ceremony that dynastic domesticity took its public form with the parents and the child together, a public and formal expression of their commitment to the family. The parents were not only expressing their religious beliefs, but also declaring their intentions to ensure the future of the family dynasty, a future in which the woman played an important and powerful role. In both ceremonies, the public function of elite childbirth would be marked, and through the rituals women were able to assert their role as a dutiful mother through performativity. The ceremonies allowed her to highlight her status and her virtuous dedication to her child and dynasty which she had now enhanced by ensuring its future success.

In becoming a mother, the elite woman of the eighteenth century was fulfilling both her dynastic and domestic roles. She was ensuring that there was a family that would be able to further the family interest as well as providing children to enhance the happy partnership between herself and her husband. The pregnancy and childbirth stages were essentially female experiences, and women were reliant on their sisters and mothers for support and advice. However, fathers were not disinterested spectators, and actively supported their wives and children through their pregnancies and births. Together, the male and female relatives would assist the women, and ensure that they were central to the pregnancy and childbirth. This encouragement allowed women to be empowered by their pregnancies, which lasted throughout their time as mothers. The collaborative approach to the pregnancy also meant that women found it a pleasurable experience, as they were well supported and cared for. Through pregnancy women could begin to become emotionally tied to their baby, and were concerned with its well-being from its first kicks in the womb. Because of the affectionate attachment created before the birth and the support that they gained from their family, women were fully prepared to take on the next stage of motherhood, the care and management of young children.

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<sup>70</sup> Georgiana Carlisle was churched just before the christening of Elizabeth on 12 January 1817. Carlisle MSS, J18/62/5, Pocket Book, 1816.

<sup>71</sup> Carlisle MSS, A5/166, Probate of the will and codicil of the Rt. Hon. Georgiana Dorothy Countess of Carlisle, 15 June 1859.

## Being a Mother

The majority of the women in this study were actively involved in the care of their children, and the mother played an important role in their upbringing. The legal frameworks of the period meant that the position of the elite mother could be difficult. Children were the responsibility of the father and in the case of a marital breakdown, the wife had no rights regarding the children.<sup>72</sup> Aristocratic children were considered to be part of the male line of the family, the property of the father in the same way a wife was. However, as was the case with marriage, the laws did not shape the nature of relations in most families. The harmonious nature of much of elite family life meant that women played an active and important role in the care of their children. Women did not simply produce the children and abandon them; from the medieval period (at least) the dominant feature of mothering was the nurturing of the child, rather than its reproduction.<sup>73</sup> Practical, medical and emotional care often fell to the mother, with the father's support, and women were responsible for making the majority of decisions regarding the care of the children. While it was possible that the dynastic desire to produce well-educated young aristocrats could have led to a conflict between the affectionate and the aristocratic, the ideals of dynastic domesticity meant that both concerns could be balanced, and that a fond mother/child relationship was common. Within the houses studied, there is overwhelming evidence that most parents cared deeply for their children, and brought them up within a loving family; they were not neglectful or indifferent parents. Elite motherhood during this period appears to have been essentially affectionate, and the needs of the child shaped the reactions of women to their maternal responsibilities. This affection often made motherhood a joyful experience, and so the pleasure and power possessed by aristocratic women is presented, showing the caring, empowering and positive nature of dynastic domesticity.

For many mothers, the first decision that they had to make was whether to breastfeed their child or arrange for wet-nurses to be used. Throughout this period there was pressure on mothers to breastfeed, and by the late eighteenth century it was seen as their duty, an

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<sup>72</sup> P. Branca, *Women in Europe since 1750* (London, 1978), p. 111.

<sup>73</sup> Parsons and Wheeler, 'Introduction', p. xv.

important part of domestic motherhood.<sup>74</sup> Because of this pressure, it has been argued by historians that those women who ignored the advice and arranged wet-nurses were neglectful mothers, and the large numbers of children who died while in the care of these surrogate mothers is often noted.<sup>75</sup> However, this argument does not reflect the complexities of the issues regarding feeding a child. There were numerous reasons why women would choose wet-nursing, including a desire to avoid the indelicacy of nursing or to save their figures, as there were many reasons why breastfeeding was chosen too, including a desire to avoid pregnancy and a distaste for the lower classes from whom wet-nurses were recruited.<sup>76</sup> The evidence that survives from a small number of the women in this survey suggests that the choice whether to breast-feed or use a wet-nurse was based on the needs of the baby. Those who did feed their own children often enjoyed it; it was not the 'tedious chore' described by Stone, and featured in Gillray's satirical sketch, *The Fashionable Mother*.<sup>77</sup> In the 1780s, Georgiana Devonshire breastfed her first child, as she believed it was best for the baby, although it caused her in-laws to complain because of the perceived contraceptive effects of breastfeeding; she had not yet produced a son and heir. Despite this she delayed weaning her daughter, later Georgiana Carlisle, and when she eventually stopped feeding her herself, she wrote of her sadness: 'I have been twenty times going to take [her] up in my arms and run away and suckle her - I would give the world for her dear little eager mouth at my breast'.<sup>78</sup> Harriet Sutherland described the same feelings as her grandmother fifty years later, writing: 'I believe I wean on Wednesday or Thursday, which I dread as a sort of separation from the darling thing'.<sup>79</sup> Within the same family, women also chose to use wet-nurses. The decisions taken by Georgiana Carlisle and her daughter, Georgiana Dover, in the early nineteenth century did not reflect an elite indifference to their offspring, but was a positive move to ensure the well-being of their

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<sup>74</sup> One of the early texts was by the Countess of Lincoln, who wrote a pamphlet to encourage women to breastfeed their own babies in 1622. E. Clinton, *The Countesse of Lincolnes Nurserie* (Oxford, 1622).

<sup>75</sup> For example: E. Badinter, *Mother Love: Myth and Reality. Motherhood in Modern History* (New York, N.Y., 1981), passim; E. Shorter, *The Making of the Modern Family* (London, 1976), esp. p. 201.

<sup>76</sup> Lewis, *In the Family Way*, pp. 212-13.

<sup>77</sup> See plate six. *Ibid.*, p. 209.

<sup>78</sup> Quoted in *Ibid.*, p. 210.

<sup>79</sup> Leconfield, *Three Howard Sisters*, p. 99.

children.

When Georgiana Dover's first child born in 1824, it was very small and weak. As Georgiana was only young, the nurses thought that she would be unable to provide the baby with as much milk as it needed, and so she had to endure, in her mother's words: 'the trial of nursing another child whilst its Mother suckles hers'.<sup>80</sup> The use of the word 'trial' here is interesting as it appears that Georgiana Carlisle understood the closeness between mother and child created by breastfeeding and so lamented that she and her daughter were unable to enjoy this.<sup>81</sup> It may also reflect her own recollections of the displeasure of feeding another woman's child. The decision for Lady Dover not to breastfeed was a pragmatic one, based on the needs of the baby. She would have been aware of the pressure placed on aristocratic mothers to breastfeed their children, but she was unable to fulfil this task. She could have ignored the advice, and fed her own child as opposed to someone else's. However, she knew that this was not best for her baby and so had to take the more difficult, and unfashionable, choice.

It was less clear why her mother used wet-nurses, but it appears that it was out of concern for her babies too. Georgiana Carlisle may have used them at first because she feared the contraceptive benefits of breastfeeding, even though she had '20 troubles about wet-nurses' after the birth of her fourth child.<sup>82</sup> Once she had enough children to ensure the continuance of the family name, it appears that she felt concerned about her own ability to nurse the children successfully. She suffered from a nervous disposition, and medical opinion in this period argued that delicate women were bad nurses, as their worries and anxieties were passed on to the child.<sup>83</sup> It may be that she was reluctant to feed her children herself as she believed wet-nurses provided a better option for the children. For the two Georgianas it was their affection for their children that was central to their decision whether they breastfed rather than selfish needs, or the desire to follow fashionable advice.

The needs of the child were also central to decisions made regarding the general

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<sup>80</sup> Carlisle MSS, J18/2/2, Georgiana Carlisle, Grosvenor Place, to sixth Earl of Carlisle, n.d. It appears that she would have fed the baby of the wet-nurse.

<sup>81</sup> Lewis, *In the Family Way*, p. 210.

<sup>82</sup> H. Cavendish, *Hary-o. The Letters of Lady Harriet Cavendish 1796-1809*, ed. G. Leveson Gower and I. Palmer (London, 1940), p. 117.

<sup>83</sup> Lewis, *In the Family Way*, pp. 212-13.

health of children. Parents were keen to hire the best staff to care for their young children, and ensured that they or relations would closely monitor nurses and other staff. While it was common for mothers to leave their children in their first months in order to recover from the birth and to fulfil political or familial duties, they were normally keen to be kept informed about their children's health and reassured about the quality of care they were receiving. In 1772, for example, Caroline Carlisle was pleased to hear from her stepmother that her first daughter was well, and that she approved of the nurse.<sup>84</sup> The fragility of the life of the eighteenth-century child was well understood among the aristocracy, and because of the affection they felt for their children, parents showed concern if there were any signs of illness. Arthur Irwin was worried when his son John was unwell in 1694 writing: 'your father is so much concerned for Jhony [sic] that he can not think of any else. I hope there is no danger of him'.<sup>85</sup> The dynastic concerns of the family meant that grandparents were worried too. In the 1760s, his wife, Isabella Irwin was anxious to receive regular reports regarding the health of her great-grandchildren, the daughters of Frances Irwin, who were Isabella's only hope for the continuation of the family name.<sup>86</sup> She would have been relieved to hear in 1764 that the girls were healthy and fully recovered from smallpox, as Isabella lost her two eldest sons to the disease.<sup>87</sup> The development and promotion of the smallpox vaccine during the eighteenth century reflects how childhood (and adult) illnesses were a cause for concern, and that people recognized that ill health was not inevitable but could be prevented and limited. Although, by modern standards, there were high levels of infant mortality, this was not due to parental neglect. It has been noted that the higher survival rates among the children of the aristocracy may have been due to their better quality diet, and Trumbach, for example, argues that the drop in infant mortality after 1750

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<sup>84</sup> PRO 30/29/4/2/68, Caroline Carlisle, Spa, Brussels, to Countess Susan Gower, 27 August 1772.

<sup>85</sup> WYAS, Leeds, Pawson MSS, Ac 1038, Volume 7 (April 1691-December 1704), Arthur Irwin, London, to Isabella Irwin, Temple Newsam, 27 December [1694].

<sup>86</sup> WYAS, Leeds, TN/C/19/87, Sam Keeling, Temple Newsam, to Isabella Irwin, 15 July 1763.

<sup>87</sup> It is not clear whether the girls had full-blown smallpox or were inoculated, as Mrs Ramsden commented that she wished her son had 'had it so well', but as he was too young to be inoculated, he had suffered badly; WYAS, Leeds, TN/C/19/117, Isabella Ramsden to Isabella Irwin, 16 May 1764. For a discussion of adult ill health see chapter seven.

was due to increased levels of maternal affection.<sup>88</sup> However, my evidence suggests that there was no significant rise in affection, as there were loving parents throughout the eighteenth century. Through this period, parents were keen to invest both their own time and in the skills and knowledge of professional in order to ensure the health and safety of their children.

In order to ensure the health of their children, women took an active role in controlling advice and medication given to them if they fell ill. Isabella Irwin was concerned in 1709 when her son William was given medicine by the household staff, while she was away, as they had not consulted her. She did not trust the staff to act in the best interests of her child and insisted that a doctor was called so that William could be given something 'beneficial'.<sup>89</sup> Parents were often given a range of advice when their children were unwell, and the widespread knowledge of traditional medicines meant that they faced a dilemma between familial and medical advice. Elite women were often well informed regarding about home medicines. For example, Isabella Carlisle had a recipe book that included treatments for childhood diseases, including whooping cough, that may have been used by her children and grandchildren.<sup>90</sup> If the staff at Castle Howard used these medicines they would have had at least the tacit consent of Isabella, so by writing the text she continued to have some control even when she was away from her children. This knowledge could also be used to argue against following medical advice. When Talbot Clifford Constable suffered from a bowel disorder in his early years, his mother, Marianne, was warned against using 'violent minerals and medicines' by her cousin.<sup>91</sup> There was a growing fear that the prescribed medicines may have had a negative effect on young children, causing more damage than the original complaint. Mothers like Marianne had to decide whether the doctors or her family offered the best advice for her child's well-being.

Infectious diseases were a particular concern for parents, especially for those with a number of children. In March 1845 two sons of the third Earl and Countess of Harewood

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<sup>88</sup> Trumbach *Rise of the Egalitarian Family*, chapter five.

<sup>89</sup> WYAS, Leeds, Pawson MSS, Ac 1038, Volume 7 (April 1691-December 1704), Isabella Irwin to John Roades, 30 April 1709.

<sup>90</sup> Carlisle MSS, J13/1/4, My Book of Receipts, f. 29.

<sup>91</sup> ERYARS, DDCC/144/33, George Clifford, Tixall, Staffs, to Marianne Clifford Constable, 24 February 1829.

died, possibly from a shared disease, although the cause of death remains unknown.<sup>92</sup> In the same way that smallpox was a worry in the eighteenth century, cholera was a particular concern in the nineteenth century. Parents became anxious following an outbreak in November 1831, and some sought to leave urban areas whenever possible. Harriet Sutherland and her children left London for Scotland the following year, and she gave them all precautionary medicine to protect them from cholera during the journey. When her eldest son fell ill, she was most alarmed, and then embarrassed when she discovered that it was only a childish disease. She was angry that she had made herself so anxious: 'I shall be ashamed, at least if he gets well I shall be so, to think how terribly nervous I have been, and to feel how unfitted I am *now* for the care of my sick children'.<sup>93</sup> Harriet's fears and concerns for her children reflect how close she was to them, and the possible intensity of emotional relationship between mothers and their children. Harriet was also aware of the importance of her role and feared that her self-inflicted ill health would have made her 'unfit' for the trials of motherhood. She, like many other parents, tried their best to ensure the health of their beloved children, a task that often led to anxious days, difficult decisions and, sometimes, unavoidable failures.

Medicines and treatments were not always successful, and, even among elite society, childhood death was common.<sup>94</sup> The responses of relations to a dead child differed regarding how long the child had lived, as there was a sense that children could be replaced. Thus when they had only lived for a short period of time, full-blown grief was not expected, and it was seen as a 'sad little happening' rather than a family tragedy.<sup>95</sup> In 1824 Julia Howard noted after her great-niece Caroline Lascelles had lost her first child that she hoped that 'she will soon have another child to occupy her mind and prevent her dwelling so much on her loss'.<sup>96</sup> Although baby William had lived for six months, he was still seen by some relatives as replaceable. However, mothers did not share this attitude, and Caroline

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<sup>92</sup> WYAS, Leeds, Harewood Accounts 258, Builders Account Book.

<sup>93</sup> Leconfield, *Three Howard Sisters*, pp. 193-4, 221, 236-38.

<sup>94</sup> Hollingsworth found that the rate of mortality for elite girls aged 0-15 years was 225 per thousand born between 1675-99 and 117.5 between 1800-24. By the period 1900-24 it had fallen to 27.3 per thousand. T. H. Hollingsworth, 'Demography of the British Peerage', Supplement to *Population Studies* 18.2 (1964), p. 62.

<sup>95</sup> Dally, *Inventing Motherhood*, p. 28.

<sup>96</sup> Carlisle MSS, J18/50, Julia Howard, The Priory, to Georgiana Carlisle, 20 December [1824].



genuinely grieved for her 'fine boy'.<sup>97</sup> While a child may have been considered replaceable by an aunt or a cousin, to the parents, especially the mother who had bonded with it during pregnancy, it was a significant blow. The wider family was more sympathetic to grief if the child had lived for some time. Louisa, the fourth daughter of the fifth Countess of Carlisle, had suffered from poor health for most of her three years, and when she died in June 1781, her mother, Caroline Carlisle, was greatly upset by the death.<sup>98</sup> Her father had a more pragmatic response, remembering that they had other children who needed their care, but he was willing to support Caroline in her grief. The family gave her the space to grieve for her daughter, and it was not suggested that young Louisa was replaceable. There are examples of parental grief throughout this period, and cases from the early modern period, such as that of Mary Rich who was thought to have died of grief after losing a child, reflect that affectionate parent/child relations were not an eighteenth-century development.<sup>99</sup> The death of a child within the dynastic domestic home would have been a blow to the parents, as they not only lost part of the future plans for the family, but were also deprived of a child for whom they had genuine affection for.

Mothers were not only concerned with the health and well-being of their children in relation to diseases, but also their long-term needs of care, education and discipline. There was plenty of advice regarding how to bring up children in the eighteenth century; from philosophical texts, medical treatise to children's literature, the care and management of infants were central concerns during this period.<sup>100</sup> There is evidence that many of the women in this survey read childcare manuals and guidance books for mothers. Just after the birth of her first daughter, Frances Irwin ordered Rousseau's *La Nouvelle Héloïse*

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<sup>97</sup> Keele University Library, Sneyd MSS, SC5/5, Georgiana Morpeth to Ralph Sneyd, 28 December 1824.

<sup>98</sup> Carlisle MSS, J15/1/29, Frederick, fifth Earl of Carlisle, Dublin Castle, to Caroline Carlisle, 19 January 1781; PRO 30/29/4/2/73, Caroline, fifth Countess of Carlisle, Dublin Castle, to Countess Susan Gower, 13 March 1781; PRO 30/29/4/2/74, Frederick, fifth Earl of Carlisle, to Countess Susan Gower, 10 June 1781.

<sup>99</sup> Both Stone and Trumbach suggest that it was: Stone, *Sex and Marriage*, chapter nine; Trumbach, *Rise of the Egalitarian Family*, chapter five. For discussions of early modern maternal grief see: S. H. Mendelson and P. Crawford, *Women in Early Modern England, 1550-1720* (Oxford, 1998) p. 156; P. Phillippy, 'London's mourning garment: maternity, mourning and royal succession', in *Maternal Measures. Figuring Caregiving in the Early Modern Period*, ed. N. J. Miller and N. Yavneh (Aldershot, 2000), pp. 319-22; Crawford, 'The construction and experience of maternity', p. 23.

<sup>100</sup> For a discussion of the range of texts which explored childcare see Myers, 'Impeccable governesses', pp. 31-2.

(1761) and Sarah Pennington's *Unfortunate Mother's Advice to her Absent Daughters* (1761), two texts that formed a central part of the libraries of fashionable mothers in the sentimental age.<sup>101</sup> Her choice of Pennington is particularly interesting as her work gives advice to daughters who had become estranged from their mother. As Frances appears to have had no contact with a mother figure she may have felt in need of the maternal voice to advise her in the guidance of her own children. Frances also purchased books to help her in the education of her daughters. While tutors and governesses were hired, some mothers took an active lead in the education themselves. In 1770 she bought a copy of 'Letters between Master Tommy and Miss Nancy Goodwill', which was derived, in part, from Sarah Fielding's *The Governess* (1749).<sup>102</sup> Georgiana Carlisle was also an active educator, and her early nineteenth-century letters include descriptions of what she was teaching her own children and grandchildren.<sup>103</sup> She was keen to help the young children read and write, and took notes from the books that she read, including a life of Frederick the Great and Mrs Trollope's *Domestic Manners of the Americans* (1832), probably for the education of her older children.<sup>104</sup> By educating their children, elite women were fulfilling an important role of the idealized mother in the period. While they had professional tutors on their staff, women such as Georgiana and Frances felt it important to perform the role of mother as educator. From the second half of the eighteenth century didactic literature increasingly celebrated the role of mother as educator, and it was an important way that women could publicly use their intellectual skills for the good of their family.<sup>105</sup> By purchasing texts in their own name, describing the lesson in letters and having themselves painted educating their children, women publicly confirmed their status as a virtuous,

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<sup>101</sup> WYAS, Leeds, TN/EA/12/18 Bills for Books, stationery, etc., Bill to Mrs Ingram from William Randall, 2 January 1761.

<sup>102</sup> WYAS, Leeds, TN/EA/12/18 Bills for Books, stationery, etc., Bill from J. Ogle to Frances Irwin. The text when through numerous editions.

<sup>103</sup> For example: PRO 30/29/17/5/8, Georgiana Morpeth to Harriet Granville, Castle Howard [1813?]; Carlisle MSS, J18/62/16, Diary written for her grandson George Howard, July 1848.

<sup>104</sup> Carlisle MSS, J8/62/15, A case of books, Memoranda. The life of Frederick the Great may have been that written by her son-in-law, George Dover, *The Life of Frederic the Second, King of Prussia*, Two Volumes (London, 1832).

<sup>105</sup> Myers, 'Impeccable governesses', p. 35. In Mary Wollstonecraft's work women were only given an intellectual voice when they fulfilled the role of pedagogue. B. Taylor, *Mary Wollstonecraft and the Feminist Imagination* (Cambridge, 2003), p. 34.

successful and empowered mothers. (See plate seven)

Academic education was not a mother's only concern; she also needed to teach their children how to become aristocrats. Children's manners were very important, especially to aristocratic parents, as the ability to perform the role of the diplomatic networker was important for those who wanted successful political careers. Childish rudeness was often criticized by mothers. In the mid-nineteenth century Mary Barbara Chichester was furious when her son forgot to thank her for the money she had sent, exclaiming: 'what is the matter with you!!'.<sup>106</sup> Georgiana Carlisle's youngest daughter, Mary, also showed signs of disobedient behaviour, and in 1829 her mother felt compelled to monitor her for signs of improvement through the use of a diary.<sup>107</sup> Throughout Mary's difficult stage Georgiana continued to show her affection for her daughter, calling her 'dearest little Mary', even though she found it infuriating whenever Mary and her sister quarrelled. Georgiana carefully noted signs of improvement, and tried to stimulate good behaviour through praise and encouragement. This response to a naughty child shows how affectionate forms of discipline were preferred to physical assaults, and the dedication that a mother could show to her children.<sup>108</sup>

Despite the worries over children's health, education, and development, most women appear to have enjoyed being a mother, and gained a great deal of joy from their role. Women were expected to find motherhood a joyful experience; Georgiana Carlisle described having a loving husband and 'children that answer my fondest expectations' as the very basis of happiness.<sup>109</sup> Women were often very emotionally close to their children, especially if their husband spent a lot of time away; Frances Irwin, for example, was dependent on her children's affection during Lord Irwin's absences in the 1760s.<sup>110</sup> If

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<sup>106</sup> Brynmor Jones Library, Charles Chichester MSS, DDCH/58, Letter from Lady Chichester to Raleigh Chichester, n.d.

<sup>107</sup> Carlisle MSS, J18/62/9, Journal about her daughter, Mary Howard, 19 October 1829-26 November 1829.

<sup>108</sup> For discussion on the shift away from physical punishment after the early seventeenth century see Stone, *Family, Sex and Marriage*, pp. 433-7.

<sup>109</sup> Carlisle MSS, J18/74, Georgiana, sixth Countess of Carlisle, Writings on Religious Topics, prayer written by Georgiana, sixth Countess of Carlisle, undated.

<sup>110</sup> PRO 30/29/4/2/3, Frances Irwin, Temple Newsam, to Susan Stewart, n.d.; PRO 30/29/4/2/23, Frances Irwin to Countess Susan Gower, Temple Newsam, 5 February 1767.

circumstances meant that women were separated from their children, they were anxious for news about their offspring. In 1823, Georgiana Dover described reading letters about her absent children as: 'some of the pleasantest [sic] moments I have passed'.<sup>111</sup> The idea that children were 'delightful' was common by the nineteenth century, and mothers sympathized with one another if they were away from them; Elizabeth Rutland noted that life could appear 'so dull and dismal without them'.<sup>112</sup> During these absences, women often wrote of their impatience to see their children, and hoped that arrangements would be made for the children to go to them as soon as possible.<sup>113</sup> The pleasure felt by a mother when with her children was recognized as being so strong that it was even thought to have healing properties, and when women were feeling lonely, they were encouraged to be with their children.<sup>114</sup>

It was often the case that mothers could share the joy of parenthood with their husbands. There are examples of loving father/child relations throughout the period, and there is little evidence to suggest any reluctance among men to express affection towards their children. The fifth Earl of Carlisle has been described as a harsh, patriarchal figure, who ruled Castle Howard with solemn silence, discouraging noise from his children.<sup>115</sup> His letters, though, indicate that he was clearly very fond of his offspring. When he was leaving for America as part of a mission to report on the calls for independence, he was concerned about his children and would what happen to them if he did not return.<sup>116</sup> He was also worried that the children would miss him too much, and insisted that they did not speak of him for two months, in order to prevent upsetting themselves and their mother, reflecting how 'patriarchal' behaviour and affection were not mutually exclusive. Many

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<sup>111</sup> Keele University Library, Sneyd MSS, SC9/182, Georgiana Agar Ellis to Ralph Sneyd, Paris, November 1823.

<sup>112</sup> Carlisle MSS, J18/48/8, Duchess of Rutland to Georgiana Morpeth, Belvoir Castle, n.d.

<sup>113</sup> For example Carlisle MSS, J15/1/45, Gertrude Stanley to Caroline Carlisle, 3 July, n.y.

<sup>114</sup> Devonshire MSS, Letters of the fifth Duke of Devonshire, 1874, Lord Hartington to Georgiana Morpeth, 10 March 1806.

<sup>115</sup> Venetia Murray describes him as a 'querulous martinet' in *Castle Howard: the Life and Times of A Stately Home* (London, 1994), p. 115. Murray appears to have based this opinion on Harriet Cavendish's letters, which regularly contained remarks on the silence during dinners at Castle Howard, and 'Il règne en despote'. However, witty young Harriet's remarks need to be read with a degree of caution. Cavendish, *Hary-o*, p. 106.

<sup>116</sup> Carlisle MSS, J15/1/5, Frederick fifth Earl of Carlisle to Caroline Carlisle, Portsmouth, n.d.

children missed their fathers through this period, indicating how close the tie was. Frances Irwin's eldest daughter was 'forty times a day wishing for her papa' while he was away on parliamentary business in the 1760s.<sup>117</sup> Fathers returned this affection, and often expressed how they missed their children in their letters; in 1694 Arthur Irwin wrote to his wife: 'I hope my dearest is well and all the lettill boys I long to bee with' [sic].<sup>118</sup> More than a hundred years later George Carlisle asked his wife to kiss his son for him, indicating how a paternal love existed within these aristocratic families throughout the long eighteenth century.<sup>119</sup>

Artistic representations of children, as discussed in chapter three, also reflected the degree of affection parents had for their children, whether it was commissioning a full scale portrait or purchasing a print of an existing work for family friends.<sup>120</sup> The conversation piece portrait often displayed an affectionate relationship between mother and child. Although there are examples of these throughout the eighteenth century, the portraits by Reynolds after 1755 particularly represent this close relationship.<sup>121</sup> The 'Madonna and child' theme continued into the nineteenth century, with Thomas Lawrence's portraits of Harriet Sutherland (plate seven) and Georgiana Dover, which them as mothers with children on their knees.<sup>122</sup> These pictures also played an important dynastic role, and the depiction of mother and child did not only represent maternal love, but also celebrated the

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<sup>117</sup> PRO 30/29/4/2/3, Frances Shephard, Temple Newsam, to Susan Stewart, n.d.

<sup>118</sup> WYAS, Leeds, Pawson MSS, Ac 1038, Volume 7 (April 1691-December 1704), Arthur Irwin, London, to Isabella Irwin, Temple Newsam, 29 December [1694].

<sup>119</sup> Carlisle MSS, J18/1 (Book 40, 17), George Morpeth, Newcastle, to Georgiana Morpeth, 3 July 1802.

<sup>120</sup> A print of the Lascelles children was bought for the steward in 1796. WYAS, Leeds, Harewood accounts 189, Household Accounts.

<sup>121</sup> Stone, *Family, Sex and Marriage*, pp. 412, 456. Portraits by Reynolds of mothers and children from this sample group include the portraits of Georgiana Devonshire and her daughter, later sixth Countess of Carlisle (1784); Mrs Delmé (née Howard) and her children (177); and Anne Chaloner, first Countess of Harewood with her infant daughter, Frances (1762-4). D. Mannings and M. Postle, *Sir Joshua Reynolds: A Complete Catalogue of His Paintings* (London, 2000).

<sup>122</sup> K. Garlick, *Sir Thomas Lawrence: A Complete Catalogue of the Oil Paintings* (Oxford, 1989), pp. 134-7.



Plate Seven.

*Harriet Sutherland.*

Thomas Lawrence, 1828.

active role that the women played in ensuring the future of the family.<sup>123</sup> The picture of Harriet, for example, also reflects her roles as educator, with a book in hand and an interested child alert to her directions. By celebrating a woman's motherhood in art her status within the family was confirmed and made permanent for future generations.

Not all parents, though, were loving. In the mid-eighteenth century, Colonel Charles Ingram seemed to have preferred the army to his family, and although his children missed him greatly he was not anxious to return home to them.<sup>124</sup> His uncle Edward Irwin also only showed a limited interest in his daughter, although her early death meant that the relationship was not given opportunity to flourish.<sup>125</sup> There are also many mothers within this survey who have left no trace of their feelings regarding their children. While it may be that they did not record their attachment to their children because there was no affection, it is also possible that their papers simply do not survive in sufficient numbers to include details of their relationship with their offspring. All the significant archival collections of mothers within this sample do include evidence of the joy and dedication to the role. In most cases the relationship between parent and children was close, and based on mutual love and affection. For most, motherhood was a joyful experience, and while the mother had a number of roles to fulfil, as educator, carer, and advisor, it is unusual to find complaints. Those women who were unhappy with their lives as elite women, such as Georgiana Devonshire, often found being a mother one of their few joys.<sup>126</sup> Mary Wollstonecraft noted that 'the neglected wife is, in general, the best mother', but the cases of Georgiana Dover and Frances Irwin show that even the most besotted of wives could be

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<sup>123</sup> For a discussion of genealogical preoccupations within the eighteenth-century conversation piece see M. Pointon, *Hanging the Head. Portraiture and Social Formation in Eighteenth-Century England* (London, 1993), chapter six.

<sup>124</sup> WYAS, Leeds, Pawson MSS, Ac 1038, Volume 10 (January 1748-December 1776), Henry Irwin to Isabella Irwin, Windsor, 27 January 1748.

<sup>125</sup> WYAS, Leeds, TN/C/5/173, Edward Irwin to his brother Arthur Ingram, December [1685?].

<sup>126</sup> Exhausted by the demands placed on her by her social life, which conflicted with her desire to spend time with her children, she wrote to her mother: '*cette chiene de vie me tue* [this bitch of a life is killing me]'. Lewis, *In the Family Way*, p. 68

affectionate mothers too.<sup>127</sup> They were empowered by their ability to shape their children's education and by their responsibilities to ensure that the child's health and development were well managed. They could express their joys of motherhood through their correspondence with other mothers, and artistic representations. The dynastic role of the mother was also important, as the successful continuation of the family was their responsibility. However, it was the pleasure of motherhood, especially the love that they felt for their children, which meant that they were largely happy performing the role of 'mother'.

### Always a Mother

As the children became older, the role of the mother changed, becoming an advisor rather than a carer. Aristocratic parents were instrumental in guiding the future lives of their children, through the identification of potential spouses and suggesting career paths. As the elite system of employment was based on patronage, the need for parental support was acute for younger sons who needed to find an income.<sup>128</sup> As discussed in the previous chapter, parents were also important in the marriage market, and mothers would show as much interest in identifying spouses for sons as for daughters, although their wishes were not always fulfilled. In 1707 Isabella Irwin had great hopes that her eldest son would marry local landowner and heiress Betty Hastings, but unspecified rumours about Lady Betty, and Edward's early death, meant that both never married.<sup>129</sup> Parents were also the source of financial and emotional support for children and so the ties between them could continue to be very strong even when the children had become parents themselves. The relationship between mothers and their older and adult children remained an affectionate one, and that as the child matured, the mother became an increasingly powerful influence in their lives. The eighteenth-century aristocratic system encouraged children to maintain close

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<sup>127</sup> Wollstonecraft, *Vindication*, p. 97.

<sup>128</sup> Elaine Chalus has studied the importance of patronage in the late eighteenth century in 'Women in English Political Life, 1754-1790', DPhil Thesis (University of Oxford, 1997).

<sup>129</sup> WYAS, Leeds, Pawson MSS, Ac 1038, Volume 8 (January 1705-December 1716), Edward Irwin to Isabella Irwin, 9 June 1707.



relationships with their birth family, even after marriage, meaning that motherhood was a lifelong vocation. The effects of dynastic domesticity shaped the lives of children even into adulthood.

The main role of eighteenth-century aristocratic parents was to ensure that their children would be equipped with the skills and finances so that they could be successful aristocrats too. In their teenage years, their childhood training and education would have come to fruition, and spouses and careers needed to be chosen. Younger sons were normally helped in their choice of employment by their fathers, who would have been able to use the contacts that they had formed through political and social activities to seek patronage for their sons' political, military, clerical or legal careers. However, if the mother was better socially connected, or the father had died, the responsibility was often placed with the mother. Isabella Irwin was widowed in 1702, and was left with nine sons, aged between one and sixteen years old. When her father died a few years later, Isabella had no significant male relatives to help her with the upbringing of her boys. In 1709 she wrote to the Temple Newsam estate manager, John Rodes for advice regarding 'disposing of my sons'. Her eldest son, now Viscount Irwin, was unwilling to find positions for his brothers, and Isabella could not extract practical advice from male acquaintances, as they replied to her requests with compliments rather than information.<sup>130</sup> Some of her sons took a career within the army, although providing them with enough money to buy regimental commissions was a drain on the estate finances. She was anxious to encourage her third son, Arthur, to take up a career in Law, but she had a great deal of trouble persuading him to join the profession, and in finding a suitable attorney to train him.<sup>131</sup> After many quarrels, he agreed to train for the Bar on condition that she would pay for him to lodge in rooms at the Temple, the most expensive option for the financially insecure Temple

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<sup>130</sup> WYAS, Leeds, Pawson MSS, Ac 1038, Volume 7 (April 1691-December 1704), Isabella Irwin, Horsham, to John Rodes, Temple Newsam, 17 September 1709.

<sup>131</sup> WYAS, Leeds, Pawson MSS, Ac 1038, Volume 7 (April 1691-December 1704), Isabella Irwin, Horsham, to John Rodes, Temple Newsam, 11 August 1709.

Newsam estate to manage.<sup>132</sup> By making this compromise, Isabella was balancing her affectionate relationship with her son with the dynastic issues relating to the family finances.

Parents did not only have to negotiate with their children regarding jobs; sibling squabbles were common place, and they often led to their parents having to be peacemakers. The three daughters of the third Earl of Carlisle often quarrelled amongst themselves and with their mother, each reporting the details of their dispute to their father.<sup>133</sup> The sons of Isabella Irwin were also argumentative and jealous when one son appeared to be gaining more of their mother's attention than another. In 1708, for example, Rich Ingram wrote to his mother:

Dear Madam. I am sorry the company of an elder Son should put quite out of you thoughts a poor younger that has no pleasure in this world but in your welfare; I hope your Ladyship upon these considerations will revive my drooping spirits with a line.<sup>134</sup>

Some of the Ingram brothers became resentful when their eldest brother, who would have held the position of Viscount Irwin, began to interfere with their affairs.<sup>135</sup> In 1735 Arthur Irwin was arguing with his younger brother Henry regarding the Horsham estate, and they both wrote to their mother to ask her to mediate in the affair.<sup>136</sup> Both sons were careful not to upset Isabella, now in her sixties, noting that 'we all ought to do what we can to make the finishing of it as easy to you as maybe', but still they continued to air their complaints about one another through her until the issue was resolved.<sup>137</sup>

Many of the complaints between siblings were financial in nature, and the aristocratic

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<sup>132</sup> WYAS, Leeds, Pawson MSS, Ac 1038, Volume 7 (April 1691-December 1704), Isabella Irwin, London, to John Roades, Temple Newsam, 3 January 1710.

<sup>133</sup> See, for example, Carlisle MSS, J8/1/360, Elizabeth Lechmere to the third Earl of Carlisle, 4 July 1721.

<sup>134</sup> WYAS, Leeds, TN/C/10/67, Rich Ingram to Isabella Irwin, 4 April 1708.

<sup>135</sup> See for example: Historical Manuscripts Commission, *Reports on Manuscripts in Various Collections*, Volume 8 (London, 1913), p. 90.

<sup>136</sup> Horsham Museum, Machell Ingram MSS, 792.37, Henry Ingram to Isabella Irwin, 11 November 1735.

<sup>137</sup> Horsham Museum, Machell Ingram MSS, 792.39, Arthur Ingram to Isabella Irwin, 15 November 1735.

parent/adult child relationship was often shaped by money. Sometimes, parents were closely involved in the management of their children's finances. Isabella Irwin indirectly managed the Temple Newsam estate for many years after the death of her husband in 1702; several of her sons died young and intestate, and she was named as their executor. As the estate passed from brother to brother as five successive Viscount Irwins failed to produce an heir, Isabella continued to hold some control over the land until her grandson married in 1758. This power often placed Isabella in conflict with her sons. While her sons shared their father's taste for luxury, she desired prudence, and so she was often angered by their requests for money to cover debts.<sup>138</sup> When Henry, seventh Viscount Irwin succeeded his brother, she was reluctant to give him control of the whole estate, as she was still trying to deal with the debts of Rich, fifth Viscount. Her actions infuriated Henry, causing him to write: 'For Godsake madam have I hindered you for a moment from doing anything you or Peters thought proper to do in execution of your trust, or have I ever meddled in it in any shape?'.<sup>139</sup> Isabella needed to balance her sons' personal concerns with her responsibility for the wider dynastic future of the estate, but by using her emotional power as their mother, she was normally able to gain their respect and compliance in order to enable her to fulfil her duties as executor.

Most of the parents within the sample, however, were less involved in the estate finances of their adult children, and had a more formal relationship regarding money. The main way that provision for their children was made was through dowries and annuities. In the mid-nineteenth century the wealthy third Earl of Harewood was able to give £10,000 to each of his children as they came of age or as they married, and his wife Louisa also bequeathed items to her unmarried children, showing how mothers were able to help their children reach financial security too.<sup>140</sup> Parents sometimes covered smaller expenses if

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<sup>138</sup> For example: WYAS, Leeds, TN/C/10/292, Richard Hey to Isabella Irwin, 2 June 1713.

<sup>139</sup> Peters was Isabella's legal advisor; WYAS, Leeds, TN/C/15/121, Henry Irwin to Isabella Irwin, 27 June 1738.

<sup>140</sup> WYAS, Leeds, Harewood accounts 113, Statement of sums charged on the estate of the Earl of Harewood for the Jointure of the Countess of Harewood and the portions of the younger children of the late Earl and Viscount Lascelles, c. 1857; WYAS, Leeds, Harewood accounts 115, Epitome of the will of the Rt. Hon. Louisa, Countess Dowager of Harewood, 1 June 1858.

their children had a limited income, such as the cost of a tablecloth in case a visitor should call a student son, or medical bills.<sup>141</sup> The latter could grow considerably if an illness continued. The third Earl of Carlisle promised to cover the medical expenses of his daughter, Mary (1695-1786), so she could go to Bath and recover from an illness. Her ailments continued for many years, and whenever she showed signs of improvement, events always conspired to set back her recovery.<sup>142</sup> She felt embarrassed about the continued kindness that her father showed her: 'it affects me so when I reflect how much I have thrown away of your money and am no better ... I long to be at home, to see you and thank you for what you have done for me'.<sup>143</sup> Her continuing dependence on her father meant that their relationship had the potential to be difficult. However, their reciprocal affection meant that they could continue to support one another without resenting their position.

Despite differences regarding money, and continued parental interference, it was important to all children to maintain a positive relationship with their parents, and many continued to actively declare their love. Sons were often protective of their mothers; Edward Irwin promised that he would travel down to London in order to escort his mother back to Temple Newsam 'like a gallant knight'.<sup>144</sup> Many letters written to mothers throughout the period would be addressed to their 'Honoured Mother' or 'Dear Mother'.<sup>145</sup> The use of affectionate terms reflects a closeness in the relationship. Georgiana Dover always called her parents 'Mama and Papa', even in her adult years, reflecting a degree of

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<sup>141</sup> WYAS, Leeds, Pawson MSS, Ac 1038, Volume 7 (April 1691-December 1704), Edward Irwin, to Isabella Irwin, 19 October 1702.

<sup>142</sup> Most dramatically, she was chased by a Bull through the streets of Bath, which undid the benefits of her long stay in the city. Carlisle MSS, J8/1/156, Mary Howard, Bath, to the third Earl of Carlisle, 14 March, n.y.

<sup>143</sup> Carlisle MSS, J8/1/158, Mary Howard, Bath, to the third Earl of Carlisle, 8 April, n.y.

<sup>144</sup> WYAS, Leeds, Pawson MSS, Ac 1038, Volume 9 (January 1717-December 1747), Arthur Ingram, Temple Newsam, to Isabella Irwin, Windsor, 19 December 1735.

<sup>145</sup> WYAS, Leeds, Pawson MSS, Ac 1038, Volume 7 (April 1691-December 1704), Edward Irwin to Isabella Irwin, Temple Newsam, 23 March, n.y.; WYAS, Leeds, TN/C/15/33, George Ingram to Isabella Irwin, 16 June 1736.

informality in the relationship.<sup>146</sup> As children aged, they increasingly recognized the importance of their mother to them, and vocalized their praise for them. In 1710 John Ingram described himself as 'the most ungratefulest of sons to the best of mothers', and when a parent herself, Georgiana Carlisle noted that her mother was 'superior to all mothers, even the good ones'.<sup>147</sup> The qualities of Georgiana as a mother were also appreciated by her children, and after her husband died she became particularly close to her eldest son, George, seventh Earl of Carlisle. George was unmarried, and he and his mother formed a close partnership at Castle Howard, where she continued to live. He spoke of the place as a 'House of Love', and his relationship with his mother as a 'marriage'. When he planned to leave for a tour of the eastern Mediterranean he reassured his mother:

You know I fully and most gladly feel that we are married together for life, but even the best marriages admit an occasional truancy, and with your great affluence of relatives and daughters, I think you may manage a single season very satisfactorily without me.<sup>148</sup>

By representing the partnership in this way, as a long term emotional commitment rather than an accident of biology, he elevated their relationship and the position of his mother within the house. His devotion to his mother was not based on duty, but on a deep and long term affection.

The love that children felt for their parents was reciprocated. In a number of cases parents grew more fond of certain children as they became adults, gaining a fresh appreciation of their sons and daughters.<sup>149</sup> Mothers would often sign their letters as

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<sup>146</sup> Keele University Library, Sneyd MSS, SC9/155, Georgiana Dover, Dover House, to Mr Ralph Sneyd, 20 June 1832. For a discussion of the importance of modes of address in assessing the degree of affection in a relationship see Stone, *Family Sex and Marriage*, pp. 329-30.

<sup>147</sup> WYAS, Leeds, Pawson MSS, Ac 1038, Volume 7 (April 1691-December 1704), John Ingram to Isabella Ingram, 20 November 1710; Carlisle MSS, J18/21/99, Georgiana Morpeth to Georgiana, Duchess of Devonshire, September 1804.

<sup>148</sup> Carlisle MSS, J18/3, Seventh Earl's correspondence with his mother; 19 February 1855 and 30 December 1852. Many thanks to Christopher Ridgway for these references.

<sup>149</sup> Georgiana Fullerton became Harriet Granville's favourite child in her last years, despite the fact that Susan Rivers was her favourite during their youth, and Georgiana had joined the Roman Catholic Church. B. Askwith, *Piety and Wit. A Biography of Harriet Countess Granville 1785-1862* (London, 1982), pp. 177-8.

'mama' even when the child was a mature adult, indicating a sentimental relationship.<sup>150</sup> This degree of sentiment is in evidence throughout the second half of the eighteenth century, and into the nineteenth century, although it is probably an absence of records rather than absence of affection that means there are fewer examples in the earlier eighteenth century.<sup>151</sup> In some letters, the affection was overwhelming; on seeing her newly married daughter, Georgiana Carlisle wrote: 'I am so happy, my heart quite overflows with happiness at seeing dear Caroline'.<sup>152</sup> When a family faced difficult times, the mother often desired the children to return home, as they did during the illness of the sixth Earl of Carlisle, leading his wife to write: 'You can imagine what support and comfort it has been to have my dearest children around me. He has seen them all and felt their kindness'.<sup>153</sup> Parents recognized the importance of the emotional unit of the family, and their gatherings were not simply dynastic displays, but time for mutual support and affection.

As their children matured and were able to be independent adults, this sentimental affection often developed into parental pride. Charles Carlisle was clearly proud when his daughter was awarded a Court position in 1736, but although he enjoyed her intellect and wit, he was keen to remind her to keep her learning hidden, as the educated woman was not widely celebrated in the early eighteenth century.<sup>154</sup> A century later, Georgiana Carlisle was happy to highlight the intellectual prowess of her son, George Morpeth, from his gaining a first-class degree at Oxford to his later talents at the parliamentary dispatch box.<sup>155</sup> Georgiana shared her pleasure of Morpeth's success with her husband, and was pleased that

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<sup>150</sup> For example, Isabella Irwin signed letters 'Mama Is. Irwin' to her son when he was in his fifties. WYAS, Leeds, TN/C/18/117, Isabella Irwin to George Ingram, 17 April 1750.

<sup>151</sup> Pollock argues that there was not a growth of affectionate parent/child relations in the eighteenth century, but just a growth in eloquence as language became increasingly romanticized in *Forgotten Children*, pp. 106-7.

<sup>152</sup> Devonshire MSS, Letters of the sixth Duke of Devonshire, 837, Georgiana Morpeth to sixth Duke of Devonshire, 2 September 1823.

<sup>153</sup> Keele University Library, Sneyd MSS, SC5/13, Georgiana Carlisle to Ralph Sneyd, 2 March, n.y.

<sup>154</sup> Carlisle MSS, J8/1/257, Anne Irwin to the third Earl of Carlisle, 3 April, n.y.

<sup>155</sup> Devonshire MSS, Letters of the sixth Duke of Devonshire, 748, Georgiana Morpeth to sixth Duke of Devonshire, 2 December 1822; Carlisle MSS, J18/70, Unbound copies from speeches and books written out by Georgiana, sixth Countess of Carlisle.

her son was talented enough to be able to promote the interests of the family into which she married, noting to her husband that George was 'a worthy scion of your House'.<sup>156</sup> Georgiana deeply loved her eldest son, and his continued success in the public world reflected her own success in providing her husband with an heir equal to the Carlisle title.

This love for their children meant that parents spent a great amount of time worrying for their adult offspring. Many of their concerns were based on their uncertainty of how their children would manage in the adult world. Isabella Irwin was anxious about twenty-three-year-old Edward being alone at Temple Newsam in 1709, and Georgiana Carlisle was troubled about the safety of young Harriet Sutherland on her honeymoon, as she had: 'no experienced person with her and she is delicate'.<sup>157</sup> Sometimes the worries were based on a real threat to their children's safety; for example a son's travels abroad often caused concern to their parents, especially as the distance meant that they had little control over the dangers they faced. This was a perennial problem; in 1704 Edward Irwin was angered by his trustees' decision to dismiss John Haccius as his tutor and insist he returned from his Grand Tour, as they and his mother thought Haccius unreliable and a poor influence.<sup>158</sup> In 1709, though, Edward Irwin wanted to return to Europe to visit Italy, where Haccius was based. His mother was most anxious about Irwin's plans, writing that if he made the journey: 'I shall never expect to see him alive, for twas God's great providence he escaped before'.<sup>159</sup> More than a hundred years later the Howards faced a similar problem. Frederick, the second son of the sixth Countess of Carlisle, faced money troubles while in India, caused by him being led astray by an unsuitable friend. He contacted his mother to inform her that he was returning home early, leaving Georgiana to tell her husband the full reason why. Her letter to her husband reflected the diplomacy necessary when dealing with

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<sup>156</sup> Carlisle MSS, J18/2/2, Georgiana Carlisle, Grosvenor Place, to sixth Earl of Carlisle, n.d.

<sup>157</sup> Horsham Museum, Machell Ingram MSS, 792.15, Letter from Isabella Irwin to Mr Roads, 19 of ?, 1709; Devonshire MSS, Letters of the sixth Duke of Devonshire, 851, Georgiana Morpeth to sixth Duke of Devonshire, 14 October 1823.

<sup>158</sup> WYAS, Leeds, TN/C/9/343, Edward Irwin, Cologne, to Isabella Irwin, London, 17 February 1704.

<sup>159</sup> WYAS, Leeds, Pawson MSS, Ac 1038, Volume 7 (April 1691-December 1704), Isabella Irwin, Horsham, to John Roades, Temple Newsam, 20 May 1709.

the parent of a wayward child. She was aware that her husband would feel responsible for his son's failings, and so flattered him by reminding him that Selina Trimmer, her virtuous childhood governess, thought George an excellent father. She also noted that: 'we must consider, my dearest Lord C, how much we are upon the whole blessed in our children, how particularly so in our eldest son'.<sup>160</sup> Her care to reassure her husband reflects how being a successful parent was a real concern to elites, and that the behaviour of adult children reflected upon their parents. It was most important, though, that their eldest son was a success, and because they could feel proud of him, the Carlises could consider themselves good parents. The dynastic responsibility of parents did not end with the production of heirs. They needed to produce a whole family of exemplary aristocratic adults who could further the family tradition with success, rather than shaming the parents and losing the fortune through dissipation.

Sometimes parents could no longer trust their children to uphold the ideals of the family, and severed ties with them. Isabella Irwin is alleged to have disowned her son John because he married a Quaker, and later settled in the colonies; failing to comply with the family needs and expectations could be a serious blow to familial relations.<sup>161</sup> Parental disputes with their children could have serious consequences. The continued arguments between Henry, second Earl of Harewood, and his eldest son and heir led to his disinheritance, which appears to have caused his father a great deal of sadness.<sup>162</sup> Deliberately severing connections with one's children was unusual, and because of the importance of family to the aristocracy, this would have been a last resort.

In the same way that children could cause embarrassment and worry to their parents, mothers and fathers could also hinder the success of their children. In the early eighteenth century Anne Carlisle, who had separated from the third Earl, had a difficult relationship with her daughters. Elizabeth Lechmere, whose drinking made her argumentative, found

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<sup>160</sup> Carlisle MSS, J18/2/4, Georgiana Carlisle to sixth Earl of Carlisle, n.d.

<sup>161</sup> James Lomax, pers. comm. The evidence for this is somewhat limited, although there are Americans who claim descent from John. These claims seem to have developed during the early twentieth century when the future of Temple Newsam house was under debate, and the American families wanted a settlement. See the Ingram genealogical website <<http://www.tbgen.com/ingram/ing18.html>> [8 April 2003]

<sup>162</sup> Leconfield, *Three Howard Sisters*, p. 52.



her mother particularly trying, as her sister, Anne Irwin, noted: 'mother and sister are just the same, some days worse here; we have had lately some very bad days, not quarrels but a good deal teasing; poor woman she plagues herself so that I wonder she is not quite wore out'.<sup>163</sup> While Anne and her sisters felt a sense of obligation to their mother, particularly when she was ill, Lady Carlisle's awkwardness and short temper meant that their relationship was based upon a sense of duty rather than affection.<sup>164</sup> Anne Irwin pityingly noted that her mother thought she was 'the most unfortunate Woman in the World, neither to be believed nor helped', an idea that Anne tacitly agreed with.<sup>165</sup> The fourth Countess, Isabella Carlisle, also had a difficult relationship with her children in her later life as her remarriage and self-imposed exile in France threatened the respectability of the Howard name. When she did return, although her children were happy to board her, they argued amongst themselves regarding the source of further income for their mother, and even her loyal daughter Julia was unwilling to relinquish any of her allowance in order to support Isabella.<sup>166</sup> When a mother threatened the status of a family because of her behaviour, the respect normally associated with the role could be diminished, and the affection strained.

Given the nature of aristocratic life, with its emphasis on continuity and succession, motherhood was often a long term commitment. It was a role that started in their teens, and while some women, including Isabella Irwin, outlived their children, for most women it was their own death that marked the end of their role as mother. This length of service meant that motherhood was an important factor in shaping the lives of many aristocratic women. Whilst the care of young children was the most time consuming, the role of the mother of adult children was an important one. The life-cycle of the mother, therefore, did not end

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<sup>163</sup> Carlisle MSS, J8/1/142, Mary Howard to the third Earl of Carlisle, 19 February [1733].

<sup>164</sup> Anne Carlisle suffered with ill health for many years, meaning that her daughters were regularly called upon to play the role of nurse; Carlisle MSS, J12/1/54, Anne Irwin, Kew, to Henry Howard, fourth Earl of Carlisle, 21 July, n.y.

<sup>165</sup> Carlisle MSS, J8/1/231, Anne Irwin to the third Earl of Carlisle, 19 November, n.y.

<sup>166</sup> Carlisle MSS, J14/14, The economic affairs of Isabella Carlisle, 1783-93; Carlisle MSS, J14/1/33, Julia Howard to Frederick, fifth Earl of Carlisle, Wednesday, July [1778]. For a further account see chapter six and W. H. Smith, *Originals Abroad. The Foreign Careers of Some Eighteenth-century Britons* (New Haven, Conn., 1952), pp. 91-114.

with the menopause, or when her children reached twenty-one, but was a far longer stage of her life. It was a significant role, which placed her in a position of power during their children's adult life, enabling them to continue to shape the future of their family. Although some mothers did not always behave according to the ideals of motherhood, for many their desire for the love and respect of their children shaped the major part of their lives, and they played the role of mother until their death.

Throughout the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries the aristocratic mothers in this survey loved their children. Although affectionate motherhood became more acceptable in the late Regency period, there is little evidence to show that earlier generations loved their children any less, just that they were not as demonstrative. The nature of the aristocracy meant that they were very child-centred; children represented the future success of the family, and embodied their dynastic hopes. There was an increased emphasis on the celebration of the relationships between mothers and children, especially in artistic representations and in their role as educators, but affectionate relationships can be identified through the period. Because these basic needs of the aristocracy remained constant over this period, it is not surprising that the parent/child relationship shows evidence of continuity. Elite families were wealthy enough to support children in a leisured life, and so parents could enjoy their company and indulge their needs, with a ready supply of paid help to support. Playing the role of mother was empowering for many of the women in this survey. They were closely involved in the care, education, and fun in their children's lives, and so were shaping the future of the family. The emotional relationship, which was often sentimental, between parents and their children indicates how there was often a loving nature to the domestic family throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and that women were central to this affectionate unit. From their autonomy during pregnancy to their respected position during the child's adult life, women could shape their own responses to motherhood, and women, such as Isabella Carlisle, could elect not to conform. Most did, though, and the role of mother was one they performed for the majority of their life. Women as mothers were central to dynastic domesticity, and the

affectionate family setting and empowering nature of the role meant that motherhood was a joyful experience for many of the women of the Yorkshire Country House.

## Chapter Six: Single Women and Widows

*Lady Mary can't be married for want of a good fortune, whose person is not ill and she has a great deal of life and wit.*

Sarah, Duchess of Marlborough, 1732.<sup>1</sup>

Sarah Marlborough's comments about Mary Howard, the youngest daughter of the third Earl of Carlisle, reflect the importance placed on marriage during the eighteenth century. Being a wife was significant for any aristocratic woman, as it enabled her to gain a position as joint head of a family, and to become a mother, the most powerful domestic role open to her. It was believed that every woman wanted to marry, and that it would only be a lack of money or personality that would lead a woman into a single life. Those women who did not have a spouse, either because they never married or were widowed, did not fit within the conventional picture of the family, and were less able to fulfil the ideals of femininity. This meant that they were often much maligned figures, whose independence meant that they were often subject to vitriolic attacks by contemporary commentators. The terms 'spinster' and 'old maid' were increasingly seen as forms of abuse, and in the 1713 misogynist poem 'Satyr upon old maids', the never-married were described as 'nasty, rank, rammy, filthy Sluts'.<sup>2</sup> The perceived dangers of unfettered female sexuality meant that some writers portrayed single women as unnatural, and the sexual appetite of widows was especially feared; an early modern proverb noted that: 'the rich widow weeps with one eye and casts glances with the other'.<sup>3</sup> There was general concern in the early eighteenth century that, as marriage was increasingly considered to be unfashionable, more women would choose not to marry nor remarry, therefore denying men wives.<sup>4</sup> Because she was seen to be unwilling and unable to share their life with a husband, the single woman became:

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<sup>1</sup> G. Scott Thomson (ed.), *Letters of a Grandmother 1732-35. Being the Correspondence of Sarah, Duchess of Marlborough with her granddaughter Diana, Duchess of Bedford* (London, 1943), p. 58.

<sup>2</sup> Quoted in B. Hill, *Eighteenth-Century Women. An Anthology* (London, 1984), p. 124.

<sup>3</sup> S. Mendleson and P. Crawford, *Women in Early Modern England 1550-1720* (Oxford, 1998), p. 68.

<sup>4</sup> I. H. Tague, 'Love, honour and obedience: fashionable women and the discourse of marriage in the early eighteenth century', *Journal of British Studies* 40 (2001), pp. 76-106.

'one to be despised, pitied and avoided as a sempiternal spoilsport in the orgy of life'.<sup>5</sup>

However, there were supporters of the unmarried woman, especially at the end of the seventeenth century. Richard Allestree encouraged the 'superannuated virgins' to behave piously, and so defend themselves from criticism.<sup>6</sup> Mary Astell actively encouraged women to search for alternatives to marriage, and argued that women ought to remain single rather than to marry unsuitably in fear of the: 'dreadful name of old maid'.<sup>7</sup> Most commentators, though, looked upon the unmarried woman with pity, assuming that she was unsuccessful in love, and pining for a knight, if not a Duke, in shining armour to rescue them from the embarrassment of singlehood. This notion of the pitied single woman was common throughout the nineteenth century too, although there were as many who recognized the active and independent lives of single women as those who considered them to be 'Miss Havisham' figures.<sup>8</sup>

However, single women and widows were not pathetic figures to be pitied or feared. Women without husbands have, after many years of neglect, been the subject of increased academic study in recent years.<sup>9</sup> As historians have developed frameworks that allow the study of people whose historical records are scarce, so the history of single women has begun to emerge. These have shown that husband-less women played an important role in past societies, and have highlighted the diversity of experiences that women enjoyed. Because of this variety, the terms 'single women' or 'singlewomen' have been subject to

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<sup>5</sup> O. Hufton, 'Women without men: widows and spinsters in Britain and France in the eighteenth century', *Journal of Family History* 9 (1984), p. 356.

<sup>6</sup> R. 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, 1673). Section II, Part One, esp. p. 146.

<sup>7</sup> M. Astell, *A Serious Proposal to the Ladies for the Advancement of their True and Greatest Interest. By A Lover of Her Sex* (London, 1696), Part I, esp. pp. 111-12.

<sup>8</sup> K. Hickok, 'The spinster in Victorian England - changing attitudes in popular poetry by women', *Journal of Popular Culture* 15.3 (1981), pp. 119, 121.

<sup>9</sup> Studies of Victorian single women that highlight the role of unmarried women in feminist and political movements of the period were among the earlier studies, including M. Vicinus, *Independent Women. Work and Community for Single Women 1850-1920* (London, 1985). More recently, the experiences of the single woman in other time periods have been examined, especially the medieval period and the eighteenth century: C. Beattie, 'Meanings of Singleness: the Single Woman in Late Medieval England', DPhil Thesis, University of York, 2001; B. Hill, *Women Alone: Spinsters in England, 1660-1850* (London, 2001). A wider perspective was taken in the collection of essays edited by J. M. Bennett and A. M. Froide, *Singlewomen in the European Past, 1250-1800* (Philadelphia, Pa., 1999).

significant debate regarding their meanings and how historians should use them. 'Singlewomen' can be used to refer to women without husbands, whether unmarried, separated or widowed. However, the experiences of the widow and the never-married woman were very different, in terms of status and opportunities, and so differentiation is needed.<sup>10</sup> Also, there needs to be a separation of 'life-cycle singlewomen', those who were yet to marry, and 'lifelong singlewomen', those who never married.<sup>11</sup> The majority of existing studies of single women have been wide ranging in nature, and have focused on the work and economic support for poor and middle-class single women. This has meant that the elite single woman has been studied less, as her experiences have often been considered to be unrepresentative, and so her important role within the family has been overlooked.<sup>12</sup>

This chapter explores the role of aristocratic single women and widows. It highlights the important roles that they played within the country-house family, and illustrates that they were not pathetic figures or led by unfettered sexual desires. Instead, it demonstrates that they were active and powerful contributors to elite society. Although there were legal and cultural shifts that changed the perception of single women and widows, including the move from the dower to jointure, and the increased admiration for independent single women, there was considerable continuity in their domestic role. They were active providers of and a focus for familial affection. They were not only cared for by their families, but played an active role in caring for others too. They also gained status through their role as motherers, both of their own children and of their relatives' offspring. Below I look at single women and widows in turn, and argue that by fulfilling important domestic roles both groups were active members of the aristocratic family, and helped to fulfil its dynastic and domestic concerns.

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<sup>10</sup> See A. M. Froide, 'Marital status as a category of difference. Singlewomen and widows in early modern England', in *Singlewomen in the European Past, 1250-1800*, ed. J. M. Bennett and A. M. Froide (Philadelphia, Pa., 1999), pp. 236-69.

<sup>11</sup> Terms are taken from J. M. Bennett and A. M. Froide, 'A singular past', in *Singlewomen in the European Past, 1250-1800*, ed. J. M. Bennett and A. M. Froide (Philadelphia, Pa., 1999), p. 2.

<sup>12</sup> Among the studies that looks at the experiences of wealthier single women are: C. Adams, 'A choice not to wed? Unmarried women in eighteenth-century France', *Journal of Social History* 29 (1996), pp. 883-94; S. Whyman, 'Gentle companions: single women and their letters in late Stuart England', in *Early Modern Women's Letter Writing, 1450-1700*, ed. J. Daybell (Basingstoke, 2001), pp. 177-93; J. Liddington, 'Beating the inheritance bounds: Anne Lister (1791-1840) and her dynastic identity', *Gender and History* 7 (1995), pp. 260-74;

## Single Women

The position of the unmarried woman in the country house highlights the importance of familial affection and mutual support within the aristocracy. While she could not, within a polite society, fulfil the biological role of the mother, she could still contribute to the promotion of the family. She was active in ensuring its physical and emotional well-being, and even played the role of motherer, caring for siblings and their children and grandchildren. This section is concerned with single women as distinct from widows; while the lifelong single woman is the main focus, the experiences of women while waiting to marry are also included.<sup>13</sup> Although nuns do feature in the families that form the basis of this study, the religiously celibate are not studied here. The Catholic nun was removed from the family and its domestic concerns, and while they did offer prayer and spiritual support, their religious life meant that opportunities to be part of the family were limited. The unmarried woman was a not uncommon feature of the elite family, as during eighteenth century nearly a quarter of aristocratic women did not marry, rising to just less than a third among the daughters of the Scottish elites.<sup>14</sup> Reasons not to marry could be numerous. There were women who had expected to find a husband, but were unlucky in love, had a limited dowry or were responsible for family members. Other women had a strong personal preference to remain single, possibly because of their sexuality or a determination to be autonomous.<sup>15</sup> Whatever the motivation behind their singleness, the unmarried women in this survey continued to play an active and important role within the elite family.

Single women were both dependent on and independent from their natal families. They relied on familial financial support, as their social class meant that they had few opportunities to work to gain a living. However, with that income, they could live quite separately from their relatives, free to follow a lifestyle of their choosing that could grant them a significant degree of freedom. Many women, though, chose to continue their close

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<sup>13</sup> The widowed woman will be discussed below; see chapter four on 'Love and Marriage' for the courting single woman.

<sup>14</sup> Hufton, 'Women without men', p. 359; T. H. Hollingsworth, 'Demography of the British Peerage', Supplement to *Population Studies* 18.2 (1964), p. 20.

<sup>15</sup> For a discussion of sexuality see: M. Hunt, 'The Sapphic strain: English lesbians in the long eighteenth century', in *Singlewomen in the European Past, 1250-1800*, ed. J. M. Bennett and A. M. Froide (Philadelphia, Pa., 1999), pp. 270-96; Liddington, 'Beating the inheritance bounds', *passim*. For a survey of women who chose spinsterhood, see Z. Berend, "'The best or none!'" Spinsterhood in nineteenth-century New England', *Journal of Social History* 33 (2000), pp. 935-57.

links with their relations, and were an important and respected part of the elite family. A single woman's position as a sibling meant that she was still an important feature of her natal family group, and, as a daughter, sister or aunt, had the opportunity to remain part of an elite network and the opportunities that this offered. Unlike their working-class counterparts, many elite single women would have had a living parent for many years into their adulthood, and so there was the potential for continued parental concern.<sup>16</sup> Although neither a wife nor a mother, they could undertake the responsibilities associated with these roles, and so gain some the status associated with these positions. By performing these duties, single women were able to assert both their aristocratic and feminine status, and act as an effective force in the dynastic and domestic needs of the elite family.

In his *Philosophical, Historical and Moral Essay on Old Maids* (1785), William Hayley described the lives of the unmarried daughters of the nobility as a lonely existence, living in a contracted lodgings within provincial towns, with just a single servant each. He thought that their income would just be the interest from a few thousand pounds, begrudgingly given by a brother, who would normally think it an 'incumbrance' on the estate.<sup>17</sup> However, the families within this sample ensured that women had a sufficient income. In 1778, Julia Howard (1750-1849) had an income that she was able to share with her other unmarried sister Anne (1744-1799) and still have more than £850 a year for her own needs.<sup>18</sup> These sisters' needs in old age were also taken into consideration, and the family's steward made enquires regarding pensions provision for both women, showing how long term planning of the unmarried sister remained the concern of her natal family.<sup>19</sup> Women, though, were also able to support themselves financially. Although elite women could not normally work, they could become members of the Royal Household, which attracted an income. Anne Howard was engaged as a Lady of the Bedchamber to Princess Amelia in 1768, and in this role travelled with the Royal family, including a trip to Paris in

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<sup>16</sup> Edwin Chadwick's 1842 survey suggests that the average age at death in Bethnal Green was 45 years for a Gentleman, 26 years for a tradesman, and 16 years for labourers, servants and mechanics. M. Pelling, M. Harrison and P. Weindling, 'The industrial revolution, 1750-1848', in *Caring for Health: History and Diversity*, ed. C. Webster, Third Edition (Buckingham, 2001), p. 66,

<sup>17</sup> W. Hayley, *A Philosophical, Historical and Moral Essay on Old Maids* (London, 1786), Vol. 1, pp. 7-18.

<sup>18</sup> Carlisle MSS, J14/1/33, Julia Howard, Grosvenor Square, to Frederick, fifth Earl of Carlisle, Wednesday, July [1778].

<sup>19</sup> Carlisle MSS, J14/26, Expenses at Castle Howard, 1772-1822, Memorandum for Mr Gregg.



1770 when she met the young Dauphin.<sup>20</sup> Single women could also be active investors. In the nineteenth century Eliza Chichester, who lived with her married sister at Burton Constable, had sufficient independent income to invest heavily in the new railways, including £8000 in Midland railway stock.<sup>21</sup>

Unmarried women's income was not restricted to formal payments from the estate and their savings, and parents would often supplement their children's income. Mary Howard's father, for examples, covered her 'unusual' expenses, especially doctors' bills, in the early eighteenth century.<sup>22</sup> Mothers would ensure that their children were financially secure in their wills. In 1858, Louisa Harewood bequeathed her London house and its fittings to her unmarried daughters for their use until they did marry, thus providing for them the basic necessities for independence.<sup>23</sup> Following Georgiana Carlisle's death in 1858, her youngest daughter, Mary, was given a larger share of her mother's jewellery than her sisters. Mary was unmarried at the time that Georgiana originally drafted her will, and it appears that she was aware that Mary would have had only a limited access to family jewels, unlike her wealthier married sisters.<sup>24</sup> Parents seem to have recognized the amount of informal financial support that they gave to their unmarried daughters, and so wanted to ensure that they were provided for after their death.

Providing for unmarried women not just the responsibility of their parents, and because of the affectionate nature of elite family life, single women often had the continued support of their relations. The most practical way that an aristocratic family could support their unmarried kin was to allow them to live in their homes. While many had enough money to afford to live independently and some, such as Julia Howard, even had their own

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<sup>20</sup> M. Coke, *The Letters and Journals of Lady Mary Coke* (Edinburgh, 1889), ii, pp. 144, 255-7; iii, p. 251. Reproduced in <<http://www.alexanderstreet2.com/bwldlive>> [30 March 2003].

<sup>21</sup> ERYARS, DDCC(2)/37, Regarding Miss Chichester and her railway shares, R. Hogarth to Miss Chichester, 24 June 1845.

<sup>22</sup> See for example: Carlisle MSS, J8/1/156, Mary Howard, Bath, to the third Earl of Carlisle, 14 March, n.y.; Carlisle MSS, J8/1/158, Mary Howard, Bath, to the third Earl of Carlisle, 8 April, n.y.

<sup>23</sup> When her daughters were all married, the property was to revert to her younger sons; WYAS, Leeds, Harewood accounts 115, Epitome of the will of the Rt. Hon. Louisa, Countess Dowager of Harewood, 1 June 1858.

<sup>24</sup> Carlisle MSS, A5/166, Probate of the will and codicil of the Rt. Hon. Georgiana Dorothy, Countess of Carlisle, 15 June 1859. Mary married in 1852, but the will was not changed before Georgiana's death in 1858 to reflect this.

homes, most appear to have chosen to spend some of their time living with relatives. Large country houses had more than enough room to accommodate unmarried kin, and to do so would help to ensure her well-being and continued safety. Single women have often been described as living in a small estate cottage at a suitable distance away from the main house.<sup>25</sup> However, within this sample most women had one of the main houses as a permanent residence. During the mid-eighteenth century Elizabeth Ingram lived mainly with her parents at Horsham, the second seat of the family, and Winifred Constable spent her life within the family home at Burton Constable. Julia Howard appears to have spent less time at her London home during her later years, preferring to live in Castle Howard with her brother. After his death in 1825 she was very grateful that her nephew allowed her to stay, as she did not want her circumstances to have to change.<sup>26</sup> Women would encourage unmarried relatives to live with them in their homes. In the early nineteenth century, Eliza Chichester lived permanently with her married sister at Burton Constable, and Georgiana Carlisle arranged for her unmarried sister to spend long periods of time with her at Castle Howard.

Living in a relative's house could mean that women only had a limited degree of freedom within the home. The lack of security of their residency was a concern, and if a sibling married someone who did not relish the company of an unmarried sister-in-law, there could be problems. In 1771, when Julia was still young, there was concern that Caroline, the new Countess of Carlisle, might not welcome her into Castle Howard, and so there was delight when she was a 'good wife and sister and indeed very kind' by allowing Julia to stay.<sup>27</sup> While single women faced the potential threat of being asked to leave their natal home, there is no evidence of single women having to move out within this sample group. Single women could be very active in the house, and, as discussed in chapter one, could be central to redesigning the house, as Winifred Constable and, later, Eliza Chichester did at Burton Constable. Elite women were welcomed in the country houses of their relatives as an important part of their family, and they were able to see these buildings as their homes.

Within the country house, many single women played an important role in supporting their family members, a duty that was both rewarding and empowering. Their attachment

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<sup>25</sup> See, for example, Hufton, 'Women without men', p. 359.

<sup>26</sup> Carlisle MSS, J18/50, Julia Howard to Georgiana, sixth Countess of Carlisle, 23 September [1825].

<sup>27</sup> Carlisle MSS, J13/1/3, Copy books of letters to Julia Howard from Isabella Carlisle, 1771-2.

to their family meant that they were keen to support them in their times of need. Mary Howard was anxious to be with her sisters when they needed her and was willing to spend many hours caring for Anne Irwin after she was widowed in 1721.<sup>28</sup> Her niece Julia Howard was also often called on to support her siblings, which meant travelling great distances across the country at the end of the eighteenth century. She spent a great deal of her time in Hertfordshire with her sister Elizabeth Delmé, especially during Mr Delmé's illness, providing support and company.<sup>29</sup> They could also provide more practical and domestic support. Before she was married, Elizabeth Ingram was often used by her elderly grandmother as a personal shopper and was often sent to purchase items on her behalf, such as gowns.<sup>30</sup> The women usually volunteered for these duties, indicating that they gained some pleasure from helping their relatives, and by becoming an indispensable form of assistance they gained a role and some status within the elite family network. In providing this practical and emotional support for their families, single women were fulfilling the role of carer. By undertaking these tasks they were able to demonstrate that they had the moral qualities that were increasingly associated with homely women during the later eighteenth century.<sup>31</sup>

They not only cared for their needy adult relatives, but also took on the duties of a motherer by looking after young children. Before their marriages both Elizabeth Ingram and Harriet Granville were doting aunts, and the latter often spent long periods with the children while her sister was away at the start of the nineteenth century.<sup>32</sup> Single women would oversee the care provided by the paid staff and report back to absent parents, ensuring both the children's well-being and parental peace of mind. Children often enjoyed their aunts' company, and saw them as a more enjoyable alternative to more senior and serious relatives.

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<sup>28</sup> Carlisle MSS, J8/1/127, Mary Howard, London, to the third Earl of Carlisle, 13 April [1721]; Carlisle MSS, J8/1/128, Mary Howard, London, to the third Earl of Carlisle, 23 April [1721]. For a further exploration of the role of the family at the time of a bereavement, see chapter eight.

<sup>29</sup> Carlisle MSS, J15/1/47, Julia Howard to Caroline Carlisle, 5 May, n.y.

<sup>30</sup> For example: Horsham Museum, Machell Ingram MSS, 794.10, Elizabeth Ingram, Hills, to Isabella Irwin, 3 August 1762; WYAS (Leeds) TN/C/19/52, Elizabeth Ingram to Mr Dickinson, 29 July 1762.

<sup>31</sup> C. Hall, 'The early formation of Victorian domestic ideology', in *Fit Work for Women*, ed. S. Burman (London, 1979), p. 28.

<sup>32</sup> H. Cavendish, *Hary-O. The Letters of Lady Harriet Cavendish, 1796-1809*, ed. Sir G. Leveson Gower and I. Palmer (London, 1940), p. 119.

The young George Morpeth preferred aunt Harriet to his grandfather, the fifth Earl of Carlisle, and after she collected George following a visit to Carlisle in 1803: 'the young gentleman *shouted* and *hooted* so loud for *joy* when they got into the carriage to come away that she [the nurse] was sadly afraid grandpapa Carlisle would be offended'.<sup>33</sup> The aunt would often reciprocate the affection. Harriet Granville's letters are full of odes to her nieces and nephews. In an 1804 letter to her mother she described Georgiana Carlisle's eldest three children with maternal pride:

George is more improved than I could have thought it possible and he is really intelligent and witty. He calls himself a *little tiny romp* and says "*Aunt Hary-o spoils George*". Caroline is beautiful, but her mental accomplishments are not so great and the little baby almost the prettiest of all.<sup>34</sup>

She continued the affectionate relationship after she was married and when the children were adults. When her niece Georgiana Dover married, she said that she would look on the new bride and groom as her: 'two eldest children - and love and scold them accordingly. I swell like the frog in the fable when I think of the enlarged scale of Auntitude which I have entered upon'.<sup>35</sup> In performing the role of motherer, the single woman was demonstrating her feminine ability to care for children, while helping to contribute to the future dynastic success of the family by nurturing and educating young relatives. While she was not able to become a mother when without a male partner, as a motherer she could still be active in ensuring the dynastic and domestic future of her family.

Elite single women did not only have the opportunity to perform the role of mother, but also that of a wife to their brothers or other single male relatives. The alliance of unmarried siblings was not uncommon during this period, as there were benefits for both parties in the arrangement.<sup>36</sup> The brother got a loyal confidant to share the responsibilities of running a house with while the sister got a secure home and some degree of social prestige, while not becoming subordinate to a husband. During the mid-eighteenth century, Winifred Constable fulfilled the position of chatelaine within her unmarried brother's home.

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<sup>33</sup> Cavendish, *Hary-O*, p. 43.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 99.

<sup>35</sup> V. Surtees (ed.), *A Second Self. The Letters of Harriet Granville 1810-45* (Salisbury, 1990), p. 163.

<sup>36</sup> See, for example, Adams, 'A choice not to wed?', p. 886.



**Plate Eight.**

*William and Winifred Constable in Rome as Cato and Marcia.*

**Anton Maron, 1773.**

William, owner of Burton Constable, was dependent on his sister in order to ensure the good running of the house and described himself as: 'the head of a very large well appointed and, by the help of my sister, an exceedingly well regulated family'.<sup>37</sup> His reliance on his sister was heightened when his generally poor health suffered even further. She acted as his nurse, and accompanied him on his 'grand tour' of Europe, on which he hoped to gain expert medical advice. Through their trip she kept a travel journal, which was little more than a list of her brother's ailments, which reflects her dedication to him. Her untiring affection for her brother was quite remarkable, and she was as loyal to his needs as any wife.<sup>38</sup> The closeness of their relationship is reflected in the remarkable portrait painted of them while on their tour, which shows them as husband and wife: he is Ancient Roman republican, Cato, and she is Marcia (see plate eight). Choosing this imagery for themselves shows how much they considered their relationship to be like a marriage, and the fact that William did not marry his long-term sweetheart, Catherine, until after Winifred died indicates the responsibility they felt for one another. Winifred's active performance of the role of wife meant that she was a valued and important member of the household, and she gained the status of an elite wife. Like the substitute mother, the substitute wife was an important part of the elite family network, providing essential support to ensure the maintenance of the dynasty and gaining significant pleasure and prestige from the role.

Single women were not only important providers of support for the family circle, but they were also crucial in their role as family networkers. They were often prolific letter writers, and kept their family informed of each other's news; for example, Julia Howard claimed to have written daily letters to her sister at the start of the nineteenth century.<sup>39</sup> They were also active visitors; the image of the old maid who remained at home alone was questioned by the actions of many women and also literary sources. Through the period

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<sup>37</sup> D. Connell, 'The Grand Tour of William and Winifred Constable 1769-1771', in *Burton Constable Hall: The Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries* (East Yorkshire Local History Series 51, 1998), p. 40.

<sup>38</sup> ERYARS, DDCC/150/274, Account of my brother's illness.

<sup>39</sup> HRO, D/ER/C423/1, Julia Howard, Park Street, to Mrs Anne Melicant Delmé Radcliffe, March 10, [1803]. It has not been possible to locate the present whereabouts of these letters.

novels, poetry and ballads celebrated the freedom of unmarried women.<sup>40</sup> In *Roxana* (1724), for example, Defoe observed the independence spinsters enjoyed, and noted that if a single woman gave away her power by marrying, she 'merited to be as miserable as it was possible that any creature could be'.<sup>41</sup> In the nineteenth century, the single woman 'on the move' became a popular figure in fiction. Frances Power Cobbe described the spinster as an 'exceedingly cheerful personage, running about untrammelled by husband or children; now visiting her relatives' country houses, now taking her month in town, now off to a favourite *pension* on Lake Geneva, now scaling Vesuvius or the Pyramids'.<sup>42</sup> While none of the single women within this study were scaling the Pyramids, Winifred Constable did get to Naples and Milan, and most women explored Britain as country-house visitors.<sup>43</sup> These travels meant that women were able to network effectively, helping to widen the sphere of influence of their family. Before she married in 1809, Harriet Granville spent a great deal of time on the road, visiting numerous Cavendish homes, her sister at Castle Howard, as well as her grandmother and family friends.<sup>44</sup> Harriet played a central role in maintaining cordial relations between her family and her in-laws, the Howards, which helped the political and dynastic aspirations of both families.<sup>45</sup> She was able to perform the role of ambassador for the Cavendishes, developing and nurturing new relationships. Single women were free from the complications of the concerns of a marital family and so were able to develop networks of friends that would help promote the interests of their parents and siblings.

The elite single woman of the eighteenth century enjoyed a wide degree of freedom, and was able to lead an active and independent life. While she could not be a mother or a wife, she could perform these roles, and in doing so help in the maintenance and promotion of the dynasty. She was not a marginalised figure, dependent on reluctant familial charity,

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<sup>40</sup> For a discussion of representations of single women in the early modern period see C. Peters, 'Single women in early modern England: attitudes and expectations', *Continuity and Change* 12 (1997), pp. 325-45.

<sup>41</sup> Quoted in B. Hill, *Eighteenth-Century Women. An Anthology* (London, 1984), p. 128.

<sup>42</sup> Quoted in Hickok, 'The spinster in Victoria England', p. 122.

<sup>43</sup> ERYARS, DDCC/150/274, Account of my brother's illness.

<sup>44</sup> Cavendish, *Hary-O*, passim.

<sup>45</sup> The dynastic futures of both families were helped when later generations of the Howard and Cavendish families intermarried, and two Dukes of Devonshire had Howard mothers and/or grandmothers.

but a self-sufficient woman who was central to the family network. Although some women were reluctantly single, there were many benefits to the role to make the choice not to marry a positive move. In doing so they were not working against the family interest by refusing to find a well-connected husband, but could be offering themselves as a familial ambassador, providing emotional and practical support, whilst still maintaining and promoting the family's dynastic ideals.

### Widows

Widowhood was a status that was thrust upon women, normally against their wishes. It was common for women to be widowed, and the majority of wives would be widowed at least once in their lifetime. Within the families that form the basis of this study, there are sixty-two marriages where the year of death of both partners can be accurately identified. Of these, thirty-eight of the marriages ended with the death of a husband, thus creating a widow in 61% of marriages. The position of the widow was a complex one, and shaped by numerous factors, including their age and whether they had children. Those who were widowed young and childless often faced a life very similar to the never-married woman, although they kept the status of their husband through their title and term 'dowager'. Anne Kugler argues that widowhood with sufficient economic independence and without dependent children, could offer a woman unprecedented freedom and autonomy, and those with adult children were particularly empowered by their status.<sup>46</sup> Some elite women successfully ran the family's business and political affairs, and saw their position as the head of the family as permanent, not just a temporary arrangement until their son was able to take over.<sup>47</sup> This position and their independent financial income meant that the elite woman was often at her most powerful when a widow. As a seventeenth-century Polish poem noted: 'Cheese to maidens, milk to wives, cream to widows and whey to old women .../... The world to maidens, Paradise to wives, Heaven to widows and hell to old women'.<sup>48</sup>

The rest of this chapter explores the variety of experiences that an aristocratic widow faced. Through a survey of their financial affairs, their relationships with their children and

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<sup>46</sup> A. Kugler, "I feel myself decay apace": old age in the diary of Lady Sarah Cowper (1644-1720)', in *Women and Ageing in British Society Since 1500*, ed. L. Botelho and P. Thane (London, 2001), p. 68.

<sup>47</sup> M. E. Wiesner, *Women and Gender in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge, 1993), p. 74.

<sup>48</sup> M. Bogucka, 'Marriage in early modern Poland', *Acta Poloniae Historica* 81 (2000), p. 78.



their active roles in the family's estate and political businesses, I explore the important role that elite widows played in the country-house family. As with single women, they had significant freedom, and were able to follow their own individual concerns and desires. However, most were dedicated to the dynastic and the domestic, actively ensuring their family's emotional and physical well-being while managing its status and future. In their duties as head of the family they did not allow their gender to limit their authority, but could be vigorous defenders of their own status and that of the pedigree.

By the eighteenth century the elite family had a sophisticated system to ensure that widows were provided for in later life. The dower system, which granted the widow a life interest in a third of her husband's property, was in decline by 1700, and the system of jointures and annuities was introduced.<sup>49</sup> The details were normally agreed in the marriage settlement, and so the parents of the bride were able to limit the chances of their daughter being impoverished in her widowhood. Frances Carlisle was promised an annuity of £500 and a jointure of £2,000 when she married the fourth Earl of Carlisle in 1717; she predeceased him, and so the arrangement was passed on to his second wife, Isabella.<sup>50</sup> This was a standard settlement for an elite woman; £1,500 was an average sum for an annuity, although some enjoyed a lavish £3,000. The annuity could soon build up if a woman was bereaved in her youth; for example, the widow of the third Duke of Leeds was paid £190,000 over her widowhood as she survived her husband by sixty-three years.<sup>51</sup> The less wealthy Constable family had more modest settlements. Elizabeth Constable, second wife of Cuthbert Tunstall Constable, was widowed in 1747, and received quarterly payments of £125, and annual interest from bonds in the East Indian Company worth £150.<sup>52</sup> By the nineteenth century the amounts were normally larger. Following the death of her husband

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<sup>49</sup> For a discussion of the nature of these changes see S. Staves, *Married Women's Separate Property in England, 1660-1833* (Cambridge, Mass., 1990), esp. chapters one and four.

<sup>50</sup> Carlisle MSS, A5/63, Marriage settlement, Henry, Earl of Carlisle and Isabella Byron, 6 June 1743.

<sup>51</sup> Staves, *Married Women's Separate Property*, p. 95.

<sup>52</sup> DDCC(2)/20A/2, Elizabeth Constable's Account Book, 1752-1756.

in 1857, Louisa Harewood was due £4,000 a year, to be paid quarterly.<sup>53</sup> Not all jointures were agreed at marriage; when Arthur Ingram unexpectedly became the third Viscount Irwin following his brother's death, he and his wife then made a marriage settlement in 1691, reflecting his change in his status and income.<sup>54</sup>

One of the reasons the marriage settlement was so popular was that it meant that the wife was prevented from claiming a third of the estate for life, her dower, as was her right under common law. By forcing a jointure, the husband could reduce the impact a widow could have on estate finances. However, it should not be considered as a move that worked against the wishes of women as many preferred the security of the jointure system. Mary Wortley Montagu, for example, could have claimed a third of her husband's estate following his death in 1761, which was valued at £800,000 in money and £17,000 a year in rental income from land. However, he had only left her £1,200 a year in his will, providing that she did not claim dower. Although her relationship with her husband had been unhappy, she refused to make the larger claim, writing to her son: 'I dare be poor, I dare not be dishonest'.<sup>55</sup> Lady Mary's response reflects a consideration women faced before claiming money for their widowhood; what would be the impact on the estate and the family dynasty? The jointure would have been paid from estate income, and so would have had a direct impact on the wealth of the heir. If the heir was her son, as was normally the case, the widow would have needed to assess whether it was for the benefit of the family if she took her full jointure or dower; the role of mother and widow came into conflict. By electing to take the full amount or not, women were playing a central role in the future success of the family, and they had to choose whether to make a personal sacrifice for the family good, or to ensure their own security. Susan Staves argues that it was a mixture of familial affection and social pressure that prompted women to relinquish some of their income; I would argue that the importance of the dynasty to many women also played a central role.<sup>56</sup>

Because of the nature of the widow's income, from the son to the mother, from the

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<sup>53</sup> WYAS, Leeds, Harewood accounts 113, Statement of sums charged on the estate of the Earl of Harewood for the Jointure of the Countess of Harewood and the portions of the younger children of the late Earl and Viscount Lascelles, c. 1857.

<sup>54</sup> WYAS, Leeds, TN/F17/22 Marriage settlement for Arthur Ingram and Isabella Machell, 20 February 1691.

<sup>55</sup> Staves, *Married Women's Separate Property*, pp. 111-2.

<sup>56</sup> Staves, *Married Women's Separate Property*, p. 115.

family estate to the individual, there was potential for a great deal of tension regarding the payment of a jointure. Women were often concerned that their income would be reduced by the avarice of their sons and daughters-in-law. Isabella Irwin greatly begrudged the payment of a dowry to her sister-in-law, the second Viscountess Irwin who was widowed in 1685. When Isabella was widowed herself in 1702 she took careful steps to ensure that she was paid her own income. In 1724, after the death of her second son, she became concerned when the new Viscount, her son Arthur, began to take an interest in the legal and financial affairs of the estate he had just inherited. He had asked Isabella to send to him the legal documents that covered her income, but she refused to, in fear of losing her jointure. Arthur was a lawyer, who had received the Temple Newsam estate in poor financial health, and she clearly did not trust him to ensure her personal financial security.<sup>57</sup> However, because of the affectionate relations between mothers and children, these difficulties were uncommon. Georgiana Carlisle lived happily in Castle Howard after her husband's death in 1848, as the heir was devoted to his mother and greatly valued their relationship.<sup>58</sup> The importance of the role of the mother meant that a widow was still an active and important member of the aristocratic family, whose needs and cares remained a central concern.

Sometimes, this affection was severely tested. In Henry Carlisle's will, he specified that if his wife, Isabella, remarried she would lose custody of the children, control of the estate, and would only have the income that the settlement allowed. Mary Wortley Montagu described this as: 'the kindest thing he could have done, to save her from her own Folly, which would have probably have precipitantly hurried her into a second marriage, which would most surely have reveng'd all her misdemeanours'.<sup>59</sup> However, Isabella Carlisle remarried in 1759, only a year after her husband's death. Her young son's trustees argued that even her jointure should be reduced, as her new husband, Sir William Musgrave, was now responsible for supporting her. She did not receive much support from the wider public; Isabella Irwin wrote: 'If the account we have heard of the Disposition of Lord Carlises *affairs* be true I think he has done well, and I am not sorry *Lady Carlisle* is to loose five hundred a year and the care of her children if she marries again, it is believed in

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<sup>57</sup> WYAS, Leeds, TN/C/13/55, Arthur Irwin to Isabella Irwin, 10 December 1724.

<sup>58</sup> See Carlisle MSS, J18/3, Seventh Earl's correspondence with his mother, *passim*.

<sup>59</sup> M. Wortley Montagu, *The Complete Letters of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu*, ed. R. Halsband (Oxford, 1966), iii, p. 184.

general that she will be comforted without loss of Time'.<sup>60</sup> Lady Irwin clearly thought that if a widow remarried, she relinquished her claim on the marital estate, and so she should no longer be the concern of her first husband's family.

The situation for Isabella Carlisle only worsened. She separated from her second husband, and exiled herself to France after she had over-zealously promoted her daughters' interests, which almost led to her youngest, Julia, marrying a Corsican army officer in 1771. There she had a lengthy affair with a man whom she thought was Baron de Weinheim, but was really Monsieur Larcher, an outcast from a prosperous family, who relied on Isabella for money.<sup>61</sup> She lived beyond her means, and had to face the ignominy of her son sending Rev. Dr Walker to return her to England, and to organize a sale of her personal possessions to pay her debts.<sup>62</sup> Among the items sold were her jewellery, books and wearing apparel, raising more than a thousand pounds. Dr Walker's presence alarmed Isabella greatly, as he publicly declared her ruined, thus damaging her status. She also lost her independence, as she was forced to return to live with her family, since a second cut in her income made it impractical for her to live alone in France.<sup>63</sup> Although Frederick Carlisle showed concern for his mother, he and his advisors took harsh steps to ensure that Isabella did not ruin the family, both its reputation and finances.

The case of Isabella Carlisle reflects how the concerns of the dynastic and the domestic did not always agree. By remarrying, Isabella had reduced her claim for the full economic backing of the Howard family, as she had sought to become a member of a new family. As a widow she showed little interest herself in the dynastic concerns of the Howards, and failed to manage the family's parliamentary interests at Morpeth and Carlisle. Even after the family had helped to clear her debts she returned to France and the baron until

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<sup>60</sup> WYAS, Leeds, TN/C/23/55, Isabella Ingram, Hills, to Mrs Charles Ingram, Temple Newsam, 26 November, n.y.

<sup>61</sup> A. I. M. Duncan, 'A study of the Life and Public Career of Frederick Howard, fifth Earl of Carlisle, 1748-1825', DPhil Thesis, University of Oxford, 1981, p. 273.

<sup>62</sup> Carlisle MSS, J14/13/3, Mr Gregg to Isabella Carlisle, n.d; Carlisle MSS, J14/14, Insurance policies relating to the economic affairs of Isabella Carlisle, 1778-82.

<sup>63</sup> Carlisle MSS, J14/13/6, Isabella Carlisle, Moulins, to Mr Gregg, 26 February 1782; Carlisle MSS, J14/13/3, Mr Gregg to Isabella Carlisle, n.d.

1787, when, indebted again, she returned to England permanently.<sup>64</sup> Because of their concern for their mother, Isabella's children provided some financial support when she was in trouble. She was housed within her daughters' homes and in the family's London residence, and enquires were made into providing her with a pension.<sup>65</sup> However, her behaviour in remarrying, separating and conducting an unsuitable affair limited her claim to full support. By failing to adhere to the standards of the 'domestic woman' she could not expect to be treated as one. Although she had caused her children embarrassment, they did not reject her and her needs. That they continued to care for an (often) ungrateful and errant mother indicates the importance of affection within the elite family, which extended to widows even after they had broken all legal ties with them. They continued to be mothers, no matter what their formal status was.

When there were no children, the dynamics of the situation changed considerably. A childless widow had only financial reasons to remain part of her marital family network, and so would have had relatively limited support within that family. Instead, she would have been more dependent on the continued support of her natal relatives. When Rich Irwin died intestate in 1721, only three years after his marriage, it was the start of a prolonged wrangling between his widow (Anne Irwin), her family (the Carlises), and Rich's executor (his mother, Isabella Irwin). Rich was in acute financial difficulty at the time of his death. He had invested in the 'cruel South Sea', paying £40,000 for £10,000 worth of stock that was never recovered.<sup>66</sup> Faced with this debt he had arranged to be Governor of Barbados, which was worth £5,000 a year, but before he was able to improve the family's finances he contracted and died of smallpox. Anne was personally devastated by the death, and her grief was acute.<sup>67</sup> She also faced some immediate practical financial problems too. Immediately following his death there were numerous bills to be paid to tradespeople, which she simply could not afford because of the high level of his debts. She had received a thousand pounds from the crown, part of the £7000 that was due to her as Rich had bought a regiment. However, the money from this was quickly spent, and Anne had no money left to cover her

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<sup>64</sup> Duncan, *Frederick Howard, fifth Earl of Carlisle*, pp. 207, 274.

<sup>65</sup> Carlisle MSS, J14/26, Expenses at Castle Howard, 1772-1822; Memorandum for Mr Gregg.

<sup>66</sup> Carlisle MSS, J8/1/124, Mary Howard to the third Earl of Carlisle, 21 February [1721].

<sup>67</sup> See chapter eight for a discussion on Anne Irwin's emotional response to her husband's death.

own expenses, even the cost of travel back to Castle Howard.<sup>68</sup> Her father and sister came to her support, and ensured that she was cared for.

Rich's death was also difficult for Isabella. As he had died intestate, she was his executor and therefore responsible for his finances. The estate was already heavily mortgaged, and the gambling and other debts of Rich placed the finances under a real strain. She needed to identify everything that belonged to the estate, so that she could assess the financial situation. However, Anne had taken items from Temple Newsam that she believed were hers, but Isabella claimed to be part of the estate.<sup>69</sup> Isabella also pressed Anne hard about money that was due to the Irwin estate as part of Anne's marriage settlement, a problem that was not resolved for many years. Anne staunchly fought against Isabella's requests, demanding to keep various items, at least for her lifetime, and ensuring that the Carlises were not financially affected by Rich's death. While Rich was alive, the relationship between the two Lady Irwins was difficult. When Isabella was encouraged by her steward to make peace with Rich and Anne, she dismissed his request as: 'friendly advice to give up my just wit to an ungrateful son, wholly governed by the proud family of the Howards who have never served anybody but for their own interest'.<sup>70</sup> His death meant that the only thing which united them had been removed. Anne and Isabella, two widows, came into direct conflict, and were shown to have a great deal of power to manage the negotiations in order to get what they and their families wanted.

The early widowhood of Anne Irwin reflects the difficult situation that widows could find themselves in. She faced a direct conflict between the dynastic needs of her natal and marital families. Because she did not have any children and enjoyed an affectionate relationship with her father, she continued to support her own family's needs during the long negotiations with the Irwins. Isabella, a widow and mother, firmly supported the needs of her children; the Irwins were *her* dynastic concern, while for Anne, it was the Carlises. Anne could afford to disentangle herself from the Irwin family, removing from the estate only the valuable and the sentimental. Isabella's relationship with the estate was a great deal more complex. She outlived all of her nine sons, and remained the head of the family as it

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<sup>68</sup> Carlisle MSS, J8/1/128, Mary Howard to the third Earl of Carlisle, 23 April [1721].

<sup>69</sup> She eventually returned or paid for most items, although she kept a portrait of Rich for her lifetime. WYAS, Leeds, TN/C/13/37, R. Hopkinson to Isabella Irwin, 29 January 1723/4.

<sup>70</sup> WYAS, Leeds, Pawson MSS, Ac 1038, Volume 9 (January 1717-December 1747), Robert Hopkinson to Isabella Irwin, 13 December 1718.

passed through five brothers. She was the executor for a number of her sons, and was still managing the debts of Rich and Arthur many years after their deaths. It was only in 1758, fifty-six years after she was widowed, that she could see an end to her management. Her grandson, and future ninth Viscount, married Frances, a wealthy heiress whose fortune freed the estate from its numerous mortgages. Isabella Irwin played an important role in the maintenance of the Irwin name, managing and controlling it until it was freed from the cycle of childless sons, and could finally move on to a future generation.

Frances Irwin also continued to work hard to ensure that the family interest was maintained during both her marriage and her widowhood. She took a keen interest in politics, especially at the family seat of Horsham, Sussex. She fought to keep direction of votes of the borough when the eleventh Duke of Norfolk threatened her control of the seat. Although Norfolk had incredible influence and wealth, spending £70,000 on the borough, it is a testament to Frances' determination and petitioning skills that he had to use corrupt means to win the elections. However, she successfully petitioned against the results, and had her candidates seated in both the 1790 and 1806 contests against Norfolk. He only gained control of the borough after her death, when he bought the Irwin interest for the record sum of £91,475.<sup>71</sup> Her determination to keep part of the family's dynastic influence in their control reflects how important issues of inheritance and maintaining political power were to women. As widows they were able to fulfil a role that had a significant impact on the future success of the family.

Widows were also able to have an impact on the domestic. For many women, widowhood could be an enjoyable time, a period of domestic freedom and autonomy, especially for those, like Frances, who were left in control of the main house. She loved her husband dearly, and missed him acutely after he died in 1778. However she felt some comfort in being at Temple Newsam, writing to a friend: 'I have been here a month and find a kind of satisfaction in this place which I am a stranger to every where else'.<sup>72</sup> She continued to find contentment there, and a number of years later she began to undertake

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<sup>71</sup> E. Chalus, 'Women, electoral privilege and practice in the eighteenth century', in *Women in British Politics, 1760-1860: The Power of the Petticoat*, ed. K. Gleadle and S. Richardson (London, 2000), pp. 28-9.

<sup>72</sup> PRO 30/29/4/2/48, Frances Irwin to Lady Stafford, 25 August 1778.

some major alterations to its fabric.<sup>73</sup> Her status as widow meant that she had the opportunity to reshape her domestic environment, and control her own home.

An early widowhood meant that some women were head of their households for many years. Following the death of her husband in 1702 Isabella Irwin rented a house in Windsor, and there is no evidence that she returned to Temple Newsam after her second son became Viscount Irwin in 1714. She appears to have maintained a high standard of living in her house, and although it seems that she had only one live-in servant, she did have access to a number of advisors from the Temple Newsam staff.<sup>74</sup> Among the items that she owned at the time of her death were numerous family portraits, an eight-day clock in a walnut case, and more than a hundred books, giving her a well-equipped home for an educated woman in the age of enlightenment.<sup>75</sup> From here she was able to manage the affairs of the Temple Newsam estate, as well as receiving visits from her family members, especially her granddaughters, and she shared the house with her youngest son for a number of years.<sup>76</sup> With the support of the Temple Newsam staff, a good income, and a significant degree of influence over her sons, she lived her sixty-two years of widowhood in a comfortable and powerful position, still maintaining a significant influence over the dynastic future of the family.

Not all widowed women remained unmarried. Remarriage could be a solution to the problems widows faced, and while it was more common for men to remarry, a small proportion of women found second husbands.<sup>77</sup> Wealthy widows, such as the Duchess of Leinster, had the freedom to marry whoever they wanted, even from the lower social

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<sup>73</sup> PRO 30/29/4/2/54, Frances Irwin to Lady Stafford, 14 June 1795. See chapter two.

<sup>74</sup> There was only one maid's room in the inventory, and she only refers to one female servant in her letters. WYAS, Leeds, TN/EA/3/25, Inventory of household goods of Isabella Viscountess dowager Irwin at her house at Windsor, 27 July 1764.

<sup>75</sup> WYAS, Leeds, TN/EA/3/26, Catalogue of all the Household furniture, plate linen etc. of Lady Dowager Irwine [sic] at her late dwelling house at Windsor ... to be sold by auction, 11 October [1764].

<sup>76</sup> See Horsham Museum, Machell Ingram MSS, 794.18, Edward Dickinson to Mr Samuel Keeling, 6 October 1764.

<sup>77</sup> Wiesner, *Women and Gender*, p. 75; Recent studies have shown that women tended to remarry if they had been widowed while they were young, and few women over fifty remarried. See for example: B. Moring, 'Widowhood options and strategies in pre-industrial northern Europe. Socioeconomic differences in household position of the widowed in 18th and 19th century Finland', *History of the Family* 7 (2002), p. 90.



orders.<sup>78</sup> This meant that women had to make careful choices whether they wanted to secure the good name of their natal family, or their married family, or to gain personal happiness. Most importantly, it could have a major impact on a mother's relationship with her children, as it could mean she had only limited access to them, as well as having possible implications on her eldest son's inheritance.<sup>79</sup> For young women, there was some sympathy for the young widow, especially if it was thought that they might have trouble remarrying. Following the death of Frederick Howard in battle in 1815, Countess Jersey wrote of his widow: 'Poor Fanny Howard at 20 deprived of her husband is not VERY animating and the loss would be more easily borne if any national object had been obtained'.<sup>80</sup> The failure of the campaign in which Frederick died meant that Frances was unable to be comforted by the idea that her husband was a hero, but instead faced a life alone. For older women, remarriage was not always seen as a sensible choice as the freedom of widowhood was far greater than potential restrictions of marriage; as the widowed Sarah Cowper noted: 'wear not a straight ring. Lead your life in freedom and liberty, and throw not yourself into slavery'.<sup>81</sup> Because of these problems, choosing to remarry was often considered to be a selfish act, and the second marriages of Anne Irwin and Isabella Carlisle reflect this. Isabella's second marriage meant that she lost a significant part of her income, and direct access to her children, whose interests were managed by the Carlisle trustees. The speed of the marriage after her first husband's death and then eloping with another man so soon into the second marriage suggests a certain degree of selfishness in her actions; she was acting for her own needs rather than out of concern for the family's image and future success.<sup>82</sup> Anne Irwin waited more than fifteen years after becoming a widow before remarrying, and was forty years old when she married Colonel Douglas in 1737. She had been independent during her widowed life, travelling abroad alone and took up a position

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<sup>78</sup> Hufton, 'Women without men', p. 373.

<sup>79</sup> Wiesner, *Women and Gender*, p. 75.

<sup>80</sup> Historical Manuscripts Commission, *Report on the Manuscripts of Earl Bathurst Preserved at Cirencester Park* (London, 1923), p. 672.

<sup>81</sup> Kugler, "I feel myself decay apace", p. 77.

<sup>82</sup> V. Murray, *Castle Howard: the Life and Times of A Stately Home* (York, 1994), p. 58.

of in the Royal Household.<sup>83</sup> Her decision to remarry caused great upset in the Howard family, as there was no purpose to the marriage other than affection. After many years of representing the family's ambitions at Court, and defending them against the Irwins, Anne appears to have wanted some comfort for herself in her older years, and married a man that she loved.

The elite widow was an important figure in the elite family, managing practical and political affairs of the family, as well as shaping the domestic environment. Her degree of involvement in the family's future was dependent on her behaviour and willingness. Sometimes widows turned away from their marital family, fulfilling their own needs or those of their natal family. However, many widows remained influential in the marital family, and were an important force in the domestic life of the country house. Their situation was often similar to that of the unmarried woman, and they were both independent and active ambassadors for the family. While single women were not empowered by motherhood, they could, like widows, continue to ensure the family's future as motherers. While the behaviour of some elite women meant that they only received limited support from their relatives, in most cases widows and single women were treated well by their families, and they reciprocated this support by playing important roles in the family. They were involved in household and estate management, caring for the family, and promoting the family interest. The absence of a husband did not force women to lead secluded lives, but could enable them to be active and powerful forces in the family and the wider world.

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<sup>83</sup> For example: Carlisle MSS, J8/1/257, Anne Irwin to the third Earl of Carlisle, 3 April, n.y.

## Chapter Seven: Old Age and Ill Health

*Dearest beloved husband whom I love with the most devoted affection most grieved am I for you that you married such a poor creature as I am subject to one of the most painful and trying of complaints, extreme irritability of the nerves.*

Georgiana Carlisle, 1819.<sup>1</sup>

Georgiana Carlisle's heartfelt letter to her husband reflects her hopelessness in facing her melancholia. She was not only suffering because of the 'trying' complaint, but also because of her belief that she had caused her 'beloved husband' great distress too. She felt that she was unable to fulfil her duty to him and their children, and that she was failing in her domestic roles because of her depression. Her incapacity meant that she questioned her very position within the family and her ability to continue as an elite woman.

This chapter explores the role of the incapacitated and the old in the country-house family, and questions whether Georgiana's fears were justified. The old and the ill have often been on the margins of society throughout history, and so their stories often remained untold. Although recent years have shown an increased concern in the history of old age, and medical history continues to develop a strong historiography, the emotional and personal responses to ill health and the ageing processes have largely remained uncovered. It has been assumed that women who fell into these categories were not active members of the community, and so they do not feature in broad surveys of past societies. Within the country-house family, they could be perceived in the same way. The unwell were unable to be active in the family business, their ailments preventing them from furthering the family interest; the old quickly became part of the family's past, not their future. Historians have often depicted these women as only having a 'twilight existence', as the nuclear family unit has been the main focus of women's history.<sup>2</sup>

However, these women did play an important role in familial concerns. Below is an exploration of the role of women who were physically less active within the country house, in order to study their responses to the changes in their status. Firstly, the influence of ill

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<sup>1</sup> Carlisle MSS, J18/2/10, Georgiana Morpeth to George Morpeth, 2 September 1819.

<sup>2</sup> O. Hufton, 'Women without men: widows and spinsters in Britain and France in the eighteenth century', *Journal of Family History* 9 (1984), p. 355.

health on women is highlighted, and their reactions to the ailments of themselves and others are considered. The networks of familial support that ensured the unwell were cared for are also studied, and it is demonstrated that the importance of the domestic group meant that the long-term ill, such as Georgiana Carlisle, could continue to be part of the family. Then the position of older women is considered, and the continuing role that they played highlighted. The variety of experiences enjoyed by older women is discussed and compared to the ways that they were perceived by others and themselves. While their circumstances often meant that they were unable to play a full part in the promotion of the family interest, the old and the ill could be an important force within the Yorkshire country house by being a focus for domestic devotion and affection.

### **Ill Health**

The position of the unwell woman in the elite family was very different to that of the wife or the widow as her ill health was not the main way that people would have normally identified her role in the family. A woman was a mother, wife, aunt or sister instead, and her illness would have been a temporary, additional, status. However, being unwell, especially for long periods of time, did have a great effect on the woman's position in the family network and may have meant that she was unable to fulfil her roles within the family. Sometimes they would have been physically remote from their relatives, as the unwell often resided in spas or seaside towns in order to benefit from the environment. Those with poor mental health were particularly likely to become detached from the family's concerns, and may have been institutionalized.<sup>3</sup> This section offers a brief overview of how illnesses shaped family relations, especially with regard to dynastic concerns and the domestic nature of the family unit.<sup>4</sup> It examines how individuals reacted to the illness of a relative, focusing especially on displays of affection and concern. The networks of support that a family offered, both practical and emotional, are assessed, and the suggested solutions to illness by the family and their advisors, most especially doctors, are considered. Individuals' responses to their own illnesses are also discussed, especially their feelings about the impact of their incapacity on their position and role within the family unit. Georgiana Carlisle's

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<sup>3</sup> The eighth Earl of Carlisle, for example, spent most of his adult life in a hospital for the mentally ill. V. Murray, *Castle Howard: the Life and Times of A Stately Home* (York, 1994), p. 177.

<sup>4</sup> This is a topic that needs a much broader and more detailed discussion than can be covered here.

melancholia is presented as a case study, and her remarkable writings about her own ill health assessed. Illness was often used as a way for families to share advice, support and concerns, and so the individual became a focal point for familial affection.

It is important to remember that ill health was a common feature of eighteenth-century elite life, with descriptions of ailments, major and minor, featuring in the vast majority of letters written. Those who were healthy were admired; siblings Elizabeth Lechmere and Mary Howard were constant sufferers, and were in awe of their third sister's good health. Elizabeth noted in 1736: 'My sister Irwin's health is more steady than most persons I know, and I heartily wish her the continuance of so valuable a Blessing'.<sup>5</sup> Despite the regularity of ill health, the fear of a loved one becoming seriously ill was a common concern within the eighteenth-century country-house family. The illnesses of children often caused particular concern not only to their parents, but also to the wider family, especially if they embodied their dynastic future.<sup>6</sup> Charles Morpeth, the eldest son of Frances and Henry Carlisle was sent abroad in order to improve his education and his health as a youth. Charles' health failed in 1739, and his father cut short his visit to Rome to be with his son who was seriously ill in Turin.<sup>7</sup> Charles lasted for two more years, but by 1741 the hopes for any improvement faded, causing much distress to his family. His aunt wrote: 'much concerned I have been att [sic] this distress, my mother has really felt it sensibly'. Families understood the importance of the eldest son and so feared the consequences of their illness.<sup>8</sup>

Married couples also showed great concern for each other's well-being, especially when parted. When Arthur Irwin was in London on parliamentary business in 1694, he was most anxious to hear that his wife, Isabella, was unwell. He wrote that he was: 'very sorry to heir your face is so bade. I told you when you cam out that you would get cold but you would not mind me, and now pray take care and get your selfe welle, for I should be very

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<sup>5</sup> Carlisle MSS, J8/1/477, Elizabeth Lechmere to the third Earl of Carlisle, 24 February 1736.

<sup>6</sup> For a discussion of the ill health of children see chapter five.

<sup>7</sup> M. Wortley Montagu, *The Complete Letters of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu*, ed. R. Halsband (Oxford, 1966), ii, pp. 126, 148.

<sup>8</sup> Carlisle MSS, J12/1/51, Anne Irwin, Kew, to Henry, fourth Earl of Carlisle, 27 June [1741?].

uneasy to hear you weer worse'[sic].<sup>9</sup> Even from a distance, Arthur was concerned for Isabella's well-being, advising her to keep herself warm, and asking her to look after herself as he cared deeply for her. Contagious diseases caused great alarm, especially smallpox and cholera. When Rich Irwin was in London preparing to go to Barbados in 1721, his wife, Anne, got increasingly anxious about him, writing to her father that: 'I wish my lord [Irwin] every day in Yorkshire for fear of his catching distemper'. Rich contracted and died of smallpox the following month, while still in the capital.<sup>10</sup> Because of these fears, aristocrats were keen to ensure their own familial safety by limiting the risks of catching a disease. When looking for new staff, they often specified that servants must have already had smallpox, and the second Viscountess Irwin was so afraid of the condition that she did not want her future brother-in-law to attend her wedding as he had been in contact with the illness.<sup>11</sup> Because of the affectionate nature of the elite family there was a real fear of death, and so, despite its commonness, avoidance of ill health was seen as crucial in order to ensure the success of the elite family.

As illness was a frequent country-house guest, the family regularly had to deal with one of its members being indisposed. Because they were able to afford regular doctors visits and rely on their many servants, minor ailments could pass with only limited disruption to the family. Common illnesses such as gout did not greatly affect the routine of the family, and were accepted as part of everyday life. However, the more seriously ill became a focal point for the concerns and affection of the family. The degree of support they offered to the ill was notable, and many families provided financial assistance, care and compassion, and emotional support to their kin. The cost of dealing with an illness could be considerable. In the early eighteenth century Mary Howard was reliant on her father's good will to pay her medical costs, as well as her accommodation in Bath, where she stayed for many years.<sup>12</sup> The unwell could also take up a considerable amount of the family's time. Winifred

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<sup>9</sup> WYAS, Leeds, TN/C/7, Lord Arthur's Letters to his wife, Arthur Irwin, London, to Isabella Irwin, Temple Newsam, 11 December [1694].

<sup>10</sup> Historical Manuscripts Commission, *Fifteenth Report, Appendix, Part 6: the Manuscripts of the Earl of Carlisle, formerly Preserved at Castle Howard*, ed. R. E. G. Kirk (London, 1897), p. 29.

<sup>11</sup> WYAS, Leeds, Pawson MSS, Ac 1038, Volume 6 (September 1642-April 1691), Robert Stapleton to Arthur Ingram, 10 February 1686. See chapter one.

<sup>12</sup> For example Carlisle MSS, J8/1/131, Mary Howard, Bath, to the third Earl of Carlisle, 13 October [1721].

Constable appears to have had very little respite when dealing with the illnesses of her brother, William, during the mid-eighteenth century. She wrote in great detail about his ailments and sleepless nights, which she appears to have shared by caring for him. It is notable that following his recovery in April 1774, when he was 'perfectly well in all respects, but still very lame', that *she* died soon afterwards.<sup>13</sup> Caring for her brother appears to have become a vocation to Winifred, and when he became well after at least four years of her constant attention, she may have felt somewhat directionless. The support provided to relatives, though, was appreciated. William was clearly grateful for his sister's help, and did not marry his long-term sweetheart during Winifred's lifetime, perhaps out of fear of upsetting her. Mary's letters to her father also reflect her gratitude, and she was concerned to demonstrate her affection for him. Some relatives were rewarded financially for their care. Elizabeth Halle, the niece of Anne Harewood, was bequeathed £1000 by Edward Harewood in 1819 as a token of his appreciation of her kindness towards Anne during her final illness.<sup>14</sup> The importance of ensuring that the unwell were cared for was recognized by the wider family, and those who offered their time, skill or finances were appreciated by both the patient and their family.

In order to demonstrate their support to sick relatives, women would often visit them, sometimes travelling considerable distances. When Caroline Lascelles was unwell in the early nineteenth century, she appreciated her mother and sister visiting her.<sup>15</sup> The guests may have been able to manage the childcare and remove a little of the responsibility from the patient, as well as helping to raise their spirits. Caroline may have felt cheered by having her natal family around her rather than her in-laws, whom she lived with, as she found the Earl of Harewood quite stern in nature.<sup>16</sup> Georgiana Carlisle's spirits were also raised whenever her children came to stay with her when she was unwell and she saw being with

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<sup>13</sup> ERYARS, DDCC/150/274, Account of my brother's illness.

<sup>14</sup> WYAS, Leeds, Harewood House Accounts, 117, Draft copy of the will of Edward Earl of Harewood, 1819.

<sup>15</sup> Carlisle MSS, J18/2/43, Georgiana Carlisle, Harewood, to sixth Earl of Carlisle, n.d.

<sup>16</sup> M. Leconfield (ed.), *Three Howard Sisters. Selections From the Writings of Lady Caroline Lascelles, Lady Dover and Countess Gower, 1825 to 1833* (London, 1955), p. 52.

her children as mode of recovery.<sup>17</sup> As noted above, she suffered from melancholia, and was very grateful to her husband and father-in-law when they arranged for the children to be sent to be with her.<sup>18</sup> Her husband showed real patience and sympathy to his wife's condition, encouraging her to do whatever she felt would make her feel better, and he was willing to changes his plans to be with her. In 1833, for example, Georgiana had hoped to go to Castle Howard to be with him, but he was concerned for her: 'Tho you were better the day you wrote, you seem to have been rather low in what you say about coming here, if really you are unequal to it when the time comes I have no wish to stay on here without you, nor indeed would I consent to it'.<sup>19</sup> George Carlisle's affection for his wife meant that he knew the importance of reassuring her that her well-being was his primary concern.

Imagining diseases was a common ailment during this period, and some people, including James Boswell, wallowed in their morbid fears regarding their own health.<sup>20</sup> The illnesses of Anne Carlisle during the 1730s were often treated with some scepticism by her daughters, especially Anne Irwin and Mary Howard. She often complained that she would never feel well again, and although she appeared well, she regularly talked of dying.<sup>21</sup> Her ailments caused great disruption to the household, as she was often very demanding; on one occasion her doctors prescribed her laudanum to help her sleep, which pleased her overworked servants greatly.<sup>22</sup> Normally, though, her doctors encouraged her to live a normal life by going to the opera or playing cards, and they appear to have had little sympathy for her. Because Anne considered herself to be seriously ill she was furious when she was told that she suffered only from her imaginations. Her relationship with her daughters was shaped by her illness, and so they often felt frustrated. In one letter to her

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<sup>17</sup> For example Keele University Library, Sneyd MSS, SC5/11, Georgiana Carlisle to Ralph Sneyd, n.d.

<sup>18</sup> Carlisle MSS, J18/2/17, Georgiana Carlisle, St Leonard's, to sixth Earl of Carlisle, n.d.; Carlisle MSS, J18/2/42, Georgiana Morpeth, Bishopthorpe, to George Morpeth, n.d.

<sup>19</sup> Carlisle MSS, J18/1 (Book 40, 32), Earl of Carlisle, Castle Howard, to Georgiana Carlisle, 1 September 1833.

<sup>20</sup> Eighteenth-century men of letters were particularly keen to claim that they suffered from melancholia as a badge of sensibility. R. Porter, 'Being mad in Georgian England', *History Today* 31 xii (1981), p. 45.

<sup>21</sup> Carlisle MSS, J8/1/139, Mary Howard, London, to the third Earl of Carlisle, 15 January [1733].

<sup>22</sup> Carlisle MSS, J8/1/232, Anne Irwin, London, to the third Earl of Carlisle, 10 December, n.y.



father, Anne Irwin wrote that: "I could fill this paper up with an account of her ... but I really think you would not believe what I should tell you unless you saw it".<sup>23</sup> The nature of Anne Carlisle's poor health meant that she was often treated as an annoying obligation rather than someone whom they genuinely wanted to care for. While the ill normally did get real sympathy the hypochondriac and tiresome patient could try the loyalty of even the most affectionate relative.

The regularity of illnesses and the family-wide support of the unwell meant that there was a sophisticated understanding of how to treat various ailments. The family provided a network of information regarding multiple remedies that came into play whenever anyone complained of a genuine malady. Recipes for medicines appear in many of the archival deposits for country houses, and some of these were clearly the works of the women of the houses.<sup>24</sup> The collection and compilation of medical advice was an activity undertaken by many elite women, who would use the information to dispense advice and medicines within the household and the wider community.<sup>25</sup> Isabella Carlisle wrote a comprehensive book of recipes in the mid-eighteenth century, which included medicines, as well as instructions for cooking and preserving food.<sup>26</sup> The ailments that her remedies were designed for included whooping cough, heart burn, gout and disorders of the spirits. A number of her cures came from other elite women, including Lady Berkeley's recipe for mouth water, indicating the presence of a widespread network for medical information. Whenever a family member fell ill, their relatives were quick to give them advice. Edward Irwin told his mother in 1707 that her (unspecified) illness was probably caused: 'from your living too soberly which is very dangerous for such young ladies as you'.<sup>27</sup> When someone had been a recipient of good advice, they were keen to share it. In 1733 Elizabeth Lechmere recommended the medicine she had been prescribed to her father, if he should ever need it,

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<sup>23</sup> Carlisle MSS, J8/1/232, Anne Irwin, London, to the third Earl of Carlisle, 10 December, n.y.

<sup>24</sup> There are a number of recipes in the Temple Newsam collection. WYAS, Leeds, TN/F8, Recipes, seventeenth century and eighteenth century.

<sup>25</sup> See R. Aspin, 'Who was Elizabeth Okeover?', *Medical History* 44 (2000), pp. 531-40.

<sup>26</sup> Carlisle MSS, J13/1/4, My Book of Receipts.

<sup>27</sup> WYAS, Leeds, TN/C/10/40, Edward Irwin to Isabella Irwin, 22 January 1707.

and her sister wanted their father to go to Bath in order to improve his gout.<sup>28</sup> There was a shared concern to ensure the well-being of relatives, demonstrating the affective nature of family ties.

Besides familial remedies, the network often provided information regarding professional help. The eighteenth-century elite family had a well-developed relationship with doctors and apothecaries and their letters suggest that they were able to make informed decisions regarding professional advice. Many respected the opinion of doctors. For example, in 1709 Isabella Irwin was keen that her son was seen by a doctor rather than given medicine by one of the servants, and in 1740 Anne Carlisle sought the advice of numerous doctors in London when her grandson was ill.<sup>29</sup> Isabella appears to have sought professional medical advice regularly, as there were frequent payments to doctors in her account book from the early eighteenth century.<sup>30</sup> Her adult sons did not all share her trust in the medical profession, though. When the youngest, William, was given a new prescription in 1754, he told his mother that he did not know what effect it would have on him, but he knew to expect little.<sup>31</sup> Anne Irwin also questioned the wisdom of doctors. She disagreed with them when they diagnosed her mother in the 1730s, noting that she knew her mother far better than the doctors, and so was quite confident it was not a stone as they thought.<sup>32</sup> Her sister-in-law, Frances Carlisle, was also clearly knowledgeable about medical conditions, and was proud to demonstrate her learning. When she visited her sick aunt, Lady Albermarle, she was quick to prescribe her 'Sir Walter Rawleigh's [sic] cordial and viper broth'. She then wrote to the esteemed doctor, Sir Henry Sloane, who had approved of her prescription, and asked him to visit her aunt while she was there, as she wanted to ensure that he could answer her questions.<sup>33</sup> Not all women were so confident in the

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<sup>28</sup> Carlisle MSS, J8/1/453, Elizabeth Lechmere, London, to the third Earl of Carlisle, 3 March 1733; H. M. C., *Manuscripts of the Earl of Carlisle*, p. 62.

<sup>29</sup> Carlisle MSS, J12/1/9, Anne Carlisle to the fourth Earl of Carlisle, 6 June [1741]; WYAS, Leeds, TN/C/10, Estate Administration 1709-11, Isabella Irwin to John Roades, 30 April 1709.

<sup>30</sup> WYAS, Leeds, TN/EA/14/18, Notebook.

<sup>31</sup> WYAS, Leeds, TN/C/18/108, William Ingram to Isabella Irwin, 16 November 1754.

<sup>32</sup> Carlisle MSS, J12/1/54, Anne Irwin, Kew, to Henry Howard, fourth Earl of Carlisle, 21 July, n.y.

<sup>33</sup> British Library MSS, Medical cases, Sloane 4078, f.231, Frances Morpeth, Soho Square, to Sir Henry Sloane, 6 July, n.y.

presence of medical practitioners, and some even felt unsafe under a doctor's care. During her first pregnancy in 1810, Harriet Granville was very nervous about her condition and noted that she thought of her doctors: 'much as I do of vapours and vixen, and I shall expire of the fright of being left at their mercy'.<sup>34</sup> Most, though, were willing to trust doctors out of hope rather than in confidence of their expertise. While Frederick Carlisle was away in North America in 1778, his wife was unwell, but he was pleased to hear that the longtime family doctor was caring for her. He wrote: 'it is impossible to reflect upon his age and experience and not have great confidence in him ... I will give credit to him for the sake of my own peace of mind'.<sup>35</sup> Many of the Yorkshire aristocracy would have probably agreed with the comments made by Anne Carlisle during a visit to York in 1741: 'theres [sic] as good a Dr [here] as any in London, but the best of all is to want none of their advice'.<sup>36</sup>

By sharing medical knowledge between relatives, aristocrats were not only maintaining good family networks, but were also stressing their concerns for the unwell. The reactions of an individual to their own illnesses often showed how much they needed that family support. It was common for them to perceive their illness as having a negative impact on the family. Being unwell would mean that a woman was less able to fulfil her roles within the family. It is important to stress here that, within the Yorkshire elite family, there does not appear to have been a different response to illness on the basis of the patient's gender. During the eighteenth century, biological differences between males and females were under specific scrutiny, and ill health was increasingly understood in relation to these differences.<sup>37</sup> In particular, menstruation and fertility were seen as central causes of female maladies.<sup>38</sup> However, although this may have shaped the doctors' understandings, the families studied

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<sup>34</sup> V. Surtees (ed.), *A Second Self. The Letters of Harriet Granville 1810-45* (Salisbury, 1990), p. 37.

<sup>35</sup> Carlisle MSS, J15/1/10, Frederick Carlisle, Trident, to Caroline Carlisle, Easter Sunday, n.y.

<sup>36</sup> Carlisle MSS, J12/1/5, Anne Carlisle to the fourth Earl of Carlisle, 17 May [1741].

<sup>37</sup> L. Schiebinger, 'Skeletons in the closet: the first illustrations of the female skeleton in eighteenth century anatomy', in *The Making of the Modern Body. Sexuality and Society in the Nineteenth Century*, ed. C. Gallagher and T. Laquer (Berkeley, Calif., 1987), p. 42.

<sup>38</sup> A. Digby, 'Women's biological straitjacket', in *Sexuality and Subordination. Interdisciplinary Studies of Gender in the Nineteenth Century*, ed. S. Mendus and J. Rendall (London, 1989), pp. 192-220.

here did not appear to treat male and female invalids any differently.<sup>39</sup> Throughout Georgiana Carlisle's illness, there is no mention in the familial correspondence that her gender may have been a factor in causing her melancholia; in fact, I have found no direct suggestion made to her, or by her, that she may have been suffering because of her frequent pregnancies or any other female specific cause. Some caution is therefore needed when considering lay responses to ill health, as the gendered approaches of the medical treatises do not appear to have shaped familial and emotional responses.<sup>40</sup>

The unwell woman often showed signs of embarrassment at her ill health. Elizabeth Lechmere suffered from a series of ailments during the early eighteenth century, mostly caused by her heavy drinking and worries about her gambling debts. In February 1726 she caused considerable scandal in London when she lost a large amount of money at cards. Mary Wortley Montagu noted: 'after having played away her reputation and fortune, she has poisoned herself. This is the effect of prudence!'.<sup>41</sup> She had attempted suicide by taking laudanum in order to escape the debts and the criticism. Because of this failed attempt and her other actions, she caused much embarrassment to her family. The following year she wrote to her father to apologize for her impolite behaviour during a recent visit to Castle Howard. She promised to reduce her alcohol consumption and explained that her actions were due to her unfounded belief that she was going to die soon, indicating that her feelings of desperation had remained with her.<sup>42</sup> In 1733 she again had to apologize, this time for her: 'intire [sic] neglect of my self, my friends, and everything that is dear or valuable in Life'.<sup>43</sup> She was most anxious about how her poor mental health had caused embarrassment to her family, and how her actions may have ostracized her from the family circle. She longed to be with her family in Yorkshire, and so wrote to her father: 'I beg to know whether your lordship can still have such a remainder of compassion for me as to take me

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<sup>39</sup> In his study of nineteenth-century British India, Waltraud Ernst argues that the treatment of the 'mad' was gender-blind, and poor mental health was not seen as explicitly female. W. Ernst, 'European madness and gender in nineteenth century British India', *Social History of Medicine* 9 (1996), esp. p. 366.

<sup>40</sup> This conclusion is based on the information from this sample and further work is needed to identify whether this was the case on a national level.

<sup>41</sup> Montagu, *The Complete Letters*, ii, p. 58.

<sup>42</sup> Carlisle MSS, J8/1/379, Elizabeth Lechmere to the third Earl of Carlisle, 23 September 1727.

<sup>43</sup> Carlisle MSS, J8/1/450, Elizabeth Lechmere to the third Earl of Carlisle, 9 February 1733.

into your perfection, and save me from utter Ruin'.<sup>44</sup> She felt that her conduct while ill had meant that she was no longer deserving of family support, and that she needed to renegotiate her position within her childhood domestic circle. As she was married, she recognized that she was not entitled to the unquestioning assistance of her natal family, and so was concerned that they may not continue to be supportive. However, her family took her in, and her sister and mother cared for her in her final days until her death in 1739.<sup>45</sup>

In the early nineteenth century Georgiana Carlisle was also embarrassed by her poor mental health. From about 1811, she regularly complained about the poor state of her nerves. She felt bewildered by her constant feeling of unhappiness, which she appears to have suffered from since childhood, when she was described as suffering from morbid fears of her sins, both real and imagined.<sup>46</sup> She wrote:

How often I have written, how often I have thought that Happiness is not for me, yet I am now blessed with a greater share of it than often falls to the lot of Mortals - a Husband who loves me ... children that answer my fondest expectations, parents and friends so good and kind to me, and a situation in life which I think adds to Happiness tho' it does not constitute it - what have I left to wish for?<sup>47</sup>

Although her position in the family as a wife and mother was more secure than Elizabeth's, she also felt that she did not deserve her family's continuing support. Georgiana was particularly concerned how her illness affected her ability to fulfil her role as a mother. When her eldest son recovered from an illness, she felt quite determined to get better for his sake, as she was aware that her children needed her.<sup>48</sup> She also felt a duty to her husband, and was anxious about the distress that her problems caused him; she felt that her complaint meant that her husband was unable to be as happy as she felt he ought to be.<sup>49</sup> Georgiana therefore did not expect him to love her any longer and thought herself a torment to her

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<sup>44</sup> Carlisle MSS, J8/1/450, Elizabeth Lechmere to the third Earl of Carlisle, 9 February 1733.

<sup>45</sup> Carlisle MSS, J8/1/301, Anne Irwin to the third Earl of Carlisle, 5 December [1739].

<sup>46</sup> A. Foreman, *Georgiana, Duchess of Devonshire* (London, 1998), p. 285.

<sup>47</sup> Carlisle MSS, J18/74, Georgiana, sixth Countess of Carlisle, Writings on Religious Topics, Prayer written by Georgiana Carlisle, Undated.

<sup>48</sup> Carlisle MSS, J18/63, Memos about health, n.d.

<sup>49</sup> See the quote at start of this chapter. Carlisle MSS, J18/2/10, Georgiana Morpeth to George Morpeth, 2 September 1819.

family and friends.

Because of her affection for her family, and her concern that her condition was damaging to its dynastic future, she was keen to take steps to become better; she was not willing to become an invalid woman. She did this in two ways: she sought religious solace and undertook practical steps to try and cure herself. Her religious response was shaped by her evangelical beliefs, as she felt that she was not only failing as a mother and wife, but also that it damaged her ability to be a good Christian. She wrote numerous prayers as a way of examining her feelings, and these reflect how closely she allied her suffering with her faith. She prayed for a release from her anxiety, and hoped that her: 'affliction may not be unprofitable, nor my sorrow vain, and that when it may be thy pleasure to relieve me I may show forth my thankfulness, not only with my lips but with my life'.<sup>50</sup> Another prayer, dated April 1817 indicates her need for resignation when facing her illness, and to recognize it as the will of God:

Oh God of my Life and Author of my days, teach me to lift up my heart unto thee and to resign myself to bear what thou thinks good for me - calm by the grace of the Holy Spirit my troubled mind and make me to find comfort where alone it is to be found, and to gain that peace which the world cannot give - For this purpose let me henceforward by prayer and meditation and reading endeavour to become more truly and practically religious, constantly endeavouring to fit myself and my Dear Children to allow Happiness in another better world, where cares of sorrows and pain will not corrode our joys, and anxiety will be at an end. Let me consider in my Duty, my first worldly duty to please, to comfort and not to sadden by my sufferings or cares the life of my dear husband who has shown me so much generous kindness, and enable me above all under every dissipation of thy Providence patiently to adore thy incurable diseases, using the means that thou hast given us to alleviate of sufferings, and in heading thy blessing when there, thanking thee with grateful heart when these means prove helpful but submitting with chastened sorrow when they are vain - may my Joy and my Sorrow become equally chastened to enable me to say in happiness or in misery, Great God almighty Father, Thy will be Done.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> Carlisle MSS, J18/74, Georgiana, sixth Countess of Carlisle, Writings on Religious Topics, Prayer by Georgiana Carlisle, Park Street, 11 March 1811.

<sup>51</sup> Carlisle MSS, J18/74, Georgiana, sixth Countess of Carlisle, Writings on Religious Topics, Prayer by Georgiana Carlisle, Park Street, 8 April 1817.

This prayer reflects Georgiana's different perceptions of her illness. She saw ill health as part of God's providence and she believed she could use prayer to help alleviate her suffering. It also suggests her concerns regarding the impact of her illness on her husband and family, and her desire to find happiness for them in a future world. Georgiana appears to have used her faith as a way of providing her with support through her difficulties, and as a way of giving her hope of happiness in the future, even if that was not until the next world, and this approach to religion was encouraged by her neighbour, Rev. Sydney Smith, in a letter to her in 1819.<sup>52</sup> That she sought spiritual assistance in her trials reflects the depth of her faith, and how important becoming well was to her.

However, she did not rely on religion alone, and took more secular steps to try and improve her health. Georgiana's practical responses to her melancholia show the well-developed understanding of medical literature that the elite woman in the early nineteenth century could have, as well as her desire to use all possible methods to get well. She used a series of tools to try and improve her spirits. Firstly, she noted her feelings in pocket books and in various memos. She appears to have thought that by making notes to herself, such as 'I can help fretting, at least I believe I can', that she could keep strong in the face of unpleasant thoughts. Georgiana also sought advice regarding what course of action was best for general nervousness, and often clung to the hope that by following any guidelines given that she would improve.<sup>53</sup> Sydney Smith, who also suffered from 'low spirits' wrote her some maxims to try and improve her spirits. His sixteen rules included reading amusing books, but avoiding serious novels and melancholy, sentimental people.<sup>54</sup> Although she took on Smith's advice to some extent, Georgiana appears to have developed her own system to challenge her melancholia. She called this 'Cadogan's system' since it was based on William Cadogan's *Dissertation on the Gout* (1771). Cadogan addressed his work to all invalids, and claimed that the causes of all ailments were 'indolence, intemperance and vexation'.<sup>55</sup> In order to deal with these disorders he encouraged the invalid, among other things, to have

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<sup>52</sup> N. C. Smith, *The Letters of Sydney Smith* (Oxford, 1953), p. 366.

<sup>53</sup> For example she wrote: 'it gives me some hope that by doing always what is best for general nervousness I may get better'. Carlisle MSS, J18/2/7, Georgiana Carlisle to sixth Earl of Carlisle, n.d.

<sup>54</sup> Smith, *Letters of Sydney Smith*, pp. 347-8.

<sup>55</sup> W. Cadogan, *A dissertation on the gout, and all chronic diseases, jointly considered, as proceeding from the same causes; what those causes are; and a rational and natural method of cure proposed. Addressed to all invalids* (London, 1771), p. 7.

only seven hours sleep in summer, a diet based on the produce of the earth, and a daily ride of ten miles, or a three or four mile walk.<sup>56</sup> Georgiana appears to have applied this thesis to her own disorder. She controlled her diet, so that it was very plain and not indulgent, and followed a strict regime of exercise to try and prevent laziness. She considered taking exercise around Castle Howard if it was raining, reflecting an interesting use of the large amount of space within the country house.<sup>57</sup> Each day, when she had followed these rules, she made a mark in her pocket book diary, possibly as a way to feel in control of her behaviour.<sup>58</sup> This mark was similar to that used by doctors to signify a 'dram', thus marking when a patient had taken medicine.<sup>59</sup> Whether she considered the treatments as medicinal, or whether she was taking drugs too, is unclear. Either way, she was taking active control of her illness. By acting in this manner she was ensuring that she was doing all she could to become better. This would have helped her to feel as though she was still working to fulfil her role as a mother and wife, her feminine duty.

It is not clear whether she developed this system alone or whether she was advised, but as all the surviving rules that she followed are in her own hand, it suggests that she played an important role in trying to cure herself. She read widely, and an inventory of the house in her later years shows that she had a large number of books in her own rooms, although the titles are not specified.<sup>60</sup> Also, the publication of Cadogan's work had caused a great debate, making it a well-known text that was likely to be in the library at Castle Howard, since a number of the Earls had suffered from gout.<sup>61</sup> It is known that women did

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<sup>56</sup> Ibid., pp. 93-5.

<sup>57</sup> Carlisle MSS, J18/63, Memos about health, n.d. Cadogan thought that walks in the rain should not be avoided as they did no real harm. Ibid., p. 94.

<sup>58</sup> See for example Carlisle MSS, J18/62/6, Pocket Book 16 1817 and Carlisle MSS, J18/62/7, Pocket Book, 1819.

<sup>59</sup> Thanks to Michael Brown for explaining the nature of the mark to me.

<sup>60</sup> Carlisle MSS, H2/11/3, Inventory of fifth Earl of Carlisle.

<sup>61</sup> For a discussion of the debate see R. Porter, 'Gout: framing and fantasizing disease', *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* 68 (1994), pp. 22 ff.



read the text, and it was among books ordered by Frances Irwin in 1771.<sup>62</sup> It is therefore possible that she would have been able to use the text directly in order to try and cure herself. Cadogan's argument was not original. Dr George Cheyne, for example, who wrote about sensibility and melancholia, thought that a third of the complaints among the aristocracy were due to overeating, and exercise was used as a cure for the 'vapours' that caused 'hysteria' from at least the early eighteenth century.<sup>63</sup> While she attributes her system to Cadogan, she may have used a wide range of sources to develop her own treatment. Her scholarly endeavours reflect how dedicated she was to improving her health. Georgiana made practical sacrifices by eating plainly and taking exercise, which was increasingly seen as lacking gentility in the nineteenth century.<sup>64</sup> Her actions show how she was willing to risk her femininity and forgo the everyday luxuries of elite life in order to be able to play her part in the affectionate aristocratic family.

The unwell within the elite family continued to remain an important part of the domestic circle during this period. They became a focus of care and attention, which helped to consolidate family ties. Elite networks were maintained by the exchange of information and advice regarding medical cures and professional assistance. These responses of the individual to their own incapacity, embarrassment and determination to get well, show how important the notions of family and its future success were to aristocrats. Georgiana Carlisle's programme to improve her health shows how the image of the invalid woman, lying on the couch all day, was not an attractive prospect. Like Harriet Martineau, whose *Tales* she had read, she sought to improve her situation and take control of her own recovery, although she used the more practical measures of plain food and exercise rather than Martineau's mesmerism.<sup>65</sup> By being active within her family she was fulfilling her duty

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<sup>62</sup> She paid 1 s. 6 d. for the book, and two years later bought a pamphlet rebutting Cadogan's argument. WYAS, Leeds, TN/EA/12/18 Bills for Books, stationery, etc., Bill to Frances Irwin from Joseph Ogle, 1771; WYAS, Leeds, TN/EA/12/18 Bills for Books, stationery, etc., Bill to Frances Irwin from H. Jackson, 1773.

<sup>63</sup> R. Trumbach, *The Rise of the Egalitarian Family. Aristocratic Kinship and Domestic Relations in Eighteenth-Century England* (New York, N.Y., 1978), pp. 232-3.

<sup>64</sup> L. Davidoff and C. Hall, *Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middle Class 1780-1850*, Revised Edition (London, 2002), p. 404.

<sup>65</sup> Carlisle MSS, J8/62/15, A case of books, Memoranda. For a discussion of the recovery of Martineau see A. Winter, 'Harriet Martineau and the reform of the invalid in Victorian England', *The Historical Journal* 38 (1995), pp. 597-616.

as a wife and a mother and so was determined to beat her illness in order to be able to perform her domestic roles.

### Old Age

As with the ill, the old were a focus for familial support and affection in the country house. While they could be perceived as lacking a distinctive role within the family's future, and possibly its present, the importance placed on domesticity and dynasty meant that the old were often celebrated and cared for in the aristocratic family. Until recently, many historians have represented female old age as a distressing period of decline, where they lost not only their attractiveness and income, but also their social function.<sup>66</sup> However, the study of the elderly in the past has grown in recent years, and many of these surveys have shown the wide variety of positive experiences that the old enjoyed.<sup>67</sup> These studies have shown that the old were not simply a homogeneous group with shared experiences, but that other factors, such as their class and gender, could have a major impact on their circumstances.<sup>68</sup> The older woman could still play an important role in the family, especially if finances and health allowed. Because of their wealth and networks of support, old age did not represent a negative and declining period, but a time when individuals were still an active force within the country house. A number of themes are explored below. Firstly, the nature of old age and people's perceptions of the old, especially the image of the elderly, is considered. The question of respect is also studied: how did an elderly woman remain respectable, and did her age gain her regard? In particular, the importance of maintaining the standards and behaviour of the 'domestic woman' into an elite woman's seniority, as a way of gaining respect, is assessed. Finally the role of the older woman as a grandmother is analysed, with

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<sup>66</sup> For a discussion of this see A. M. Froide, 'Old maids: the lifecycle of single women in early modern England', in *Women and Ageing in British Society Since 1500*, ed. L. Botelho and P. Thane (London, 2001), p. 89.

<sup>67</sup> Recent studies include: G. Minois, *A History of Old Age: From Antiquity to the Renaissance*, tr. S. H. Tenison (Oxford, 1989); P. Thane, *Old Age in English History: Past Experiences, Present Issues* (Oxford, 2000). There have also been two recent edited collections of essays: P. Johnson and P. Thane (eds.), *Old Age: From Antiquity to Post-modernity* (London, 1998); L. Botelho and P. Thane (eds.), *Women and Ageing in British Society Since 1500* (London, 2001). For a survey of the literature so far see: I. Blom, 'The history of widowhood - a bibliographic overview', *Journal of Family History* 16 (1991), pp. 191-210; L. Botelho and P. Thane, 'Bibliographical essay: older women in Britain since 1500', in *Women and Ageing in British Society Since 1500*, ed. L. Botelho and P. Thane (London, 2001), pp. 232-8.

<sup>68</sup> L. Botelho and P. Thane, 'Introduction', in *Women and Ageing in British Society Since 1500*, ed. L. Botelho and P. Thane (London, 2001), pp. 2-3.

particular emphasis on the degree to which the continuation of the role of 'motherer' helped to keep the elderly involved in the family. The ageing woman often maintained her links with the family through her later years, and could continue to have a degree of control over the future of the dynasty. She could play a central role in the display of domestic affection, and be held in high regard as she embodied the ideal of continuity in the elite family.

It is important to consider what is meant by the term 'old'. Historians have used a variety of definitions in their studies, and have often chosen a set chronological age to identify the commencement of old age. However, the commonly used age of sixty is problematic, as it does not reflect subtleties of social position, historical period, and gender, which could all influence when old age started.<sup>69</sup> During the eighteenth century there were many different understandings of the nature of old age. From the sixteenth century onwards commentators identified different stages of male old age, starting with a 'green old age', for the active part of old age, moving to 'ripe' and then 'overgrown', which was also described as decrepit old age.<sup>70</sup> These different stages were part of the 'ages of man' literature. These texts offered a wide range of ages for the start of old age, normally based upon magical or spiritual numbers. Different texts in this genre placed the start of old age at anywhere between thirty-five and seventy-two.<sup>71</sup> The contemporary understandings of female old age, though, was different; it was normally split into the three stages of maid, wife and widow. Fertility was of central importance in the understanding of the life-cycle of women, and so the onset of the menopause was perceived as the beginning of the decline. By the nineteenth century a number of texts devalued women's activities outside the domestic world of reproduction, and so denied her a role in old age.<sup>72</sup> However, the end of a woman's fertility is a difficult way of assessing the commencement of old age, as it was a private matter. Women could be mothers of young children into their older years. Caroline Carlisle gave birth to her youngest child when she was forty-two, and so still had dependent children into her late fifties. Even women who had finished giving birth earlier in life were still active

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<sup>69</sup> L. Botelho, 'Old age and menopause in rural women of early modern Suffolk', in *Women and Ageing in British Society Since 1500*, ed. L. Botelho and P. Thane (London, 2001), pp. 43-4.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 45.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 46.

<sup>72</sup> P. Jalland and J. Hooper, *Women from Birth to Death. The Female Life Cycle in Britain 1830-1914* (Sussex, 1986), pp. 3-5.

mothers, as, for most, motherhood was a role that continued until they, or all their children, had died.<sup>73</sup> These women would have been perceived as fertile for longer than those who had never had children, and so it is impractical, and misleading, to suggest a chronological age for the commencement of agedness on the basis of fertility.<sup>74</sup> For elite women, the start of old age is particularly difficult to assess as few women expressed a desire to 'retire'.<sup>75</sup> Instead, many women were more active in their later years, especially in the church and charitable concerns, and so there was not the modern appreciation of old age being a time for a 'simpler' life.<sup>76</sup>

As there was not a single defined start of ageing in the eighteenth century, such as the modern 'bus pass', the historian needs to consider social and cultural definitions of old age based on contemporary perceptions and self-perceptions. This means that it is not helpful to set a strict age, but rather to examine those women who were considered aged, especially by themselves and family members. This chapter therefore explores the experiences of 'older' women, the over-fifties, and those who were perceived as old. Georgiana Carlisle had a strong sense of the features of old age. When she was thirty she wrote: 'I am going to enter into a new era of life - youth I consider as over tho' I am not old', suggesting that she believed old age was still many years away.<sup>77</sup> Six years later, though, she felt that she was becoming old, not because of her age but because of her changing physical appearance. She was to have her teeth taken out, which she thought would: 'make me an old woman before my time and I can no longer hope to be an object ... worthy of affection'.<sup>78</sup> She not

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<sup>73</sup> See chapter three.

<sup>74</sup> Froide, 'Old maids', p. 90. Merry Wiesner uses the menopause as the commencement of old age, and sets forty as the chronological mark in *Women and Gender in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge, 1993), p. 75.

<sup>75</sup> Lady Sarah Cowper wanted to 'retire' from household management, although this proved difficult as she had an unloving husband and unhelpful sons. A. Kugler, "'I feel myself decay apace": old age in the diary of Lady Sarah Cowper (1644-1720)', in *Women and Ageing in British Society Since 1500*, ed. L. Botelho and P. Thane (London, 2001), p. 69.

<sup>76</sup> See, for example, the work of Lousia Twining and her relatives in their later years, and the studies of unmarried women: T. Deane, 'Old and incapable? Lousia Twining and elderly women in Victorian Britain', in *Women and Ageing in British Society Since 1500*, ed. L. Botelho and P. Thane (London, 2001) pp. 166-85; Froide, 'Old maids', p. 100.

<sup>77</sup> Carlisle MSS, J18/63, Memos about health, Park Street, 10 July 1813.

<sup>78</sup> Carlisle MSS, J18/2/10, Georgiana Morpeth to George Morpeth, 2 September 1819.

only felt that her appearance made her aged, but that as an older woman meant that she could not expect affection from her 'younger' husband.

Georgiana's response reflects how old age can be understood in a number of ways. Modern gerontological studies identify at least three types of ageing: chronological old age, based upon years lived; physiological old age, based on being physically old; and social old age, when one has the specific features that society attributes to old age, such as grey hair or toothlessness.<sup>79</sup> The old have therefore often been identified through their infirmities and appearance. Physical signs of ageing included changes to the face, such as wrinkles and excessive hair on the upper lip, which provided a very public display of old age. Women were particularly prone to osteoporosis, especially mothers, as pregnancies were calcium draining, thus increasing the risk of toothlessness and broken bones.<sup>80</sup> Other ailments could be less public in nature. Isabella Irwin's eyesight began to fail her in her later years and her servants had to write her letters on her behalf.<sup>81</sup> It was also expected that women would become physically constrained by advanced old age. When Georgiana Carlisle began to show signs of recovery after a long illness in her late sixties, it was noted by her brother that: 'to see her again active is more than we can expect at her age'.<sup>82</sup> Anne Carlisle fared less well in her later years, and was portrayed as a helpless figure during her final illness in 1747. Her daughter noted: 'she is now taken out of bed every day as fatigued as a child of a month old by the motion and old people and small children are but the same. Sleep and food must rouse them both'.<sup>83</sup> The vulnerability associated with the ailments of the old could limit their useful role within the family; like the ill they could be recipients of domestic affection, but they were dependent upon the continuing goodwill of their families.

The image of the old was, in popular understanding, often a negative one, especially of the older woman. Old age was associated with ill health and poverty, and so was not a

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<sup>79</sup> These terms are used in J. Ginn and S. Arber, 'Only connect: gender relations and ageing', in *Connecting Gender and Ageing. A Sociological Approach*, ed. S. Arber and J. Ginn (Buckingham, 1995), pp. 5-8.

<sup>80</sup> Botelho, 'Old age and menopause', pp. 54-5.

<sup>81</sup> This appears to have been the only disability that she suffered. WYAS, Leeds, TN/C/23/46, George Ingram, Windsor, to Mrs Charles Ingram, 13 December [1758].

<sup>82</sup> Keele University Library, Sneyd MSS, SC7/282, Duke of Devonshire to Ralph Sneyd, Chiswick, 3 September [1851].

<sup>83</sup> Carlisle MSS, J12/1/42, Mary Howard to the fourth Earl of Carlisle, London, 23 July, n.y.

desirable state.<sup>84</sup> The association of elderly women with the 'old crone' continued to have currency during the eighteenth century, and older people were often thought to be miserable.<sup>85</sup> Arthur Irwin was bemused when his wife Isabella enjoyed her time at Baraby at the end of the seventeenth century: 'among my old ants who are as mancolly as the Devill' [sic].<sup>86</sup> Although there was a perceived link between wisdom and old age, there was also general awareness of the possible decline of mental faculties too. This meant that some older women were not seen to be fully competent, and were treated dismissively because of their age.<sup>87</sup> As Wilma Scott Heide noted on ageing in 1984: 'men get wisdom, women get wrinkles'.<sup>88</sup>

Old women could therefore face some degree of disrespect.<sup>89</sup> Yet there is evidence that there was a certain degree of regard attached to senior members of the country-house family. In 1807 Georgiana Carlisle was shocked at the lack of appreciation that the voters of St Albans had shown her grandmother, the seventy-year-old dowager Countess Spencer.<sup>90</sup> She appears to have expected that her grandmother's age would have meant that she would have won the parliamentary seat that she controlled, and she thought that the local people would have respected her concerns. Georgiana appears to have felt it important to hold older family members in high esteem; when she became chatelaine of Castle Howard in 1825 she allowed the ageing Julia Howard to continue to live there for the rest of her life.<sup>91</sup> This regard was also shaped by affection. Older women still often played a maternal role, and it was a respect for them as motherers that often shaped affection. Isabella Irwin

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<sup>84</sup> The prescriptive literature of the early seventeenth century particularly emphasize old age as a time of decay. Kugler, "I feel myself decay apace", p. 68.

<sup>85</sup> B. R. Wainrib, 'The aging [sic] female client: developmental and disorder issues', in *Gender Issues across the Lifecycle*, ed. B. R. Wainrib (New York, N.Y., 1992), p. 186.

<sup>86</sup> Historical Manuscripts Commission, *Reports on Manuscripts in Various Collections*, Volume 8 (London, 1913), p. 79.

<sup>87</sup> Kugler, "I feel myself decay apace", p. 70.

<sup>88</sup> Quoted in B. R. Wainrib, 'Introduction: Gender issues in the aging [sic] population', in *Gender Issues across the Lifecycle*, ed. B. R. Wainrib (New York, N.Y., 1992), p. 160.

<sup>89</sup> For a discussion see Botelho and Thane, 'Introduction', p. 1.

<sup>90</sup> Carlisle MSS, J18/52/56, Georgiana Morpeth, Park Street, to Selina Trimmer, 8 May 1807.

<sup>91</sup> Carlisle MSS, J18/50, Julia Howard to Georgiana Carlisle, Park Street, 23 September [1825].

was viewed with particular fondness because her role as head of the family had meant that she had maintained close links with all her children and grandchildren. In 1763 Frances Irwin described her as ‘a most heavenly old woman’, who still ‘preserves the warmest affection for her family’.<sup>92</sup> Because of the positive aspects of old age, including autonomy and familial respect, it could be seen as something to aim for. Isabella expressed a desire to live to a hundred, and she may have turned to the ‘receipt [sic] against palsee’ in the family’s medical recipe collection, which claimed to ensure longevity.<sup>93</sup> A long life was associated with years of good health, which was central to the woman continuing her involvement in the elite family.

However there were also high demands on women to fulfil certain standards of behaviour in order to earn that respect. It was expected that older women would be more sensible, and the mistakes of youth were not easily forgiven in older ladies. Frances Irwin feigned mock surprise when she heard that an elder (though not yet old) lady was pregnant with an illegitimate child. In 1787, she blamed London’s social life for the immoral behaviour of those she believed ought to have known better:

your great world is full of mischief, heaven preserve my country  
Brains from infection when it is my fate to go there. My age is no  
security for the Lady in question is older, and then there are a lot of  
superannuated she-blockheads that makes me tremble.<sup>94</sup>

This need for respectable behaviour in old age encouraged women to undertake positive tasks in their later years, and some believed it was still important to play the role of the domestic woman. The early seventeenth-century diary of an ageing gentry woman, Sarah Cowper, reflects these desires; she thought it important to keep her brain active and wrote: ‘purg [sic] me from the scandal of idleness’.<sup>95</sup>

The letters of Isabella Carlisle, when in her fifties, reflect the importance placed on proper behaviour among senior women. One letter notes that while she was in Cologne in 1772 she often refused to go out on walks alone. She believed that it was improper for her to be seen on her own in such a populous area, and that as an older woman that she ought

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<sup>92</sup> PRO 30/29/4/2/9, Frances Shephard to Lady Stafford, 2 May 1763.

<sup>93</sup> WYAS, Leeds, TN/F8, Recipes seventeenth century and eighteenth century, A receipt against Palsee, Undated. She died aged about ninety-six years old.

<sup>94</sup> PRO 30/29/4/2/25, Frances Shephard, Temple Newsam, to Lady Stafford, 8 November 1787.

<sup>95</sup> Kugler, “I feel myself decay apace”, p. 69.

to be more aware of public opinion.<sup>96</sup> She found life in Cologne an isolating existence, as she was an older woman alone in a place where she knew few people, and so did not have the networks of sociability open to her that she might have enjoyed in London or Yorkshire. Because of her loss of status due to her remarriage and subsequent affairs, it can be argued that she was acutely aware of the need to perform the role of the domestic woman, suffering the facade of femininity in order to win support from her family. The letters that survive paint a carefully produced picture of a remorseful woman, and there may have been a large degree of construction in this image. The letters that survive today are not the originals, but a copy book of letters written up by her youngest daughter, Julia. She may have felt that she needed to help improve her mother's image, and so selected those letters that reflected the idealized virtues that Isabella was later to write about in her *Maxims*.<sup>97</sup> One letter noted that Isabella spent her time embroidering: 'I have got my work together and am beginning my Summer Employs, but I do confess at present the evenings are dreadfully lonely and spirits quite sick'.<sup>98</sup> By portraying herself as the victim of her own virtuous respectability, Isabella and Julia were demonstrating her commitment to the life of the domestic woman, and her rejection of her 'gay' nature, which Mary Wortley Montagu had correctly predicted would cause her considerable problems.<sup>99</sup> Loneliness was a common complaint among older people in the eighteenth century as the high death rates meant that there were few people for them to share old age and past memories with.<sup>100</sup> Studies of the modern ageing community suggest that the incidence of depression is quite high, and there are significant suicide rates among the elderly. It is therefore not unreasonable to suggest that the isolation of old age and the demands for strict codes of behaviour meant that female old could be an unhappy time.<sup>101</sup>

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<sup>96</sup> Carlisle MSS, J13/1/3, Copy books of letters to Julia Howard from Isabella Carlisle, 1771-2, ff. 134-6.

<sup>97</sup> I. Carlisle, *Thoughts in the Form of Maxims Addressed to Young Ladies on Their First Establishment in the World* (Dublin, 1790).

<sup>98</sup> Carlisle MSS, J13/1/3, Copy books of letters to Julia Howard from Isabella Carlisle, 1771-2, ff. 124-126.

<sup>99</sup> Montagu, *The Complete Letters*, ii, p. 312.

<sup>100</sup> G. Fennell, C. Phillipson, and H. Evers, *The Sociology of Old Age* (Milton Keynes, 1988), p. 32.

<sup>101</sup> Wainrib, 'Introduction', p. 160.



Respectability was also gained through the appearance of the older woman, which was often subject to scrutiny. In her 1790 *Maxims*, Isabella Carlisle stressed the importance of leaving ornaments to the youthful, and thought vanity a most unsuitable emotion in the older woman.<sup>102</sup> Sarah Cowper, who only had one eye and no teeth in her final years, also spurned vanity in an attempt to be treated seriously in her seniority.<sup>103</sup> There was a sense that older women's physical attractiveness was not shaped by beauty but by virtues. The moral aesthetics of nineteenth-century Britain meant that the Renaissance portrait of the aged Vittoria Colonna was a celebrated image of femininity, although she was portrayed as being decidedly plain.<sup>104</sup> The beauty of old age was more a judgement of morals than attractiveness, and so seriousness, wisdom and devotion in an older woman were idealized.

However, not all women sought to follow these ideals too closely, and instead acted to have an enjoyable old age and to suit their own and their immediate family's needs. Many women continued to be concerned about their personal appearance in their later years. Julia Howard's penchant for flowers, ribbons and rouge caused the young Harriet Granville much amusement, although she was never critical.<sup>105</sup> Isabella Irwin also liked to take care of her appearance into her nineties. Frances Irwin noted of Isabella: 'her ladyship has some vanity still left in her, for she patched herself the other night and thought herself so handsome'.<sup>106</sup> The actions of these women show that in old age women faced the paradox of being constricted by strict boundaries of acceptable behaviour, but having the autonomy to ignore the rules. This freedom was enhanced by their status as elites. If they were active members of an affectionate and supportive family, they did not need to demonstrate their moral virtues. They were accepted and respected members of the dynasty because of their many years of service to the family name. Old age could therefore be a happy time for elite women, when they were no longer accountable to others, and free to do as they wished in

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<sup>102</sup> Carlisle, *Maxims*, p. 24.

<sup>103</sup> Kugler, "I feel myself decay apace", pp. 73-4.

<sup>104</sup> L. Østermark-Johansen, 'The matchless beauty of widowhood: Vittoria Colonna's reputation in nineteenth-century England', *Art History* 22 (1999), p. 272. The portrait was mistakenly thought to be of Colonna, a poetess, by Michelangelo. The picture has since been attributed to Bronzino, and is thought to depict Maria Salviati.

<sup>105</sup> H. Cavendish, *Hary-o. The Letters of Lady Harriet Cavendish 1796-1809*, ed. G. Leveson Gower and I. Palmer (London, 1940), pp. 104-7.

<sup>106</sup> WYAS, Leeds, TN/C/23/17, Elizabeth Ingram to Mrs Charles Ingram, n.d.

their final years, happily ignoring reprobation.

The older woman could fulfil numerous roles within the family. The widow was often a senior woman, and so they often had the status that went with that position. They could also be grandmothers too. This offered women an opportunity to continue to be active as mother figures, and meant that they could still enjoy some control over the future of the family dynasty. Georgiana Carlisle was closely involved in the rearing of her grandson, George Howard, who later became the ninth Earl of Carlisle. His mother had died in childbirth, and he was cared for by both sets of grandparents, as well as by his father. She wrote a diary for him in 1848, describing the days that he spent at Castle Howard, which entries relating to her educating him.<sup>107</sup> She would not have known for certain that George would inherit the title, as his father had three elder brothers, one of whom was married. However, she would have been aware that he might have a crucial role in the future dynastic success of the family. By taking an active part in his education, she was also ensuring that he was able to be a successful member of the Howard pedigree, and was educated as the grandson of a peer ought to be. His other grandfather was a judge, and was not given the title Baron Wensleydale until 1856, so she may have been anxious for George to be brought up to be an aristocrat.<sup>108</sup> It is also clear from the diary that she was very fond of him, and it was affection as much as dynastic idealism that shaped their relationship. By writing the diary she may have wanted to ensure that he was able to have a personal memento of his grandmother after her death. That the document survives along with her large collection of papers indicates that he was able to recall her affection, and suggests that he guaranteed the survival of her manuscripts as a testament to her memory.

The grandmother was often a well-loved figure, and the degree of affection for her could be considerable, especially from children. As a young girl, Georgiana Dover was most excited to receive letters from both her grandmamma Carlisle and great-grandmamma Spencer, and her sister Caroline noted in 1814 that 'Grandmamma is very good and kind to

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<sup>107</sup> Carlisle MSS, J18/62/16, Diary written for her grandson, George Howard, July 1848.

<sup>108</sup> Georgiana's actions were similar to those of Sarah Marlborough, who took on the responsibility of caring for her granddaughters after their mothers died. G. Scott Thomson (ed.), *Letters of a Grandmother 1732-35. Being the Correspondence of Sarah, Duchess of Marlborough with her granddaughter Diana, Duchess of Bedford* (London, 1943), pp. 11-12.

us indeed I shall always be grateful to her she is the best of Grandmammias'.<sup>109</sup> The relationship often remained close into adulthood. Georgiana Carlisle and her sister Harriet Granville were very fond of Georgiana Spencer, although the relationship was often formal. Charles Irwin was also close to his grandmother, and in 1763, when Isabella lost the last of her nine sons, he went to be with her to comfort her in her grief.<sup>110</sup> Rich Irwin was also very fond of his grandmother, with whom he spent a significant part of his childhood. In a letter written at the end of the seventeenth century he wished that his father, grandfather and master were 'gone' so that he could do anything he wanted to with his grandmother.<sup>111</sup> She reciprocated the affection, and it was noted that no-one could be more fond of someone as she was of Rich.<sup>112</sup> These older women were central to the domestic concerns of the elite family, and conduits of affection.

Within England, the older woman often lived separately from their children, as offspring normally set up their own homes when they married. This tradition of *neolocalism* meant that elderly parents would only live with their children if invited, not as a matter of custom.<sup>113</sup> There is some evidence that the middle classes did allow their parents to move in with them, although some women decided to live with other older women in order to support one another.<sup>114</sup> Among the aristocracy, there was no need to be dependent upon one's children for care into old age as they could afford to be cared for in their own homes by servants and nurses, if necessary.<sup>115</sup> This arrangement allowed the older aristocratic woman freedom in her final years. Isabella Irwin, for example, was staunchly independent

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<sup>109</sup> Carlisle MSS, J18/12/24, Georgiana Howard to Georgiana Morpeth, 18 January, n.y.; Carlisle MSS, J18/11, Caroline Howard, Castle Howard, to Georgiana Morpeth, 10 November 1814.

<sup>110</sup> PRO 30/29/4/2/9, Frances Sheppard to Lady Stafford, 2 May 1763.

<sup>111</sup> WYAS, Leeds, Pawson MSS, Ac 1038, Volume 7 (April 1691-December 1704), Arthur Irwin to Isabella Irwin, Temple Newsam, 19 February 1698 [1694].

<sup>112</sup> WYAS, Leeds, Pawson MSS, Ac 1038, Volume 7 (April 1691-December 1704), Nicholas Best to John Roads, Temple Newsam, 20 June 1692.

<sup>113</sup> Neolocalism is the practice of a newly married couple choosing a place of residence that is independent of parental or family ties. S. Ottaway, 'The old woman's home in eighteenth-century England', in *Women and Ageing in British Society Since 1500*, ed. L. Botelho and P. Thane (London, 2001), p. 120.

<sup>114</sup> Wiesner, *Women and Gender*, p. 76.

<sup>115</sup> Louisa Twining and her relatives remained in their own homes for their final years, and one sister arranged for her servant to train as a nurse to care for her. Deane, 'Old and incapable', pp. 178-9.

from her family at the end of her life, accepting assistance only from her servants. However, older women could still be actively involved in familial concerns, especially the care of their children and grandchildren. While this could be done at a distance to some extent, some women chose to live with their children and grandchildren in their final years, accommodated in the space that the country house offered. The affectionate nature of their familial relationship allowed for the continuity of a domestic life through a woman's senior years.<sup>116</sup> Those who chose not to be near their families, such as Isabella Carlisle, were often lonely, as the family was the main network of support for older elite women. Older women were normally well respected, a part of the family's past, on which they relied for their status. The concerns of dynastic domesticity meant that they remained a part of the family through their old age, as widows, favourite maiden aunts, mothers and grandmothers.

Many elite women could rely on their family for support and protection during their ill health or old age. Women were active carers in the aristocratic family, and when they needed care themselves, they were normally welcomed into the country house, even if they had caused the family great embarrassment. Despite the popular image of the 'idle drones', aristocratic women were not content to lead their lives lying on the couch, and tried to remain active through the employment of doctors, medical cures or exercise. Old age was not a time for women to relax either, and older women were active as social networkers, mothers and grandmothers. While for some it was an important time to repair reputations, and to demonstrate their virtue, for others it could be a time of great fun and freedom to do as they wished. Old age or ill health did not exclude women from the country-house family; they were supported and respected by their relatives and the mutual affection offered meant that women remained committed to the family and its future.

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<sup>116</sup> Both Caroline and Georgiana Carlisle lived with their children until their deaths.

## Chapter Eight: Death, Grief and Mourning

*I think the loss of those one loves is the greatest affliction that can happen in this life.*

Elizabeth Lechmere, 1721.<sup>1</sup>

The aristocratic woman of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries would have lived her life acutely aware of death. If she survived her childhood, it was likely that she would have experienced the early death of some of her siblings. When she became a mother, she not only faced the risk of losing her own children, but also her own life in childbirth. Her parents probably would not have lived to see all their grandchildren.<sup>2</sup> Women who lived to advanced years therefore often endured a great many familial deaths. Isabella Irwin's husband, sister, and nine sons all predeceased her, meaning that in the final years of her life there was a full generation between her and her nearest kin. These high mortality rates meant that death was a subject of significant concern to all people throughout this period. Death was not associated with old age, but all ages.

The degree of consideration given to death in the past has meant that it has been a popular area of study for social and cultural historians in recent years.<sup>3</sup> Anthropology has identified a wide range of funerary rituals and other practices that highlight the variety of responses to death, and this research has encouraged historians, such as Philippe Ariès, to study past attitudes toward death over the last millennium.<sup>4</sup> Many of these studies have started from the premise that modern ideas regarding death are significantly different from those in the past, and have tried to understand the reasons and motivations for change and

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<sup>1</sup> Carlisle MSS, J8/1/356, Elizabeth Lechmere to the third Earl of Carlisle, n.d. [1721].

<sup>2</sup> G. Fennell, C. Phillipson, and H. Evers, *The Sociology of Old Age* (Milton Keynes, 1988), p. 29.

<sup>3</sup> R. Houlbrooke, *Death, Religion and the Family in England, 1480-1750* (Oxford, 1998), Introduction. Recent social and cultural history works include: K. S. Guthke, *The Gender of Death. A Cultural History in Art and Literature* (Cambridge, 1999); E. Hallam and J. Hockey, *Death, Memory and Material Culture* (Oxford, 2001); E. Schor, *Bearing the Dead. The British Culture of Mourning from the Enlightenment to Victoria* (Princeton, N.J., 1994).

<sup>4</sup> A survey of the anthropological studies can be found in P. Metcalf and R. Huntington, *Celebrations of Death. The Anthropology of Mortuary Ritual*, Second Edition (Cambridge, 1991). P. Ariès, *Western Attitudes toward Death: From the Middle Ages to the Present*, Trans. P. M. Ranum (London, 1976); P. Ariès, *The Hour of Our Death*, Trans. H. Weaver (Harmondsworth, 1981).

to identify the causes of our modern understandings of death.<sup>5</sup> These histories of death have highlighted the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries as important periods of change. It has been argued that the philosophies of the Enlightenment encouraged a secularization of rituals and a 'suppression' of ideas relating to death, leading to a significant shift away from the religious responses that shaped the medieval and early modern periods. During the eighteenth century neoclassical ideas began to replace the medieval image of Death terrorising the world with more peaceful romanticized notions of sleep and calm: 'death became a gentle friend'.<sup>6</sup> The growth of rationalism encouraged increasing numbers of people, such as the philosopher David Hume, to doubt the existence of heaven. However, the rise of individualism and affectionate relations meant that although the idea of personal extinction became more logical, it too became more emotionally unacceptable.<sup>7</sup> As the comment by Elizabeth Lechmere reflects, despite its familiarity, death was still a cause of real sorrow. Death was no longer feared by the dying, but by their loved ones.

The subtle responses to death during the mid-eighteenth century are in significant contrast to the popular image of the high Victorian period and the long and elaborate mourning ceremonies, embodied in the image of Queen Victoria. The move from the rational to the romantic is thought to have caused the change from denial to celebration. Mourning changed too, from being a practice designed to benefit the dead to one whose purpose was to support the bereaved. The purpose of Victorian mourning rituals was not to speed the passage of the deceased through purgatory, but to guide the living through grief. During the later eighteenth century the upper classes in England experienced a sharp fall in mortality rates; death was increasingly seen as uncommon, and so grief was more

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<sup>5</sup> For more detailed historiographies of the study of death see: J. McManners, 'Death and the French historians', in *Mirrors of Mortality. Studies in the Social History of Death*, ed. J. Whaley (London, 1981), pp. 106-30; R. Houlbrooke, 'Introduction', in *Death, Ritual and Bereavement*, ed. R. Houlbrooke (London, 1989), pp. 1-24.

<sup>6</sup> Quote from R. Porter, 'Death and the doctors in Georgian England', in *Death, Ritual and Bereavement*, ed. R. Houlbrooke (London, 1989), p. 85; J. Whaley, 'Introduction', in *Mirrors of Mortality. Studies in the Social History of Death*, ed. J. Whaley (London, 1981), p. 2;

<sup>7</sup> L. Stone, *The Past and the Present Revisited* (London, 1987), p. 393; Porter, 'Death and the doctors', p. 84.

acute.<sup>8</sup> Also, as has been discussed elsewhere in this thesis, it has been argued that there were new worlds of affection by 1800, and these brought a growth in deep mourning and the affectation of spontaneous grief, which had been uncommon in western Europe since the medieval chivalric age.<sup>9</sup> The eighteenth century is thought to have been when old ideas of death began to be rejected, and modern notions developed.

This presentation of the changing responses to death, however, is over-generalized. As they are based upon wide-ranging macro-histories, they do not reflect the very diversity those studies set out to celebrate. Responses to death are culturally constructed, and so the needs of each community or group greatly affects their ideas regarding death and dying. Recent studies have shown that the mourning culture of elite families in Britain was far more subtle and sophisticated than has been generally assumed, and that individual and familial concerns could have an enormous effect on the responses to a death.<sup>10</sup> This chapter explores the extent to which these ideas were applicable to eighteenth-century elite families. The importance of both dynasty and domestic affection in the responses to death is highlighted, as are the concerns of both the dying and the bereaved. The role of religion in the understanding of death is considered in the first section on dying, where the nature of the deathbed scene and its reporting are noted. The responses to a death by the bereaved are then studied to explore the nature of grieving and mourning during this period, and the active display of affection within elite families. Finally, the celebration and commemoration of women through monuments, portraiture, epitaphs and other writings is considered, and the importance of femininity in the constructed image of the deceased is assessed. Performativity shaped the actions of women as mourners and in the moment of death they continued to illustrate their distinctly feminine and aristocratic attributes, which were celebrated in their memorials.

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<sup>8</sup> L. Stone, *The Family, Sex and Marriage In England 1500-1800* (London, 1977), p. 250; Houlbrooke, 'Introduction', p. 3. For a survey of the rates of mortality among peers and their families in this period see T. H. Hollingsworth, 'Demography of the British Peerage', Supplement to *Population Studies* 18.2 (1964).

<sup>9</sup> Ariès, *The Hour of Our Death*, pp. 143, 512-13.

<sup>10</sup> For example P. Jalland, *Death in the Victorian Family* (Oxford, 1996).

## Dying

The nature of the moment of death was the subject of much debate in this period. There was a strong notion of a 'good death', and although its nature and purpose changed, it remained an ideal. 'Good death' was shaped by Christian thought and during the early modern period it was considered important that one died 'peacefully' in order that the dying could demonstrate their morality. Although, after the Reformation, it was not considered important to reduce the time spent in purgatory by deathbed conversions, the popular belief in the 'final moment' as a determining factor of salvation continued. Many believed that the dying became their own judge at the moment of death and that they controlled their chances of salvation.<sup>11</sup> The ideal was to be alert, at peace with oneself, and calmly praising God at death. To die in anguish, or even asleep, would be seen as evidence that God was not there at the moment of death.

During the eighteenth century, the importance of a good death as a route to heaven began to fade as life was increasingly considered to be the measure of a person's morality.<sup>12</sup> The image of death as the 'Deliverer of Terrors' was replaced by the ideas of a benevolent God, 'rest in peace' and continued sleep.<sup>13</sup> As theological thoughts regarding the afterlife changed there was a shift away from the ideal of the 'good death' for the dying, and towards a peaceful passing for the benefit of the watching relatives. Heaven became a more welcoming place, a location for reuniting families rather than judgement.<sup>14</sup> In 1698 John Dunton wrote *An Essay Proving We shall Know our Friends in Heaven*, an idea which remained popular. Isabella Irwin wrote on this topic to her husband in 1695, confirming that she believed in joyful reunion, to which he replied: 'You talke of meeting in Haven but I

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<sup>11</sup> R. Wunderli and G. Broce, 'The final moment before death in early modern England', *Sixteenth Century Journal* 20 (1989), pp. 259-6; R. Houlbrooke, 'Death, church and family in England between the late fifteenth and the early eighteenth centuries', in *Death, Ritual and Bereavement*, ed. R. Houlbrooke (London, 1989), p. 28; M. Vovelle, 'A century and half of American epitaphs (1660-1813) - toward the study of collective attitudes about death', *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 22 (1980), p. 542.

<sup>12</sup> Houlbrooke, 'The age of decency', p. 183.

<sup>13</sup> J. Rugg, 'From reason to regulation: 1760-1850', in *Death in England. An Illustrated History*, ed. P. C. Jupp and C. Gittings (Manchester, 1999), pp. 203-4.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 212-13.



hope wee shall meet in Yorkshire before wee meet theer' [sic].<sup>15</sup> As death was no longer seen as the end of life and love, because secular relationships were thought to continue in the afterlife, death became less feared by the dying.<sup>16</sup>

These more secular understandings of death were encouraged by the literature on dying in this period. Much of this was religious in nature, although it did become increasingly secular through the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Many published works took the form of *ars morendi* literature, which guided people through the difficult minefield of dying well. Increasingly, though, the texts moved away from the idea of living one's life in constant expectation of death, and started to offer more practical ideas regarding the relationship between life and death, which continued to be religiously informed.<sup>17</sup> Later in the eighteenth century, elegies became more popular and began to form part of the celebration of sorrow.<sup>18</sup> The literature played an important role in developing popular understandings towards death and grieving. Isabella Irwin owned a number of books on death and dying, and among these was William Sherlock's *A Practical Discourse Concerning Death*.<sup>19</sup> Although originally published in 1689, she had a 1749 edition, showing the longevity of the text and its ideas.<sup>20</sup> It is interesting that she obtained a copy so late in her life. In 1749 she was nearly seventy, and had already lost all her birth family, her husband and six of her nine sons. Perhaps she felt that she needed advice regarding how she should face her own death. However, caution was recommended to readers of Sherlock by Lord Chesterfield, who in 1733 wrote:

Mistaken fair, lay Sherlock by,

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<sup>15</sup> P. C. Almond, *Heaven and Hell in Enlightenment England* (Cambridge, 1994), pp. 100-5; Historical Manuscripts Commission, *Reports on Manuscripts in Various Collections*, Volume 8 (London, 1913), p. 79.

<sup>16</sup> Rugg, 'From reason to regulation', pp. 212-13.

<sup>17</sup> Houlbrooke, *Death, Religion and the Family*, pp. 65-7.

<sup>18</sup> Among the many volumes of melancholia, James Hervey's *Meditations among the Tombs* (1748) was the most widely read, often reprinted with Grey's *Elegy written in a Country Churchyard* (1751). D. Irwin, 'Sentiment and antiquity: European tombs 1750-1830', in *Mirrors of Mortality. Studies in the Social History of Death*, ed. J. Whaley (London, 1981), p. 147. For a study of the development 'textual mourning' in this period see Schor, *Bearing the Dead*, passim.

<sup>19</sup> WYAS, TN/EA/3/26, Catalogue of all the Household furniture, plate linen etc. of Lady Dowager Irwine [sic] at her late dwelling house at Windsor etc., 11 October [1764].

<sup>20</sup> Houlbrooke, *Death, Religion and the Family*, p. 66.

His doctrine is deceiving  
For, whilst he teaches us to die  
He cheats us of our living.<sup>21</sup>

Isabella may have felt safe that she had enjoyed enough life to start preparing for death, and therefore sought Sherlock in order to find suitable advice. The popularity of Sherlock and similar texts suggests that the biblical sources alone were not able to guide and support the relationship between the living and the dead and dying. People searched for more practical and romantic ideas in order to face death, and although religion played a central role, it alone was not always enough.

However, there was still a significant emphasis placed on the nature of an individual's death, and the final experiences of dying were still recorded and used as a testament to the deceased's religious faith. In the early nineteenth century, the idea of the 'good' death was still important to Catholics and evangelical Anglicans. Following the death of Charles Chichester in 1847, his widow wrote to her sister-in-law to inform her, noting: 'A happier or easier death it was impossible to have!'.<sup>22</sup> Charles and his family were Roman Catholics, and the ease of the death was seen as a comfort to his family. His son, Raleigh, wrote to his mother to console her:

I am sensible of our loss but still what consolation does his death afford, oh that everyone could promise himself a similar one, and to live so shall you die, how true. Though he was so kind and fond a parent and husband still will he now, he more so now that he is enjoying the clear sight and procession of God.<sup>23</sup>

Raleigh's comment that 'to live so shall you die' reflects the Catholic understanding of a good death, and that they still held the early modern idea of the moment of death reflecting the morality of the person's life. The comments regarding Charles' role as a fond father and husband also reflect the family's understanding of the afterlife. Raleigh felt that Charles would continue in his role as carer to the family, but, being in the presence of God, he would be yet kinder and more loving to them. Although he had died, Charles was still a father and husband, a member of the family, and his dynastic role continued.

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<sup>21</sup> Lord Chesterfield, *To a Lady Reading Sherlock Upon Death* (1733), quoted in Houlbrooke, *Death, Religion and the Family*, pp. 66-7.

<sup>22</sup> ERYARS, DDCC/144/33, Letters to Marianne Clifford Constable, Mary Barbara Chichester to Lady Clifford Constable, 14 April 1847.

<sup>23</sup> Brynmor Jones Library, Charles Chichester MSS, DDCH/55, Letters of condolence following Sir Charles Chichester's death, Charles Raleigh Chichester to Mrs Chichester, 16 May 1847.

The record of the death of Georgiana Carlisle in 1858 also emphasized her religious faith and her role as the matriarch of the Howard family, a duty that she continued into her last words. The report of her death is a short account of her final conversation with an unknown enquirer, and can be considered as describing the 'perfect' death. It is possible that this is a fictionalized account, perhaps written by one of her daughters. Whatever the nature of the document, it is nevertheless an important account of a real or imagined deathbed scene:

- How is it then?
- Peace - peace - peace. My saviour had passed thro' the dark shadow of the barrier of death before me, he guides me ...
- Does that sweet peace continue?
- Yes Christ is here.  
Tell Ld Morpeth that I said in my dying moments how much I loved him. Tell him what confidence I love his character, ability, and principles, and that I am sure he will do all he can for Ireland.<sup>24</sup>

This report of her final moments suggests that Georgiana was at peace when facing death, notable considering that she had suffered from poor nerves throughout her life. In the prayers that she wrote while alive she identified heaven as the location of peace. At her death, it appears that she celebrated the forthcoming freedom from her illness.<sup>25</sup> Her religiosity is stressed by this report as it showed her being led to heaven by Christ, an idealized 'good' death. It also portrayed her as a mother, and that she was concerned to express her love to her eldest son before she died. This account of her death, whether fictional or accurate, gave Georgiana a specific role to perform as the Christian mother, which would have asserted her status and her femininity. She was depicted as centrally concerned with her dynastic role as mother to the end, as even in the presence of Christ she stressed her support for her children's future work in the Carlisle name. There was no sense of regret at the moment of death. Aged 75 years old, a mother of twelve, with a living heir and a grandmother to many, she had fulfilled her duties in this world. As a widow and at peace with herself, she was free to join the next.

Both these deathbed scenes placed religion and the dying at the centre of the account.

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<sup>24</sup> Carlisle MSS, J18/74, Georgiana, sixth Countess of Carlisle, Writings on Religious Topics, Not in the hand of Georgiana, sixth Countess of Carlisle, Undated. Although her son was the Earl of Carlisle at the time of her death, he was still known as Morpeth.

<sup>25</sup> Carlisle MSS, J18/74, Georgiana, sixth Countess of Carlisle, Writings on Religious Topics.

They were both peaceful deaths, which were neither unexpected nor premature. However, not all deaths could be like this. Some people died as the result of disorienting or painful illnesses that prevented any sense of peace. In her final days in 1739, Elizabeth Lechmere was increasingly confused, and her sister Anne noted that: 'she sees parrots, mice and all sorts of living creatures running about her and is always feeling to catch them'.<sup>26</sup> Anne was sympathetic to the plight of Elizabeth's husband, who was clearly distressed by the situation, and was relieved that her third sister, who suffered with poor nerves, was too ill to come and be with Elizabeth, as she feared it would do neither of them any good. Elizabeth's death was neither peaceful or uplifting, but just a release from the terrors of madness. There was little room for religion or sentimentality; the watching relatives just had to cope.

When someone died young, and still had dependent family, the concerns of their relatives were often focused on those who would be left behind. It was these worries that were central to the lengthy account of the death of George Dover, written by his sister-in-law, Caroline Lascelles, in July 1833. In her recollections in her diary, Caroline placed his wife, her sister Georgiana, at the centre of the account and the text acts as a testament to both Georgiana's femininity and her husband's domestic devotion.<sup>27</sup> Although she covers in detail the actions of the doctors and the nature of his illness, Caroline is most concerned to present Georgiana at the centre of a loving and devoted family, who were concerned with her well-being during her husband's final days. The account uses the language of sensibility to highlight the simple and pious nature of Georgiana and her husband. When she was told of the seriousness of George's condition, it was described as giving Georgiana's: 'sanguine-hearted and gentle spirit a moment of such pain as few others could understand and realise'. She prayed when she realized that the final moment was near, and when he finally did die, she 'gave way', the actions of the truly sentimental young lady.<sup>28</sup>

The account also highlights the importance of affection within the elite family, and the dynastic concerns that arose at the death of the household head. The death of George

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<sup>26</sup> Carlisle MSS, J8/1/301, Anne Irwin to the third Earl of Carlisle, 5 December [1739].

<sup>27</sup> An edited version of this account appears in M. Leconfield (ed.), *Three Howard Sisters. Selections From the Writings of Lady Caroline Lascelles, Lady Dover and Countess Gower, 1825 to 1833*, Completed by J. Gore (London, 1955), pp. 274-277. John Gore, who completed the book following Lady Leconfield's death, notes that the original narrative was of 'enormous length', and believes that there can be fewer more detailed descriptions of a death-bed scene than Caroline's description.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 277.

Dover came as a surprise to Georgiana, for while he had suffered from poor health throughout their marriage, she remained convinced that he would recover when his health deteriorated during the spring of 1833. She was pregnant, indicating that they had not anticipated his death, but had continued to plan for the future. Her status as a mother meant that there was particular concern for her safety. She was not only the mother to six children, but was expecting a seventh, and together they symbolized the future for the Dover family, and so needed special care. It is therefore of note that the doctor that she called on to care for George was Dr Locock, the family's accoucheur; the care of both the patient and his wife were Locock's concern.<sup>29</sup> The extended Howard family came to be with Georgiana, and they appear to have been more concerned for her well-being than of George's.<sup>30</sup> Even the dying Dover recognized the importance of caring for his wife. When he was told that he was near death, he expressed his concern for Georgiana saying that: 'he knew it would be dreadful for her when the crisis came'. Their relationship was portrayed in the diary as affectionate until the very end, and as he worsened, he kissed his wife's hand, and: 'put his arm out to draw her towards him'.<sup>31</sup> His final actions were not judged on the basis of their religious merit, but on his continuing affection for his wife. Through the use of opiates, he was granted a peaceful death, unafraid and asleep. Medication helped to remove the sting of death, and so George was able to die free from trauma.<sup>32</sup>

The deathbed was a time for the confirmation of the strength of both faith and family networks, not only for the dying but for the living too. It offered the opportunity for the very core beliefs of the aristocratic family to be expressed and reaffirmed. For those who died leaving relatives who still needed support, such as a pregnant wife or children, their

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<sup>29</sup> Roy Porter has argued that doctors in this period did not see the prolonging of life as their main duty, but rather the soothing of the patient and their family, in 'Death and the doctors', pp. 86-8.

<sup>30</sup> Among the visitors were: Georgiana's mother; her three adult sisters and their husbands; three adult brothers; her uncle, the Duke of Devonshire; Lord Stafford, Harriet's father-in-law. It appears that of Dover's birth-family only his father, Lord Clifden, was alive to be there. In an early diary entry Dover noted how many of his family had died: 'my brother, sister, aunt, all now in the cold grave'; Northamptonshire Record Office, White MSS, Accession 1945/16, Diaries of Lord Dover, George Agar Ellis, Volume 24, 10 October 1822. It is also unclear whether Georgiana Dover's father was there too. He later reported details of the death in his letters, but they may have been based on second-hand accounts; Keele University Library, Sneyd MSS, SC5/1, Viscount Morpeth to Ralph Sneyd, 10 July 1833

<sup>31</sup> Leconfield, *Three Howard Sisters*, p. 276.

<sup>32</sup> This was considered as the best way to die by the end of the eighteenth century. Porter, 'Death and the doctors', pp. 93-4.

family was needed to provide this assistance in the coming years. However, the dying could gain peace if they had fulfilled their Christian and temporal duties, as Georgiana Carlisle did. Death was not a secular event in this period, and religious ideals continued to shape the representation of the final moment. While practical issues meant that a death could be portrayed in a functional manner, especially if it was the result of a distressing disease, those with a strong religious faith continued to portray the death in relation to God. Issues of sensibility and the language of the period continued to influence the writing of the commentators, but the representations of an idealized death continued to have some currency; Elizabeth Lechmere's sister wished that her sibling could enjoy a peaceful death, although her illness prevented it. For many in this study, death was not the end, as not only did they believe in resurrection and heavenly existence, but they also had faith that their aristocratic legacy would continue after their death.

### Grief and Mourning

Following the death of a loved one, the elite woman of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries was expected to mourn, and was likely to grieve. Mourning is a cultural rather than a psychological phenomenon, and often reflects a communal response of sympathy; for the bereaved, it can act as a formalization of the emotive sorrow of grief.<sup>33</sup> Modern psychological writings argue that grief is similar across the world, a syndrome that follows distinct stages, but that mourning is culturally specific.<sup>34</sup> As Pat Jalland notes: 'grief is the *experience* of deep sorrow, while mourning implies the *expression* of sorrow' (italics mine).<sup>35</sup> Women were especially associated with mourning and grief in this period. They were believed to be more prone to excessive grief than men, because it was thought that they lacked 'reason', and so were unable to restrain their sorrow. Also their role as a 'domestic women' meant that they were more sensitive to the absence of the deceased

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<sup>33</sup> Schor, *Bearing the Dead*, pp. 3-4; A. Olberding, 'Mourning, memory, and identity: a comparative study of the constitution of the self in grief', *International Philosophical Quarterly* 37 (1997), pp. 29-30.

<sup>34</sup> M. Bradbury, *Representations of Death. A Social Psychological Perspective* (London, 1999), pp. 164-6; A. Laurence, 'Godly grief: individual responses to death in seventeenth-century Britain', in *Death, Ritual and Bereavement*, ed. R. Houlbrooke (London, 1989), p. 65.

<sup>35</sup> P. Jalland, 'Death, grief, and mourning in the upper-class family, 1860-1914', in *Death, Ritual and Bereavement*, ed. R. Houlbrooke (London, 1989), p. 180.

within the home setting, and were therefore more aware of the impact of their loss.<sup>36</sup> Women often featured as mourners in artistic representations of death, especially in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, and in many cultures, women were involved in the care for the body after death, laying it out, and then playing the role of primary mourners.<sup>37</sup> Anthropologists have suggested that this is because women were associated with pollution, which was the focus of many of the rituals surrounding death.<sup>38</sup> Within Britain, it was more a matter of practicality. Women had the time to partake in the lengthy mourning rituals, while their husbands needed to continue in public life.<sup>39</sup>

Mourning had an important ceremonial significance for aristocratic families, as it could both affirm ties of kinship and signify allegiance.<sup>40</sup> There were set patterns of behaviour for mourning, although the details were often hazy, and changed according to fashion; when Queen Caroline, wife of George II, died in 1737, there was general confusion as to the degree of mourning that peers ought to go into.<sup>41</sup> Within families, the length of time for mourning was also often uncertain. Although it was generally understood that one should be in mourning for a spouse for at least a year, if not two, the length of time for cousins and uncles was often confused, needing a Mrs Delany-like figure in each family in order to guide them.<sup>42</sup> Mourning could be a long and lonely affair, as close relatives to the deceased were expected to withdraw from Society life for at least a year, although lesser relations could

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<sup>36</sup> A. Carrdus, 'Consolation arguments and maternal grief in seventeenth-century verse - the example of Margarethe Susanna Von Kuntsch', *German Life and Letters* 47 (1994), pp. 137-8.

<sup>37</sup> Hallam and Hockey, *Death, Memory and Material Culture*, p. 69; L. McCray Beier, 'The good death in seventeenth century England', in *Death, Ritual and Bereavement*, ed. R. Houlbrooke (London, 1989), p. 46.

<sup>38</sup> T. Walter, *On Bereavement. The Culture of Grief* (Buckingham, 1999), p. 28.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 35-6, 130; L. Davidoff, *The Best Circles. Society and Etiquette and the Season* (London, 1973), p. 56.

<sup>40</sup> R. Trumbach, *The Rise of the Egalitarian Family. Aristocratic Kinship and Domestic Relations in Eighteenth-Century England* (New York, N.Y., 1978), p. 34.

<sup>41</sup> Historical Manuscripts Commission, *Fifteenth Report, Appendix, Part 6: the Manuscripts of the Earl of Carlisle, formerly Preserved at Castle Howard*, ed. R. E. G. Kirk (London, 1897), p. 190.

<sup>42</sup> Trumbach, *Rise of the Egalitarian Family*, pp. 35-40. The nature of formal mourning in the eighteenth century has not been subject to a wide ranging survey, and so the common practices have not been clearly defined. By the nineteenth century a mourning period of two years was expected for a spouse, and one year following the death of a parent or a child. Jalland, 'Death, grief and mourning', p. 183.

forgo mourning dress for important social occasions.<sup>43</sup> These official practices of mourning could be detrimental to the bereaved, as a year or two in black limited the opportunities to be treated as a normal individual, and thus begin the healing process.<sup>44</sup> However, it can be seen as therapeutic for those who wanted to grieve; mourning offered structure to the lives of the bereaved, took away the fear of the unknown, and allowed others to express sympathy.<sup>45</sup> For a woman who did not want to enter back into society, the mourning culture could act as a shield, as she and her emotions could be confined to the safety of the home.<sup>46</sup> Most importantly, undertaking mourning rituals meant that the bereaved had made the first step towards acceptance, which is crucial to the healing process.<sup>47</sup>

The nature of the life of the female aristocrat could mean that mourning would not have necessarily prevented their work in forwarding the family, or have been enclosing. Women often fell pregnant when they traditionally should have been in mourning, especially if it was a child who had died, and some remarriages took place during the year of mourning.<sup>48</sup> Mourning practices did not always have a significant impact on country life, as mourning was often a show for the Metropolis. Women could therefore still entertain within the country house setting, and were still expected to run the household and family. Coming together as a family was one of the main leisure activities of elite women in the provinces, and mourning did not significantly alter this aspect of their social life. Within the collection of letters studied, there is a notable absence of evidence of the mourning practice of removing oneself from society for years on end. For example, the children of Georgiana Devonshire did not appear to enter a year of seclusion from society following her death in 1806. Her son wrote of his plans for the month of the first anniversary of the death, noting that he did: 'not intend to go out on the gay at all in this mellancholy month', suggesting

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<sup>43</sup> Davidoff, *The Best Circles*, p. 56.

<sup>44</sup> D. Cannadine, 'War and death, grief and mourning in modern Britain', in *Mirrors of Mortality. Studies in the Social History of Death*, ed. J. Whaley (London, 1981), p. 190.

<sup>45</sup> Jalland, 'Death, grief and mourning', pp. 180-1.

<sup>46</sup> J. Hockey, 'Women in grief: cultural representation and social practice', in *Death, Gender and Ethnicity*, ed. D. Field, J. Hockey, and N. Small (London, 1997), p. 101.

<sup>47</sup> Ariès, *The Hour of Our Death*, p. 145.

<sup>48</sup> For example, Mary Barbara Chichester gave birth to Thomas ten months after her first child, Isabella, died in 1827. The second marriage of Henry Carlisle took place eleven months after the death in July 1742 of his first wife Frances.



that he had been 'on the gay' in the previous weeks.<sup>49</sup> Formal ideals of mourning, if followed at all, appear to have been a simple addition to their daily life, not worthy of comment and not so restrictive that their life was significantly altered.

Although mourning may not have had a significant effect on the lives of women in this sample, grieving most certainly did. Although an essentially private emotion, it is possible to explore the feelings of the elite women through their letters, writings and use of material culture. Psychological studies of grief have identified a number of 'vulnerability factors' that may shape different responses to death, including gender, class, religiosity, the age of the deceased, and the response of the bereaved's family and social network.<sup>50</sup> During the eighteenth century, there appears to have been a distinctly elite form of grief, shaped by their social status, affectionate network and dynastic concerns. The individual experiences of sorrow could be shaped by the way that comfort was offered, from either religion, family, or material culture. However, for many women the importance of the family and their future was a significant factor in their grief.

Death, although an inevitable and frequent part of eighteenth-century life, was still often greeted with heartbreak and despair. Those most close to the deceased wrote of the melancholy and sorrow caused by their loss. Following the death of Rich Irwin in 1721, his young widow, Anne, wrote to her father: 'Your Lordship knew my happiness in the dear man that's gone that you wont wonder to hear I'm in sincere affliction for him ... time can only make me easie [but] at present I'me so unhappy all the views I have in this world are very melancholy' [sic].<sup>51</sup> Anne's reflections on her love for her husband show how she felt personally bereaved at his death. They had no children and had been married less than three years, so she was not expecting to become a widow and she had not yet fulfilled her role as an elite wife. Her family were greatly concerned for her well-being after the death. She was described as 'the picture of sorrow', and her sister Mary sat with her all day, every day, during the month following Rich's death.<sup>52</sup> Although she was physically healthy, she

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<sup>49</sup> Devonshire MSS, Letters of the fifth Duke of Devonshire, 1926, Lord Hartington to Georgiana Morpeth, 20 March 1807.

<sup>50</sup> Bradbury, *Representations of Death*, p. 167.

<sup>51</sup> Carlisle MSS, J8/1/175, Anne Irwin to Charles Howard, third Earl of Carlisle, April 28 [1721].

<sup>52</sup> Carlisle MSS, J8/1/127, Mary Howard to the third Earl of Carlisle, London, 13 April [1721]; Carlisle MSS, J8/1/128, Mary Howard to the third Earl of Carlisle, London, 23 April [1721].

suffered greatly from her loss, feeling: 'so dejected and mellencholly [sic] that we sometimes sit a whole day together without her speaking or caring to be spoken too'.<sup>53</sup> Anne's sadness at her widowhood may have been because she was not only grieving for her husband, but also the death of her future. Her plans for a life as Viscountess Irwin, chatelaine of Temple Newsam, and the mother to the next Lord Irwin had been taken away, and she was now a single woman again. Modern bereavement counsellors note that it is often the case that following the death of their husbands, widows feel that they have not only lost their 'other', but also their 'self'. With the death of Rich Irwin, Anne was not only losing a significant part of her own identity, but also her place within the dynastic domesticity of the Irwin family.<sup>54</sup>

The idea of people grieving not only for the individual, but also for their plans with that person is an important consideration when studying aristocratic families, especially in relation to an untimely death of an heir. When the eldest son of the fourth Earl of Carlisle fell ill in 1741, his family were greatly concerned, and hoped for improvement, as: 'his life [is] most essential to your happiness and my Ladies and the support and credit of our family'.<sup>55</sup> His death later that year was considered a real tragedy for the Howard family. Charles Morpeth had been groomed for the Earldom, and his potential had been cut short through his early death. The personal grief of his parents was understood by their relatives; Charles was twenty-two years old, and so was not a 'replaceable' child, but a person to be genuinely grieved and missed.<sup>56</sup> Like the death of a husband early in a marriage, so the death of an heir represented lost opportunities, and unfulfilled plans. The loss of an heir could herald the death of the dynasty too, a demise more significant than that of an individual, but the end of an ideal that had been nurtured and shaped for many years.

It was not only the death of a husband and heir that could cause real sorrow; women were often very close to their siblings and grieved their passing. Following the 1860 death

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<sup>53</sup> Carlisle MSS, J8/1/128, Mary Howard to the third Earl of Carlisle, London, 23 April [1721].

<sup>54</sup> Bradbury, *Representations of Death*, p. 176.

<sup>55</sup> Carlisle MSS, J12/1/51, Anne Irwin, Kew, to Henry Howard, fourth Earl of Carlisle, 27 June [1741?].

<sup>56</sup> For example, Anne Irwin wrote that she was concerned for his brother and his wife, noting that 'I heartily wish that or anything else may prove service to my Lady whose situation I look on with the utmost pity and concern'. Carlisle MSS, J12/1/52, Anne Irwin, Temple Newsam, to Henry Howard, fourth Earl of Carlisle, 7 September [1741?].

of Lady Dover her sister, Harriet Sutherland, wrote to a family friend: 'How can I [hope] to tell you what I have to say is the saddest letter that can be written. I have lost my dearest sister Georgiana'.<sup>57</sup> Because of the affectionate nature of the elite family, individuals were often upset by the death of a relative. When Caroline Carlisle died in 1824, her grandchildren wrote of their sorrow at the passing of a dear and kind 'grandmamma', and expressed their concerns for the well-being of Caroline's husband (Frederick) and eldest daughter, to whom she was very close.<sup>58</sup> The shared concern for the wider family was well established, and so there was a significant degree of sympathy for the newly bereaved. People understood the fears and sadness felt by those who had lost a parent or a spouse, and so were concerned for the well-being of the living. Frederick Carlisle did indeed mourn the passing of his wife. Although Caroline was in her seventies, and her death was not unexpected, he felt increasingly nervous following her death. He asked if she could be temporarily interred in the Minster, as he 'could not bear' for her to be buried at the mausoleum, in the Castle Howard grounds.<sup>59</sup> The sorrow felt by the family following the death of a loved one could be so strong that an elderly man could grieve the passing of his wife so much that he felt that the idea of her being buried nearby would be too upsetting.

Because of the shared sense of grief, it was important for friends and family to provide comfort to the bereaved. When Caroline Carlisle died, her husband was anxious to have his family near to him, and following the 1847 death of Charles Chichester, his sister invited the widow to be with the family at Burton Constable so that they could: 'do all we can to try and make you feel less acutely your sorrow'.<sup>60</sup> This coming together at difficult times reflected the importance of family networks from both the birth and marriage families in the support of an individual. Women often played a leading role in offering assistance. Caroline Lascelles, for example, looked after her brother Charles in 1843 after his wife died in

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<sup>57</sup> Keele University Library, Sneyd MSS, SC12/151, Harriet Sutherland to Ralph Sneyd, 1860.

<sup>58</sup> For example Carlisle MSS, J18/11, Caroline Lascelles, Harewood House, to Georgiana Morpeth, 1824.

<sup>59</sup> Devonshire MSS, Letters of the sixth Duke of Devonshire, 904, Georgiana Morpeth to sixth Duke of Devonshire, 29 January 1824.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*; Brynmor Jones Library, Charles Chichester MSS, DDCH/55, Letters of condolence following Sir Charles Chichester's death, Marianne Clifford Constable to Mary Chichester, 14 May 1847.

childbirth.<sup>61</sup> While the importance of having an ally in whom one could express and share their sorrow with was often stressed, there was a practical element to the support too.<sup>62</sup> Widows were often in need for a place to stay while their affairs were sorted out, and brothers sometimes offered a home for their bereaved sisters.<sup>63</sup> Women often lost a lot more than a husband when they were widowed, and the family network was an important source of support and comfort.

The importance of relatives at times of crisis is reflected in the contents of condolence letters, many of which offered practical advice, expressed religious ideas as a form of comfort, and contained personal expressions of sorrow. Pat Jalland has argued that the condolence letter was an important support to the grieving family in the nineteenth century, as it offered both practical and emotional support, and ensured that the bereaved did not feel alone.<sup>64</sup> Many of these letters showed great sympathy to the bereaved, and contained phrases such as: 'I can find no words to express to you what I feel for you'. For example, in 1715, Anthoinette Coyer heard erroneous reports that Rich Irwin had died in battle, and wrote to his mother to: 'express my heart breaking sorrow for the death of your honourable son'.<sup>65</sup> Consolatory writings often used biblical sources, such as St. Paul, Revelations, Job or Timothy, and spoke of the vulnerability of life.<sup>66</sup> Families often turned to religious ideas in order to express their grief. Dr Thorpe, family friend of Georgiana Carlisle, gave a sermon at Belgrave Chapel following the death of her daughter, Blanche Burlington, in 1840. He spoke of his sorrow at the death, noting: 'she who so many mourn this day

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<sup>61</sup> Northumberland Record Office, Ridley Mss, ZRI/31/30, Georgiana Carlisle, Castle Howard, to Lady Parke, 30 August 1843.

<sup>62</sup> Ralph Sneyd, for example, wrote that he was happy to listen to Georgiana Dover's sorrows following the death of her husband. Keele University Library, Sneyd MSS, SC9/247, Mr Ralph Sneyd to Georgiana Dover, n.d.

<sup>63</sup> For example, Sir Clifford Constable invited his sister Mary Barbara into his home following the death of her husband, until she sorted out her affairs. Brynmor Jones Library, Charles Chichester MSS, DDCH/55, Letters of condolence following Sir Charles Chichester's death, Sir Clifford Constable to Mary Chichester, 14 May 1847.

<sup>64</sup> Jalland, 'Death, grief, and mourning', p. 181.

<sup>65</sup> For example: WYAS, Leeds, TN/C/12, Letters to Rich, Anthoinette Coyer to Isabella Irwin, 20 March 1714/5; Brynmor Jones Library, Charles Chichester MSS, DDCH/55, Letters of condolence following Sir Charles Chichester's death, Marianne Clifford Constable to Mary Chichester, 14 May 1847.

<sup>66</sup> For a discussion of consolatory writings see Carrdus, 'Consolation arguments', esp. pp. 135-7.

exhibited the promise of lengthened years and yet, alas! she came forth like a flower and is cut down'.<sup>67</sup> Throughout the sermon, he did not explicitly name Blanche or her family, as he felt that it would intrude on the family's private grief, but he still felt that it was important to publicly express his own sorrow.

It was not only the language of religion that could comfort the bereaved, but also the associated rituals and a faith in the unswerving support of God. Georgiana Carlisle was relieved to hear that her mother-in-law had received the sacrament before her death in 1824, and took comfort in the perceived blessing that this act would have brought.<sup>68</sup> The Constable family used their Catholic faith to ritualize their behaviour following death. Roman Catholics were asked to pray for the souls of the dead, not only in the immediate aftermath of a death, but for perpetuity in order to support them through purgatory. In order to enable the living to fulfil their Catholic duty the Burton Constable family used a calendar, 'Prayers for the Dead', to mark the date of the death of members of the Chichester and Constable families.<sup>69</sup> It was in use through the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and acted as an aide memoir, so they could recall the anniversaries of their deceased relatives. This could help prolong their links to the dead, and it helped stress the importance of family and dynasty even beyond death.<sup>70</sup>

The belief in the lasting support of God was also a comfort to the grieving. Following the death of Eliza Chichester in 1859, her sister, Marianne Clifford Constable, received many supportive letters that used religious imagery. Her cousin, Mary Lucy, a nun, reminded her that while: 'it is not in the power of human consent to assuage such grief as yours ... thank God we have a higher source to draw from for consolation in the very bitterest sorrow.'<sup>71</sup> The strong belief that God would support Marianne through her grief

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<sup>67</sup> Based on Job 14:1-2. Carlisle MSS, J18/74, Georgiana, sixth Countess of Carlisle, Writings on Religious Topics, Extracts from a sermon preached by Dr Thorpe at Belgrave Chapel, 3 May 1840.

<sup>68</sup> Devonshire MSS, Letters of the sixth Duke of Devonshire, 904, Georgiana Morpeth to sixth Duke of Devonshire, 29 January 1824.

<sup>69</sup> Burton Constable Print Room, Box 65, Prayers for the dead.

<sup>70</sup> The maintenance of links to the dead through Catholic practices is an unusual example of western Europeans acknowledging the dead, as most cultural practices within these communities deny the existence of the deceased; see Walter, *On Bereavement*, pp. 24-7.

<sup>71</sup> ERYARS, DDCC/144/33, Letters to Marianne Clifford Constable, Mary Lucy Clifford de S.S. Sacramento to Lady Clifford Constable, 1 November 1859.

is clear, for the strength obtained from the 'higher source' was enough to provide her comfort. This type of belief was not restricted only to Catholics; the evangelical Anglican Georgiana Carlisle used similar ideas when grieving for her daughter Blanche. She wrote to her husband to encourage him to join her in her resolve to lead a more pious life in their future as she felt unable to live on without some purpose. She decided that the service of God should be her goal and wanted them both to pray for 'divine assistance' from God, so that they would not only be supported now, but also in the future, when either she or her husband were on their deathbeds.<sup>72</sup> Georgiana felt certain that prayer would provide them support in their 'heavy affliction', and was anxious that they, as a couple, turned to God in their moment of need.

Religion alone did not provide emotional support for the grieving elite in this survey, and there was a significant emphasis on gaining comfort through the care and collection of the possessions of the deceased.<sup>73</sup> Anne Irwin was greatly shocked at the death of her husband in 1721, and took many of his personal items away from Temple Newsam to keep for herself. The Ingram estate was keen to have these back, as they formed part of the dwindling inheritance, and while she was eventually persuaded to return or pay for the majority of items, she steadfastly refused to return the portrait of her dead husband.<sup>74</sup> Her insistence to keep the portrait reflects how the bereaved often needed a memento on which they could focus their grief. In 1839 Henry Arundell faced a struggle to keep the personal effects of his recently deceased wife, Isabella, as her sister-in-law, Marianne Clifford Constable, requested many items. This distressed him, leading him declare that 'upon reflection she [Marianne] must be aware that what would be dear to her as a friend must be infinitely more so to me as a husband'.<sup>75</sup> He was keen to keep control of the memory of his wife, and burnt her letters. However, he did keep her journals and sketches: 'I have, as is natural, held them most sacred, they contain almost the history of her too much valued life

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<sup>72</sup> Carlisle MSS, J18/2/64, Georgiana Carlisle to sixth Earl of Carlisle, n.d. [1840?].

<sup>73</sup> The relationship between death and material culture has been the subject of many studies, most recently the excellent Hallam and Hockey, *Death, Memory and Material Culture*.

<sup>74</sup> She promised she would bequeath it to a branch of the Ingram family at her own death. WYAS, Leeds, TN/C/13/37, R. Hopkinson to Isabella Irwin, 29 January 1723/4.

<sup>75</sup> Brynmor Jones Library, Charles Chichester MSS, DDCH/36, Letters to and from Mary Barbara Chichester, Henry Arundell to Mary B. Chichester, 26 August 1831.



Plate Nine.

*Miniature of Hon. Algernon-Francis and Alfred-Daniel Lascelles.*

Anthony Stewart.



Plate Ten.

*Georgiana Carlisle.*

Artist unknown.



ever to be in the possession of any other person than myself'.<sup>76</sup> The words and images of the deceased could be emotive reminders to the bereaved, and so there was great concern to ensure that they were properly managed, and reluctance to part with significant items.

Jewellery could also cause a similar response. Georgiana Carlisle acquired her mother's ring following her death in 1806, and was reluctant to part with it: 'I would not exchange mine for any - she wore it till her Death and I feel that I shall till mine'.<sup>77</sup> Miniatures were perceived as special, and acted as a form of mourning jewellery. The miniature of the Lascelles boys who died in 1845 appears to have been in use after their death (plate nine), and Isabella Arundell's miniature was greatly valued by her widowed husband.<sup>78</sup> Among the collection of paintings at Chatsworth is one of Georgiana Carlisle holding a miniature of her deceased mother (plate ten).<sup>79</sup> She was portrayed as the loyal daughter, with a devotion to her mother that she wanted to emphasize by providing a lasting image of her grief. Jewellery and miniatures were not just simple objects. They had strong emotions, such as memory, reverence and awe, 'super-added' to them, and thus became powerful symbols of grief.<sup>80</sup>

As well as jewellery owned by the deceased, items were specially made to commemorate their death. Funerary jewellery had become increasingly popular between the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries, and during this period, its purpose changed. The *memento mori*, which reminded one to be fearful of death, became increasingly unfashionable. Instead jewellery increasingly remembered the dead; it was now *memento illius*, and could act as a 'vehicle of memory'.<sup>81</sup> The inclusion of the hair of the deceased within the later eighteenth-century jewellery meant that the item acted as a 'substitute for the body'; hair, which during the life of a person is often considered dead, now came alive

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<sup>76</sup> Ibid.

<sup>77</sup> Devonshire MSS, Letters of the fifth Duke of Devonshire, 1889, Georgiana Morpeth to Lord Hartington, n.d. (after 30 March 1806). It appears that she did indeed wear the ring until her own death.

<sup>78</sup> Brynmor Jones Library, Charles Chichester MSS, DDCH/36, Letters to and from Mary Barbara Chichester, Henry Arundell to Mary B. Chichester, 26 August 1831.

<sup>79</sup> A. Foreman, *Georgiana's World. The Illustrated Georgiana, Duchess of Devonshire* (London, 2001), p. 239.

<sup>80</sup> This argument is developed in M. Pointon, 'Materializing mourning: hair, jewellery and the body', in *Material Memories*, ed. M. Kwint, C. Breward and J. Aynsely (Oxford, 1999), p. 43.

<sup>81</sup> Ariès, *The Hour of Our Death*, pp. 461-2.

after their death.<sup>82</sup> In the nineteenth century hair was believed to escape death, as the most 'delicate and lasting of our materials and survives us like love'.<sup>83</sup> There were numerous mourning bracelets and rings created following the death of the fifth Duchess of Devonshire in 1806, which her daughter, Georgiana Carlisle, kept until her own death. Many of these items included the hair of the Duchess, and Georgiana clearly cherished them, as they were among the items she bequeathed in the various editions of her will.<sup>84</sup> Mourning jewellery of all types acted to sustain the relationships with the deceased, and could do so across many generations, as Lady Carlisle's bequests would have allowed.<sup>85</sup>

For many bereaved people, though, the material possessions of the deceased could only provide them with limited comfort, and their response to their grief was to face it with fortitude.<sup>86</sup> Anne Irwin, after a month of pure melancholy in 1721, noted that while she continued to be very sad following the death of her husband: 'I must and ought to submit since it was the will of God I should lose him'.<sup>87</sup> Although Georgiana Dover was greatly saddened by the death of her husband in 1833 and began to luxuriate in her woe, she did show 'gentle fortitude' in the face of her widowhood.<sup>88</sup> This degree of acceptance was encouraged by the friends and family of the grieving relatives. Following the 1821 death of her aunt, it was hoped that Georgiana Carlisle would cope with: 'this family loss with her usual patience'.<sup>89</sup> Stoicism was recognized as an important quality for women to have, and Isabella Carlisle advised in her *Maxims* that 'a continued and humble resignation will secure

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<sup>82</sup> Hallam and Hockey, *Death, Memory and Material Culture*, p. 136.

<sup>83</sup> Quoted from *Godey's Lady Book* (1860), in L. Taylor, *Mourning Dress. A Costume and Social History* (London, 1983), p. 243.

<sup>84</sup> A5/166, Probate of the will and codicil of the Rt Hon. Georgiana Dorothy Countess of Carlisle, 15 June 1859; Carlisle MSS, J18/63, Memos about health, Park Street, 6 June 1817.

<sup>85</sup> Hallam and Hockey, *Death, Memory and Material Culture*, pp. 140-1.

<sup>86</sup> Vickery examines the need for fortitude and resignation in *The Gentleman's Daughter. Women's Lives in Georgian England* (London, 1998) pp. 87 ff.

<sup>87</sup> Carlisle MSS, J8/1/175, Anne Irwin to Charles Howard, third Earl of Carlisle, April 28, n.y.

<sup>88</sup> Leconfield, *Three Howard Sisters*, pp. 277-8; Keele University Library, Sneyd MSS, SC5/2, Viscount Morpeth to Ralph Sneyd, Dover House, n.d.

<sup>89</sup> Carlisle MSS, J14/1/32, William Sloane Stanley, Belvoir Castle, to Frederick Carlisle, 2 December [1821].

you peace in the most awful of moments, that of your dissolution'.<sup>90</sup>

Religion, material culture, and family were all ways of providing comfort after a loss. The networks of support, many shaped by the needs of dynastic domesticity, would have helped the bereaved through the grieving process. Mourning practices gave the bereaved a set pattern of behaviour to conform to in their confusion following a death, but were not set so rigidly that they constrained women in a limbo of unwanted grief. Religious beliefs also gave people the opportunity to follow ritualized behaviour while also offering explanation, support and hope to the bereaved. Objects could also focus their grief and allowed them to begin to recover from their loss. They all gave women guidelines on how to perform in the disorder of grief. However, they could only do so much, and 'making do' was the best most could hope for. Because of the affectionate nature of familial relations, a death was not just overlooked, but a real loss, which caused great upset. As the 1762 comments of Isabella Irwin's long time servant following the death of his wife reflect, one just had to cope:

I have not been able to go out yet, being still very unhappy. It is very difficult to recover one's self after the loss of such a cheerful good mannered and happy tempered companion, that one has been used to five and twenty year, and lived so much with as I have done with her. Everything about me brings her to my remembrance and shews [sic] me how great my loss is of her, who was ever careful of me, and everything about me. But I must do as well as I can.<sup>91</sup>

### Celebration of Life

The death of an aristocrat was not only followed by a period of mourning and grieving, but it also encouraged their family to celebrate their life. This was often shaped by grief, but also acted as a way of asserting the family's affection and respect for the deceased. It offered them the opportunity to highlight the role that an individual had played within the family, and to confirm their position within the dynasty. The celebration of women's lives was normally shaped by their domestic duties, and their role as mothers and their feminine attributes were especially highlighted. Commemorative material not only included published obituaries that, as Stephen Howard has noted, could act as a 'didactic

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<sup>90</sup> I. Carlisle, *Thoughts in the Form of Maxims Addressed to Young Ladies on Their First Establishment in the World* (Dublin, 1790), p. 86.

<sup>91</sup> WYAS, Leeds, TN/C/19/59, Mr Edward Dickinson, Coney Street, to Isabella Irwin, Windsor, 20 September 1762.

display of virtuous exemplars', but also private reminiscences and memorial monuments.<sup>92</sup> Women's inclusions within the dynastic monuments of the families, especially the mausoleums, meant that their roles and position within the pedigree were celebrated too. The ways that women were represented following their death can be seen as an extension to their lifelong performativity, as their femininity and aristocratic status were not only celebrated, but confirmed and assured for future prosperity.

The importance of dynastic domesticity meant that members of the aristocratic family were often interred together in family tombs. Each of the families in this survey had their own distinct burial area. The Harewoods used the Lascelles crypt under All Saints Church at Harewood, and the Irwins were buried in Whitkirk Church near Temple Newsam. Some families chose to build their own burial monument, such as a mausoleum, as can be found at Castle Howard and, for the Burton Constable family, at Halsham, East Yorkshire. The great mausoleum at Castle Howard reflects a novel approach in the third Earl's determination to confirm the family's status through the celebration of past lives, as it was the first of such monuments to be associated with a country house in Britain.<sup>93</sup> Its design indicates the importance of the mausoleum as a way of protecting and promoting the family's reputation. Its base is a series of curved retaining walls, with niches set between square bastions, thus giving the effect of a fortress, indicating its symbolic importance and that the members of the family were still safeguarded even after death. By placing the mausoleum at Castle Howard in the estate grounds it served the dual purpose of burial place and ornament. The interior of the building has been described as being 'as noble a space as it is possible to conceive', and the whole package could be seen as an assertion of the family's aristocratic status.<sup>94</sup>

Mausoleums and vaults allowed families to be brought together after death; bodies would be transported back from abroad to be buried with their relatives. The burial of family members at a single location meant that the importance of dynasty during life

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<sup>92</sup> S. Howard, "'A bright pattern to all her sex': representations of women in periodical and newspaper biography", in *Gender in Eighteenth-Century England: Roles, Representations and Responsibilities*, ed. H. Barker and E. Chalus (London, 1997), p. 232.

<sup>93</sup> J. S. Curl, *A Celebration of Death. An Introduction to Some of the Buildings, Monuments, and Settings of Funerary Architecture in the Western European Tradition*, Revised Edition (London, 1993), p. 179. For a full discussion of the conception and building of the Castle Howard mausoleum see C. Saumarez Smith, *The Building of Castle Howard* (London, 1990), chapter six.

<sup>94</sup> Curl, *A Celebration of Death*, pp. 179-80.

continued after death, as they were to be continually recalled as part of the pedigree, not as individuals. Inclusion in the mausoleum would highlight that person's position as part of the family, although there can be surprising inclusions and absences. Servants were not normally buried with the family, but Nanny Dowler, the long serving nurse from Burton Constable, was buried in their mausoleum, indicating her importance to the family.<sup>95</sup> Those who married would often be included in their marital family's plot, and at Castle Howard a great many of the children were not interred in the monument including the unmarried Julia Howard, who had lived at the house for most of her ninety-nine years.<sup>96</sup> A private building also allowed a family to manage their own burial space. Unlike a public church they had control over whom was buried there, and so the dynastic purity of the family could be protected. When the mausoleum at Halsham was completed in 1802, all the bodies from the family vault in the parish church were moved into the new building, except for that of one member of the Constable family who had squandered estate finances on racing whippets.<sup>97</sup>

Individuals could also be celebrated by their own memorial monuments. During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, these monuments became increasingly popular, and there was a growth in the number dedicated to women and children.<sup>98</sup> They were often designed to mark the role of women as wives and mothers, thus reflecting the continued celebration of the ideals of dynastic domesticity after death.<sup>99</sup> During the early modern period, memorial monuments often presented the image of the family mourning the deceased together, with the children often shown as miniature kneeling figures around the tomb.<sup>100</sup> Although the image of the family continued, it became less formal and more affectionate in nature as generic mourning figures were replaced by weeping mothers. These monuments allowed individual expressions of grief; mourning was too formal to allow real woe to be

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<sup>95</sup> Geradine Mulcahy, pers. comm.

<sup>96</sup> Many thanks to Dr C. Ridgway for allowing me to explore the Castle Howard mausoleum. It is not known where she was buried.

<sup>97</sup> N. B. Penny, *Church Monuments in Romantic England* (London, 1977), p. 58.

<sup>98</sup> N. B. Penny, 'English monuments to women who died in childbed between 1780-1835', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 38 (1975), p. 314.

<sup>99</sup> J. W. Hurtig, 'Death in childbirth: seventeenth-century English tombs and their place in contemporary thought', *The Art Bulletin* 65 (1983), passim.

<sup>100</sup> See, for example, H. Żerek-Kleszcz, 'The death of a child in old Polish culture', *Acta Poloniae-Historica* 79 (1999), p. 7.



Plate Eleven.

*Mausoleum dedicated to Elizabeth Rutland.*

Matthew Cotes Wyatt, 1826-8.

shown, but monuments offered a public medium for the articulation of personal sorrow.<sup>101</sup>

Two monuments to women who grew up in Castle Howard can be understood as reflecting their husbands' sorrow at the loss of their wives, while also celebrating their domestic and feminine qualities. After her death in 1825 Elizabeth Rutland's husband arranged for a mausoleum to be built and dedicated to her memory (plate eleven). Although the remains of other Rutland ancestors were moved into the building, it was clearly conceived as a shrine to Elizabeth, shaped by the sentiments of a grieving husband. Within the mausoleum is a figure of the Duchess, ascending to heaven, her outstretched arms greeting the angelic figures of the four children who predeceased her.<sup>102</sup> The celebration of Elizabeth's maternal virtues reflects the importance placed on the dynastic role that she played in the Rutland family, and asserted her merits. These themes can also be found on the monument to Elizabeth Lechmere. Located at Westminster Abbey, near the 'Poet's Corner', it highlights her feminine qualities and her husband's lasting devotion to her. It was erected more than thirty-five years after her 1739 death, and was paid for by the will of her widowed husband, Thomas Robinson, who died in 1775. The epitaph records that the monument was erected to perpetuate her husband's:

gratifying sense of pleasure he had in the Conversation of an accomplished Woman, a sincere friend, and an agreeable Companion, with particular direction that his own bust should be placed by hers.

Robinson's decision to include payment for a memorial for his wife in his will shows how he must have endured a continuing attachment his wife, even many years after her death. His description of Elizabeth as 'accomplished' and a friend shows the companionate nature of their relationship, which he was pleased to publicly celebrate by placing the monument in a high profile area of Westminster Abbey.

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<sup>101</sup> Irwin, 'Sentiment and antiquity', pp. 144-5; Ariès, *The Hour of Our Death*, p. 327.

<sup>102</sup> Penny, *Church Monuments*, pp. 56-7.

Both these monuments celebrated the feminine qualities and domestic lives of the women. They portrayed the deceased as persons of elite virtue, although the actions and natures of the women did not necessarily justify such proclamations. Elizabeth Rutland was known as a proud woman, whose abrupt and unfriendly manner to her less well-connected Howard siblings caused her father much sorrow, especially when her ‘unsister like coldness’ came while he was grieving the loss of his wife.<sup>103</sup> After her death, Julia Howard noted that: ‘the innocence of her conduct I was always convinced of. She cancelled so much of the excellence of it, which has now appeared’.<sup>104</sup> Julia felt obliged to overlook Elizabeth’s real nature, and seek at least some evidence of virtue. Elizabeth Lechmere likewise did not lead a virtuous life, and if the monument had been erected immediately following her death it would have almost certainly have caused much surprise in London, where she caused scandal due to her drinking, gambling and attempted suicide.<sup>105</sup> These monuments can therefore be seen as the continued construction of the feminine identity, the final performance of aristocratic domestic virtue.

Because of the importance of creating a monument that would idealize the woman, the writing of an inscription could be a difficult task for their bereaved relatives; Arthur Arundell, for example, had problems composing what should be included on his late wife’s tablet.<sup>106</sup> Sometimes the living developed ideas of what they would like as their own epitaphs. Georgiana Carlisle once wrote: ‘when I die my vanity and ambition would be gratified if it could be inscribed on my stone “here lies one whom her Husband once loved with a passion”’.<sup>107</sup> She made this remark while suffering from depression, and believed that her husband should no longer be expected to love the nervous, melancholic woman she had become. The comments reveal how she longed to be remembered not merely as a wife, but as a woman who was loved ‘with a passion’, and that she felt that by recording it on her

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<sup>103</sup> Carlisle MSS, J14/1/72, Frederick Carlisle to his daughter, Elizabeth Rutland, Belvoir Castle [1824].

<sup>104</sup> Carlisle MSS, J18/50, Julia Howard, The Priory, to Georgiana Carlisle, 20 December [1825].

<sup>105</sup> See chapter seven. M. W. Montagu, *The Complete Letters of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu*, ed. R. Halsband (Oxford, 1966), ii, p. 58.

<sup>106</sup> Brynmor Jones Library, Charles Chichester MSS, DDCH/36, Letters to and from Mary Barbara Chichester, Henry Arundell to Mary B. Chichester, 26 August 1831.

<sup>107</sup> Carlisle MSS, J18/2/10, Georgiana Morpeth to George Morpeth 2 September 1819.



memorial monument, her life would have been fulfilled. Public announcements in the papers and formal obituaries also reflected the importance placed on the familial role of the woman. A week after the 1859 death of Eliza Chichester at Burton Constable, an announcement was placed in the local newspaper. It noted that she had died following a long illness: 'borne with greatest patience and cheerfulness ... [the] loss to her sorrowing sister Lady Clifford Constable, and all their friends which had the happiness of knowing her is irreparable'.<sup>108</sup> The public declaration of femininity, dynastic loyalty, and familial affection through the monuments, epitaphs and inscriptions ensured the lasting status of the deceased, and continued their performance of elite feminine qualities beyond their lives and into perpetuity.

Responses to death and grief among the female elite in Yorkshire were varied, shaped by the individual factors of each death. From the intense grief of Elizabeth Rutland's husband to the rather distant response from her birth family, attitudes towards a death significantly influenced by the circumstances and individuals involved. Many deaths were not recorded within the letters studied; although Isabella Irwin was bereaved on many occasions during her life we have no record of her reactions to these events. This silence does not necessarily show indifference, as those documents may not have survived, or there may well have been nobody with whom she could share her thoughts. An absence of records of ostentatious sorrow does not mean that there was not genuine grief; Vickery argues that the common use of language of Christian endurance reflects the need to be strong in the face of devastating misery.<sup>109</sup> There is significant evidence throughout this period and before that the death of a relative could cause real sorrow. The seventeenth-century doctor Napier saw more than a hundred patients who had become mentally disturbed after the death of a household member, and by 1637 grief was understood to be a cause of suicide.<sup>110</sup> Melancholy was seen as a distinctively female complaint. In the later seventeenth century the medical practitioner, John Westover, saw more than three times as

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<sup>108</sup> ERYARS, DDCC(2)/45A/15, *Hull Advertiser*, 29 October 1859.

<sup>109</sup> Vickery, *The Gentleman's Daughter*, pp. 124-5.

<sup>110</sup> Laurence, 'Godly grief', pp. 75-6.

many women suffering from it than men.<sup>111</sup> Cases such as those of Anne Irwin in 1721 and Georgiana Dover in 1833 are among the many cases where significant grief was felt by women following the death of a loved one, and extreme reactions to a death should not be seen as a purely Victorian phenomenon.

Although many of the most religious responses noted here date from the mid-nineteenth century, there is an understated Christian piety in most recordings of grief examined in this study. There is little evidence of secularization of death in this period, and I would disagree with Lawrence Stone's assertion that by 1800, for the bereaved: 'death was now an ugly business, without religious meaning or consolation'.<sup>112</sup> Although the eighteenth century was a period of rational thought, the affectionate nature of relations meant that grief continued to be strong, and religion was needed to balance it.<sup>113</sup> Contemporaries could hold many different beliefs. While Hume, who was part of a tiny minority, began to question the afterlife, Boswell and Johnson continued to be terrified of damnation, Hell, or oblivion; one should not overstate the popularity of truly secular thought.<sup>114</sup> John McManners suggests that instead of secularization, the idea of 'laicization' better describes the changing attitudes to death in eighteenth-century France, and the growing importance of the religious ideas of the laity can be seen among the Yorkshire elite too.<sup>115</sup> Fortitude, acceptance and peace were all religious notions that had been shaped by popular understandings. Even notions of an 'easy death' and death as sleep were lay ideas based upon religious thought, as early Christianity taught that the dead entrusted their bodies to the care of saints, and that they would be asleep until the Second Coming.<sup>116</sup> The celebration of the virtues of deceased women not only demonstrated their feminine qualities, but also helped to confirm their position as members of the Protestant elect. Religious ideas

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<sup>111</sup> A. Laurence, *Women in England 1500-1760. A Social History* (London, 1994), p. 98.

<sup>112</sup> Stone, *Family Sex and Marriage*, p. 250.

<sup>113</sup> Studies have suggested that non-believers in the Victorian period suffered more when grieving than Christians of all denominations, support the Mill idea of the 'utility of religion'; M. McMackin Garland, 'Victorian unbelief and bereavement', in *Death, Ritual and Bereavement*, ed. R. Houlbrooke (London, 1989), *passim*.

<sup>114</sup> Porter, 'Death and the doctors', pp. 85-6.

<sup>115</sup> J. McManners, *Death and the Enlightenment. Changing Attitudes to Death Among Christians and Unbelievers in Eighteenth Century France* (Oxford, 1981), pp. 438 ff., esp. p. 464.

<sup>116</sup> Ariès, *Western Attitudes toward Death*, pp. 29-31.

continued to be important, and while they were reshaped by ideas of sentimentality and romanticism, they continued to provide support and comfort to both the dying and the bereaved.

Among the Yorkshire aristocracy the ideals of family and dynasty were central to their reactions following a death. Because of the affective nature of the elite family, it was important to gain support and comfort through the use of religion, material culture and kin networks. A death could be difficult to deal with if it damaged both the dynastic and domestic, such as the death of an heir or young husband, as it threatened the continuation of the family interest as well as being a personal loss. The death of those who had completed their role in life, and succeeded in furthering the cause of the family, could be accepted as natural, and was thought to lead to peace and a joyful reunion in heaven. Death was a central part of the continuation of the elite pedigree, as it allowed inheritance, and was the mechanism that moved the family forward. However, the fond nature of relationships meant that death was not welcomed, and the passing of a loved one was grieved. The lives of the deceased would be commemorated through monuments and epitaphs that would highlight both the aristocratic and the domestic. Dynastic domesticity therefore shaped responses to death within the elite. Although death is thought to be a great leveller, within the Yorkshire country house, it was distinctly aristocratic.

# Conclusion

*I can but think London is a kind of mistress; dissolute in principle, loose in practice and extravagant in pleasure and if a man keeps such a Lady he will surely be undone, while the Country like a wife, is chaste in its entertainments, strict in principle and useful in practice, and which of these is to be preferred for life I think admits [sic] of no debate.*

Anne Irwin, c. 1730s.<sup>1</sup>

Anne Irwin's comments about the nature of both the rural world and the wife reflects how the majority of women in this survey represented themselves. They were keen to demonstrate through their letters, portraits, diaries and monuments their feminine and virtuous nature. In their daily life they highlighted their domestic abilities as sisters, mothers, chatelaines and wives, as well as their elite status. They did this through performativity. They acted out the roles associated with the both the aristocratic and the feminine in order to consolidate their position within society and to claim their role within the family. It was not an oppressive or containing performance, but one that they used to enhance their status.

The degree of performativity in eighteenth-century elite society does need much further and wider investigation. However, if we follow Judith Butler's argument that the performance of gender roles is a constant, it could be possible to find evidence of performativity in all areas of elite women's lives.<sup>2</sup> Their roles as political hostesses, confidants and philanthropists were almost certainly shaped by their ability to play a given role. Philanthropic work, in particular, has been seen as a kind of game in which elite women 'played at being housewife' away from their home, and temporarily took on a different social class.<sup>3</sup> The country-house 'open day', where the family allowed people from the locality into their home to be entertained in an act of politicized benevolence, was also

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<sup>1</sup> Carlisle MSS, J8/1/194, Anne Irwin to the third Earl of Carlisle, 6 February, n.y.

<sup>2</sup> J. Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York, N.Y., 1990), pp. 24-5.

<sup>3</sup> K. D. Reynolds, *Aristocratic Women and Political Society in Victorian Britain* (Oxford, 1998), pp. 20-1.

essentially performative in nature.<sup>4</sup> Their self-representation as the idealized family, generous in nature and welcoming to their neighbours, was an important part of the charade of aristocracy. In the same way that medieval kings needed to travel the country in order to publicize their wealth and power, eighteenth-century elites had to work at demonstrating their status. It is of note that there is no mention in any of the letters examined for this survey of either philanthropic work or open days, although entries in various accounts indicate that they did take place.<sup>5</sup> It appears that these activities were perceived as part of their ordinary lives, as established and mundane as bathing or breakfast, and would only warrant mention in letters if there were unusual occurrences. Aristocratic women simply accepted these duties as part of their lot, and performed these roles without comment or concern.

Performativity can be seen as a factor that shaped the lives of all elite men and women. The gender and class differences in the roles that people were expected to play during the eighteenth century, and the roles they chose to play, could be a fruitful area for future research. The majority of women in this survey successfully performed the part of the domestic, aristocratic woman, and it has been their home life that this thesis has concentrated upon. Many of these women were also active in political, business and diplomatic arenas too, and this would have meant that they were required to perform different roles on these occasions. Anne Howard, for example, was a member of the Court in the mid-eighteenth century, working for Princess Amelia and travelling with her in Europe, where she would have been expected to be a loyal patriotic servant, obliging and dutiful.<sup>6</sup> Frances Irwin was active in constituency politics at the end of the eighteenth century, where it was necessary for her to be shrewd, self-assured and confident during her

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<sup>4</sup> Elaine Chalus notes the political benefits of hosting open days both at the country seat and the London house in 'Elite women, social politics, and the political world of late eighteenth-century England', *The Historical Journal* 43 (2000), pp. 679, 684.

<sup>5</sup> For example, there are bills to Henrietta Harewood for clothes to be given to the local poor in 1831, and the cost of food and drink for workers visiting Castle Howard are noted in the accounts made by Isabella Carlisle. WYAS Leeds, Harewood Charities Box, Account from A. Baker and Company, Sundries for the Poor, December 1831; Carlisle MSS, H1/14, Isabella Carlisle's abstract of household accounts, 1744-1755.

<sup>6</sup> M. Coke, *The Letters and Journals of Lady Mary Coke* (Edinburgh, 1889), ii, pp. 144, 255-7; iii, p. 251. Reproduced in <<http://www.alexanderstreet2.com/bwldlive>> [30 March 2003].

campaigns against the Duke of Norfolk.<sup>7</sup> In the mid-nineteenth century Eliza Chichester was an independent investor in the railways, and the size of her investments indicates a significant degree of financial shrewdness.<sup>8</sup> The domestic aristocrat was not the only role that these women played, and reflects only part of their lives. While it was a significant part of their emotional worlds, and shaped many of their other duties, elite women did have an active life beyond the family and the country house. This study has focused on the domestic experiences of a small group of Yorkshire elite women, and further studies are needed in order to gain a wider appreciation of the different worlds of the eighteenth-century aristocratic woman.

Throughout this thesis it has been shown that the elite familial relationships studied were essentially affectionate in nature. This influenced women's lives in a whole range of areas. Many marriages were companionate, and the idea of 'love' shaped both courting and the representation of their relationships. It was seen as an ideal for couples to aspire to, and a marriage based on 'true' feelings was both desired and celebrated. A number of the couples within this survey did fulfil this model, and went on to create families with large numbers of loving and loved children. Within these families women were not only active mothers, caring for and educating their offspring, but also sisters and aunts, actively involved in the well-being of the family. As they grew older, were widowed or fell ill, they were not ejected from the home, but welcomed and cared for by the affectionate family. Relations within families were not always happy. There were women who suffered unhappy marriages and difficult relationships with their children, and even those women who had caring husbands and loving children could find life difficult at some times, as the melancholia of Georgiana Carlisle reflects. However, for many women in these four families, their domestic worlds were shaped around affectionate and domestic concerns.

These findings broadly agree with the model presented by both Stone and Trumbach who stress the growing importance of affection with elite families during this period. I would, though, argue that this was fully in place much earlier than Trumbach's suggested date of 1750, and was prevalent in the higher elites, whom Stone argues were more likely to be patriarchal than their professional counterparts. I have found no evidence of the rapid

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<sup>7</sup> E. Chalus, 'Women, electoral privilege and practice in the eighteenth century', in *Women in British Politics, 1760-1860: The Power of the Petticoat*, ed. K. Gleadle and S. Richardson (London, 2000), pp. 19-38.

<sup>8</sup> ERYARS, DDCC(2)/37, Regarding Miss Chichester and her railway shares.

return to harsh patriarchy on the dawn of the nineteenth century which Stone suggested occurred. If anything, there is evidence of increasing affection towards the end of the period studied, when, in line with the growth in the celebration of the domestic woman in the middle classes, there was an increased emphasis on the affectionate world of the family, especially in relation to child rearing<sup>9</sup>. However, I would argue that the long eighteenth century was a period of continuity rather than change in regard to the elite familial relationships studied. There are some minor changes, especially in the responses to the birth of daughters, who were increasingly cherished by both parents. There is also some evidence that women became more involved in the decoration of buildings in the later part of the eighteenth century, as the country houses were increasingly perceived as homes rather than 'power palaces', and women were identified as guardians of the hearth. Changes in language also had an effect on the presentation of affection, as the move towards sentimental and romantic discourse shaped women's vocabulary and ability to express their emotions. Beneath the stylistic changes, though, there was a real sense of continuity. Many examples of similar events and reactions can be found through the time period covered, such as the concerns for a son abroad shared by Isabella Irwin in 1709 and Georgiana Carlisle in the 1820s. Within wealthy western communities there is a strong continuity in the nature of domestic concerns and the worries of the women within this sample, and from earlier time periods too, still hold resonance today. The emotional cycle of being a child, dependent on parents and siblings; growing up and finding a partner and caring for them and their children; and then growing older in the care of their younger relatives is one that was and is shared by many people of all sexes and classes in Britain. Because these families were affectionate through this period, it is not surprising that there is significant continuity, as the worries and joys of daughters, wives and mothers meant that they had shared experiences across the years.

Another important factor that encouraged continuity was their aristocratic status. Because they shared the same house over generations as well as a strong family identity it is not surprising that women in this survey would have also have had similar experiences. Different generations of both family and staff would intermix, sharing ideals and traditions, and encouraging a shared familial heritage. The very essence of the aristocracy encouraged

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<sup>9</sup> This was the conclusion of both Judith Lewis and Jessica Gerard too. J. S. Lewis, *In the Family Way. Childbearing in the British Aristocracy 1760-1860* (New Brunswick, N.J., 1986); J. Gerard, *Country House Life, Family and Servants, 1815-1914* (Oxford, 1994).

continuity; it was part of their identity, a mark of their success. It was their emphasis on a sense of a shared destiny and purpose that shaped their family life. This in turn created 'dynastic domesticity'. The nature of familial relations within the houses studied appears to have been influenced by both affectionate and dynastic concerns. In managing the household and family, rearing children, acting as independent women, and even in grief, the concerns of both the family and the pedigree appear to have been uppermost. In choosing a partner, for example, apparently conflicting concerns about marrying for status and marrying for love were easily navigated because of an elite attitude towards the family, in which concern about the dynasty could be perceived as a sign of affection. There was a deep and underlying attachment to family members as individuals and a real sense of the country house as a home, a place for the family. But added to this was the importance of dynasty and the social, business and political roles that the family held. This did not detract from their concern for the domestic, but enhanced it.

The form of family relations that has been identified in this study can be seen as being aristocratic in nature. This challenges the idea that domesticity was an essentially middle-class phenomenon. The elite families discussed here were not being bourgeois in their style of family life, but were creating their own distinct form of domesticity. The families were empowered by wealth and leisure, and so could follow a lifestyle of their choosing, spending time within the domestic world. The dynastic nature of this domesticity was also something especially associated with elite families, as the importance of the family as a ideal was most acute in the higher echelons of society. The continuity that shaped aristocratic life was also most likely to be found in the wealthy parts of society, especially the sharing of the same house and staff. While it was not necessarily a form of domesticity exclusive to the aristocracy, I would argue that the form identified here was especially influenced by the elite status of the family. The aristocracy needed families, and women, in order to (quite literally) succeed. Through having a form of domesticity that recognized both the affectionate and dynastic needs of the family they could continue to have a presence within elite society while enjoying a supportive and contented family life.

Two notes of caution need to be made. Firstly, this was a small-scale study based on a very privileged group of families located within a specific region. While I would not wish to claim that they were in any way unique, they were unusual and it would be unwise to suggest that these findings can be extrapolated to describe the experiences of other women in all social backgrounds. However, it may be possible to indicate that other elite women



in different counties may have had similar experiences. Although the four families here held different social, religious and political beliefs as well as different levels of status, power and wealth, similar experiences can be found across the sample. While the Constables, for examples, may have lived outside the circles of Court and Westminster, their affectionate worlds appear to have been similar to those of the other more wealthy families. The sisterly relationship between Marianne Clifford Constable and Eliza Chichester, for example, was similar in nature to that between Georgiana Carlisle and Harriet Granville. The findings across the four houses also broadly agree with those of other scholars, although few have considered the domestic world through female writings.

It is of note, therefore that the most similar study to this, in terms of size of sample and regional focus, comes to rather different conclusions. Amanda Vickery's *The Gentleman's Daughter* stresses the difficulties faced by genteel women, who could be caught within a patriarchal system and had to use fortitude and prudence to survive in, what is sometimes a rather bleak, Lancashire.<sup>10</sup> While she does find examples of happy marriages and loving parents, most notably the Gossips of Yorkshire and the London-based Ramsdens, she discusses many more unhappy and bored mothers and wives. These differences lead to interesting questions regarding the relationship between the gentry and the aristocracy with regard to domestic practice. There is very little evidence of harsh patriarchy within the four elite families studied in this thesis nor evidence of 'making do', a theme throughout Vickery's study. Perhaps the wealth and social freedom afforded to aristocratic women meant that they were more able to enjoy their domestic worlds. Housekeeping, childcare and entertaining were not chores, the minutiae of which they had to endure, but tasks that they could choose to perform or delegate some or all to their large retinue of staff. The elite women in this survey often had a choice regarding their domestic occupations, and they often chose to enjoy them.

Secondly, we need to ask whether the women studied in this survey were, in reality, as they represented themselves in their writings. The concentration of well-behaved, domestic women with loving husbands and devoted children cannot be due to the benefits of Yorkshire air alone. We need to consider why there are many more accounts of happy and dutiful women within this sample than would have been expected. As already noted, the findings in this study do roughly accord with those of Lewis, Stone and Trumbach,

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<sup>10</sup> A. Vickery, *The Gentleman's Daughter. Women's Lives in Georgian England* (London, 1998).

although the examples of the domesticated family form are probably more numerous than they may have expected. This may be explained through an understanding of the nature of the sources used. Letters, notebooks and portraits are all forms of representation. In creating them, elite women were deliberately presenting themselves in a certain way. The letters between husbands and wives that stress the importance of their shared devotion reflect the importance to the writer of showing that they loved their partner, rather than being 'proof positive' of the presence of love. In presenting themselves as loyal motherers in portraiture or in diaries for their grandchildren, they were emphasizing their wish to be remembered as a good motherer, rather than being a good mother. There are times when other voices do ring out, especially in the early nineteenth-century writings of Georgiana Carlisle about her illness, and the letters of grief written by Anne Irwin following Rich's death in 1721. However, portraits, letters and other writings need to be recognized as part of the performance of the role of the domestic woman. What this study has explored is not a truthful account of the actions of elite women in the eighteenth century Yorkshire country house, but how they presented themselves and their actions. In doing so, it reflects their ideals of family life, the roles that they wanted to perform. That they wanted to be members of happy and loving families reflects that they opted, in Anne Irwin's terms, to choose the life of the wife, not that of the mistress.<sup>11</sup>

The representation of elite women as idle, adulterous, selfish and uncaring by both historians and contemporary commentators has been challenged by this study. Within this sample there are very few women who would fit any of these descriptions, and even the 'immoral' behaviour of women such as Elizabeth Lechmere and Dorothy Worsley formed only a small part of their lives. The rhetoric used to describe elites was often employed to support a particular agenda, and the much-reported vices of the fashionable few were used as the basis for both radical and conservative critiques of society. That historians have used these same sources to describe the actual behaviour of the wider aristocracy has led to a much-distorted picture. Through using the letters of women it has been possible to develop an understanding of their representations of themselves in the world. Elite women could be harsh critics of the actions of other women; Anne and Frances Irwin, for example, appear to have particularly enjoyed employing the language of the period to attack London society while elevating their home life. Many of these women were also keen to emphasize their

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<sup>11</sup> See quote at start of Conclusion.

fondness for their partners and children, a theme that can be seen from the courting letters of Isabella and Arthur Irwin in 1685 to Georgiana Carlisle's dying words in 1858. Through portraiture their feminine and virtuous attributes were highlighted, such as the accomplished girlhood of the *Three Howard Sisters* at the start of the eighteenth century or the portrayal of domestic competence in Louisa Harewood's mid-nineteenth-century portrait. They also used their homes, their country houses, as stages for their domesticity, where they could publicly display their virtuous talents, such as embroidery and housekeeping ability. Through their actions and performativity, they challenged the popular representations of elite women, and created their own form of domesticity. The elite women of the houses of Carlisle, Harewood, Constable and Irwin were not 'idle drones' but women who worked hard to fulfil the needs of their loved ones, their domestic worlds, and the continuation of the dynasties. They were concerned with ensuring their families' place in history, and that this thesis has been written is a testament to their success.

## Appendix One: Biographical Index

*This is a guide to the main women included in this study, with their biographical detail. This gives women their full titles, and links together the different titles that they held.*

**ASTON, Harriet, Hon. Mrs Henry (1765-1815).** Born Harriet Ingram Shepherd, daughter of Charles and Frances, ninth Viscount and Viscountess Ingram. Married Col. Henry Aston on 16 September 1789; he died in a duel in 1798. Mother to one son.

**BURLINGTON, Blanche, second Countess of (1812-1840).** Born Blanche Howard, daughter of George and Georgiana, sixth Earl and Countess of Carlisle on 11 January 1812. Married William Cavendish 6 August 1829. Became Countess Burlington in 1834. Mother of one daughter and four sons. After her death, her husband became seventh Duke of Devonshire succeeding her 'Uncle Hart'. She died on 27 April 1840, at West Hill, Wandsworth.

**BYRON, Isabella (1721-1795).** See Isabella, fourth Countess of Carlisle.

**CAPELL, Anne (c. 1674-1752).** See Anne, third Countess of Carlisle

**CARLISLE, Anne, third Countess of (c.1674- 1752).** Born Anne Capel, daughter of Arthur and Elizabeth, first Earl and Countess of Essex. Married Charles, Lord Morpeth on 5 July 1688. Became Countess of Carlisle in 1692. Mother of seven children, five girls and two boys. Widowed in 1738. Died 14 October 1752 and buried at Watford.

**CARLISLE, Frances, fourth Countess of (1696-1742).** Born Frances Spencer, daughter of Charles and Arabella, third Earl and Countess of Sunderland. Married Henry Howard, Lord Morpeth on 27 November 1717. Became Countess of Carlisle in 1738. Mother of three daughters and three sons. Predeceased her husband by sixteen years.

**CARLISLE, Georgiana, sixth Countess of (1783-1858).** '(Little) G'. Born Georgiana Dorothy Cavendish, daughter William and Georgiana, the fifth Duke and Duchess of Devonshire. Married George Howard, Lord Morpeth on 21 March 1801. Became Countess of Carlisle in 1825. Mother of twelve children, six girls and six boys. Sister to Harriet, first Countess Granville (Hary-o), and Hart, sixth Duke of Devonshire. Widowed on 7 October 1848. Died 8 August 1858 at Castle Howard, and buried in the mausoleum.

**CARLISLE, Isabella, fourth Countess of (1721-1795).** Born Isabella Byron, daughter of William and Frances, fourth Baron and Lady Byron. Second wife of Henry Howard,

fourth Earl of Carlisle whom she married on 8 June 1743. Mother of four girls and one son. Widowed in 1758. Remarried in 1759, to Sir William Musgrave, but they separated soon after. Later left for France where she enjoyed an affair with 'Baron de Weinheim' (Monsieur Latcher). Died 22 January 1795.

**CARLISLE, Caroline, fifth Countess of (1753-1824).** Born Margaret Caroline Leveson Gower daughter of Granville and Louisa, first Marquess and Lady of Stafford. Married Frederick, fifth Earl of Carlisle on 22 March 1770. Mother of six girls and four sons. Predeceased her husband by just over twenty months.

**CAVENDISH, Georgiana (1783-1858).** See Georgiana, sixth Countess of Carlisle.

**CAVENDISH, Harriet (1785-1862).** See Harriet Granville.

**CHALONER, Anne (c. 1740-1805).** See Anne, first Countess of Harewood.

**CHICHESTER, Eliza (1798-1859).** Daughter of Charles Joseph and Honoria Chichester of Caverleigh Court, Devon, sister to Marianne Clifford Constable. Lived with sister at Burton Constable. Died unmarried.

**CHICHESTER, Marianne (1800-1862).** See Marianne Clifford Constable.

**CHICHESTER, Mary Barbara (1801-1876).** Born Mary Barbara Constable, daughter of Sir Clifford Constable. Married her cousin, Sir Charles Chichester (brother to Marianne and Eliza), in 1826. Mother of four girls and seven boys. Widowed on 4 April 1847. Died 14 December 1876.

**CLIFFORD, Amy (1705-1731).** See Amy Constable.

**CLIFFORD, Elizabeth (1689-1721).** See Elizabeth, fourth Viscountess Dunbar.

**CLIFFORD CONSTABLE, Lady Marianne (c. 1808-1862).** Born Marianne Chichester, daughter of Charles and Honoria Chichester. Married Sir Thomas Clifford Constable on 8 September 1827. Mother of one son. Predeceased her husband by eight years.

**COLEMAN, Jane (1732-1813).** See Jane, Lady Fleming.

**CONSTABLE, Amy (1705-31).** Born Amy Clifford, daughter of Hugh and Anne, second Lord and Lady Clifford. Sister to Elizabeth, Viscountess Dunbar. Married Cuthbert Constable (formally Tunstall) in 1719. Mother of four children, two girls and two boys. Predeceased her husband by over fifteen years.

**CONSTABLE, Cecily (1724-1752).** See Cecily Sheldon.

**CONSTABLE, Elizabeth (1689-1721).** See Elizabeth, fourth Viscountess Dunbar.

**CONSTABLE, Elizabeth (d. 1765).** Daughter of George Heneage. Second wife to Cuthbert Tunstall Constable, whom she married in 1735. Mother to one son. Widowed in 1747.

**CONSTABLE, Mary Barbara (1801-1876).** See Mary Barbara Chichester.

**CONSTABLE, Winifred (1730-1772).** Youngest daughter of Cuthbert and Amy Constable. Companion to her brother William, owner of Burton Constable. Died unmarried.

**DOVER, Georgiana, Lady (1804-1860).** Born Georgiana Howard, daughter of George and Georgiana, sixth Earl and Countess of Carlisle. Married George Agar Ellis on 7 March 1822, created Lord and Lady Dover in 1831. Mother of three girls and four boys. Widowed in 1833. Died 17 February 1860.

**DUNBAR, Elizabeth, fourth Viscountess (1689-1721).** Born Elizabeth Clifford, daughter of Hugh and Anne, second Lord and Lady Clifford. Sister to Anne Constable. Married William Constable, fourth Viscount Dunbar in 1717. Widowed in 1718. Second marriage to Charles Grey Fairfax, ninth Viscount Fairfax took place in 1719/20. She had no children, and predeceased her second husband by over fifty years.

**FLEMING, Jane, Lady (1732-1813).** Born Jane Coleman, daughter of William Coleman. Married first in 1753 John Fleming of Brompton Park who was created Baronet in 1763. In 1770, as a widow, she married Edwin Lascelles as his second wife. He was created Lord Harewood in 1790, but she continued to keep her first husband's name, and so was known as Jane Fleming. Predeceased her second husband by eighteen years, and is buried in Westminster Abbey.

**FLEMING, Dorothy (1759 - ?).** See Dorothy Seymour Worsley.

**GORDON, Lady Frances (1761-1841).** Born Frances Ingram Shepherd, daughter of Charles and Frances, ninth Viscount and Viscountess Ingram. Married Lord William Gordon on 6 March 1781. Mother of one daughter. Owner of Temple Newsam 1834-1841. Lord Gordon died 1 May 1823. Before his marriage to Frances, he had an affair with Lady Sarah Lennox, daughter of Charles Lennox, second Duke of Richmond, which led to the birth of a daughter in 1768 and Lady Sarah's divorce from her husband, Sir Thomas

Bunbury.

**GRANVILLE, Harriet, first Countess (1785-1862).** 'Hary-o'. Born Harriet Cavendish, daughter William and Georgiana, the fifth Duke and Duchess of Devonshire. Sister of Georgiana, sixth Countess of Carlisle. Married Granville Leveson Gower on Christmas Eve, 1809. Became Viscountess Granville in 1815 and Viscountess Granville in 1833. Widowed in 1846. Died 25 November 1862.

**GREY, Elizabeth (1816-1891).** Born Elizabeth Howard, daughter of George and Georgiana, sixth Earl and Countess of Carlisle. Married Reverend Francis Grey on 12 August 1840. Widowed in 1890.

**HAREWOOD, Anne, first Countess of (c. 1740-1805).** Born Anne Chaloner, daughter of William and Mary Chaloner of Guisborough. Married Edward Lascelles on 12 May 1761. Became Countess of Harewood in 1812. Mother of four children, two girls and two boys. Predeceased her husband.

**HAREWOOD, Henrietta, second Countess of (1770-1840).** Born Henrietta Sebright, daughter of Sir John and Lady Sarah Sebright. Married Henry Lascelles on 3 September 1794. Became Countess of Harewood in 1820. Mother of twelve children, four girls and eight boys. Predeceased her husband.

**HAREWOOD, Jane, Lady (1732-1813).** See Jane, Lady Fleming.

**HAREWOOD, Louisa, third Countess of (1801-1859).** Born Louisa Thynne, daughter of Thomas and Isabella, the second Marquess and Lady Bath. Married Henry Lascelles on 5 July 1823. Became Countess of Harewood in 1841. Mother of thirteen children, six girls and seven boys. Widowed in 1857, after her husband died while out hunting.

**HENEAGE, Elizabeth (d. 1765).** See Elizabeth Constable.

**HERTFORD, Isabella, Marchioness (1759-1834).** Born Isabella Ingram Shepherd, daughter of Charles and Frances, ninth Viscount and Viscountess Ingram. Married Francis, Viscount Beauchamp on 20 May 1776 as his second wife. Became second Marchioness of Hertford in 1794. Owner of Temple Newsam 1807-1834. Mother of one son. Widowed in 1822.

**HOWARD, Anne (1674-1752).** See Anne, third Countess of Carlisle.

**HOWARD, Anne (c. 1696-1764).** See Anne, third Viscountess Irwin.

**HOWARD, Anne (1744-1799).** Daughter of Henry and Isabella, fourth Earl and Countess of Carlisle. Did not marry. Engaged as a Lady of the Bedchamber to Princess Amelia in 1768.

**HOWARD, Blanche (1812-1840).** See Blanche, second Countess of Burlington.

**HOWARD, Caroline (1803-1881).** See Caroline Lascelles.

**HOWARD, Elizabeth (1701-1777).** See Lady Elizabeth Lechmere.

**HOWARD, Elizabeth (1780-1825).** See Elizabeth, fifth Duchess of Rutland.

**HOWARD, Elizabeth (1816-1891).** See Elizabeth Grey.

**HOWARD, Georgiana (1804-1860).** See Georgiana, Lady Dover.

**HOWARD, Harriet (1806-1868).** See Harriet, Duchess of Sutherland.

**HOWARD, Julia (1750-1849).** Daughter of Henry and Isabella, fourth Earl and Countess of Carlisle. Did not marry. Lived at Castle Howard most of her life.

**HOWARD, Mary (1695-1786).** Daughter of Charles and Anne, third Earl and Countess of Carlisle. Did not marry; spent a great deal of her life in Bath and at her childhood home of Castle Howard. Buried in the Castle Howard mausoleum.

**HOWARD, Mary (1822-1843).** Born Hon. Mary Parke, daughter of Sir James Parke, Baron Wensleydale. Married Charles Howard on 8 August 1842. Mother of one son. Died in 1843 due to complications following childbirth, predeceasing her husband by 36 years.

**HOWARD, Mary (1823-1892).** See Mary, Lady Taunton.

**INGRAM, Anne (c. 1696-1794).** See Anne, fifth Viscountess Irwin.

**INGRAM, Anne (c. 1699-1766).** See Anne, seventh Viscountess Irwin.

**INGRAM, Elizabeth (c. 1700-1739).** Born Elizabeth Scarbrugh, youngest daughter of Mr and Mrs Charles Scarbrugh of Windsor. Married firstly Francis Brace of Bedfordshire, and secondly Col: the Hon. Charles Ingram in 1726. Sister to Anne. It is unclear how many children she had, but at least two daughters and one son reached adulthood. Predeceased her husband by nine years.

**INGRAM, Elizabeth (c. 1734-1770).** Daughter of Col. Charles and Elizabeth Ingram.



Married Nathaniel Bailey in 1767.

**INGRAM, Frances (1734-1807).** See Frances, ninth Viscountess Irwin.

**INGRAM, Isabella (c. 1670-1764).** See Isabella, third Viscountess Irwin.

**INGRAM, Isabella (n.d.).** See Isabella Ramsden

**INGRAM SHEPHERD, Elizabeth (1762-1817).** See Elizabeth, Hon. Mrs Hugo Meynell.

**INGRAM SHEPHERD, Frances (1761-1841).** See Lady Frances Gordon.

**INGRAM SHEPHERD, Harriet (1765-1815).** See Harriet Aston.

**INGRAM SHEPHERD Isabella (1759-1834).** See Isabella, Marchioness Hertford.

**INGRAM SHEPHERD, Louisa (1766-1857).** See Lady Louisa Ramsden.

**IRWIN, Anne, fifth Viscountess (c. 1696-1794).** Born Anne Howard, daughter of Charles and Anne, third Earl and Countess of Carlisle. Married Rich Ingram, Viscount Irwin in 1718. Widowed in 1721. Remarried in 1737 William Douglas, who died in 1747/8. Lady of the bedchamber to the Princes of Wales.

**IRWIN, Anne, seventh Viscountess (c. 1699-1766).** Born Anne Scarburgh, second daughter and co-heiress of Charles Scarburgh of Windsor and grand-daughter of the royal physician Sir Charles Scarburgh. Married Henry Ingram in 1728, and became Viscountess in 1736. Widowed in 1761. No children known.

**IRWIN, Frances, ninth Viscountess (1734-1807).** Born Frances Shepherd, illegitimate daughter of Samuel Shephered, M.P.. Married Charles Ingram in 1758 and became Viscountess Irwin in 1761. Mother of five daughters. Widowed in 1778.

**IRWIN, Isabella, third Viscountess (c. 1670-1764).** Born Isabella Machell, daughter of John Machell. Married Arthur Ingram in 1685. Became Viscountess Irwin in 1688. Mother of nine sons, all of whom predeceased her. Widowed in 1702.

**LASCELLES, Anne (c. 1740-1805).** See Anne, first Countess of Harewood.

**LASCELLES, Caroline (1803-1881).** Born Caroline Howard, daughter of George and Georgiana, sixth Earl and Countess of Carlisle. On 14 May 1823 she married William Lascelles, son of Henry and Henrietta, Earl and Countess of Harewood. Mother of four daughters and seven sons. Widowed in 1851.

**LASCELLES, Henrietta (1770-1840).** See Henrietta, second Countess of Harewood.

**LASCELLES, Louisa (1801-1859).** See Louisa, third Countess of Harewood.

**LECHMERE, Lady Elizabeth (1701-1739).** Born Elizabeth Howard, daughter of Charles and Anne, third Earl and Countess of Carlisle. Married Nicholas Lord Lechmere in 1719. Widowed on 18 June 1727; her husband suffered a sudden, and fatal, attack of apoplexy. Remarried in 1728 Sir Thomas Robinson, and died at Bath on 10 April 1739. She was probably the basis for 'Rosamunda' in Pope's 'Moral Essays', Ep. ii.

**LEVESON GOWER, Caroline (1753-1824).** See Caroline, fifth Countess of Carlisle.

**MACHELL, Isabella (c. 1670-1764).** See Isabella, third Viscountess Irwin.

**MEYNELL, Elizabeth, Hon. Mrs Hugo (1762-1817).** Born Elizabeth Ingram Shepherd, daughter of Charles and Frances, ninth Viscount and Viscountess Ingram. Married Hugo Meynell of Hoar Cross in 1782. Mother of six children, two girls and four boys. Widowed in 1800.

**MORPETH, Georgiana, Lady (1783-1858).** See Georgiana, sixth Countess of Carlisle.

**PARKE, Mary (1822-1843).** See Hon. Mary Howard.

**RAMSDEN, Lady Louisa (1766-1857).** Born Louisa Ingram Shepherd, youngest daughter of Charles and Frances, ninth Viscount and Viscountess Ingram. Married Sir John Ramsden on 7 July 1787. Mother of two girls and one girl. Widowed in 1839.

**RAMSDEN, Isabella (1729-1762).** Born Isabella Ingram. Daughter of Col Charles and Elizabeth Ingram. Married Frenchville Ramsden 17 March 1761. Mother to at least one son, George.

**RUTLAND, Elizabeth, fifth Duchess of (1780-1825).** Born Elizabeth Howard, daughter of Frederick and Margaret fifth Earl and Countess of Carlisle. Married John Henry Manners, fifth Duke of Rutland on 22 April 1799. Mother of four girls and three boys. Predeceased her husband by 27 years.

**SCARBRUGH, Anne (c. 1699-1766).** See Anne, seventh Viscountess Irwin.

**SCARBRUGH, Elizabeth (c. 1700-1739).** See Elizabeth Ingram.

**SEBRIGHT, Henrietta (1770-1840).** See Henrietta, second Countess of Harewood.

**SHELDON, Cecily (1724-c.1752).** Born Cecily Constable, daughter of Cuthbert and Amy Constable. Married Edward Sheldon of Winchester on 26 November 1748. Mother of one girl and three sons. Predeceased her husband by 23 years.

**SHEPHERD, Frances (1734-1807).** See Frances, ninth Viscountess Irwin.

**SPENCER, Frances (1696-1742).** See Frances, fourth Countess of Carlisle.

**SUTHERLAND, Harriet, Duchess of (1806-1868).** Born Harriet Howard, daughter of George and Georgiana, sixth Earl and Countess of Carlisle. Married George Granville Leveson Gower on 27/8 May 1823. Mother of six daughters and five sons. Widowed in 1861. Mistress of the Robes for Queen Victoria. Her London home, Stafford House, became an important centre of society, a starting point for various philanthropic quests, including for campaigns against American Slavery. Died 27 October 1886.

**TAUNTON, Mary, Lady (1823-1892).** Born Mary Howard, daughter of George and Georgiana, sixth Earl and Countess of Carlisle. Married Rt. Hon. Henry Labouchere, Lord Taunton on 13 July 1852; they had no children. In default of male issue the barony of Taunton became extinct at his death. Mary was widowed in 1869.

**THYNNE, Louisa (1801-1859).** See Louisa, third Countess of Harewood.

**WORSLEY, Dorothy Seymour (1759-?).** Born Dorothy Fleming, daughter of Jane Coleman (later Harewood) and John Fleming. Married Sir Richard Worsley seventh baronet in 1775. Remarried in 1805, following the death of Worsley, a Mr Louis Couchet, but reverted to calling herself Lady Fleming. Date at death remains unclear.

## Appendix Two: Family Trees

The following are family trees for the main branches of the four houses studied. They are based on a wide variety of sources, including traditional reference texts, the details in the documents accessed, and information supplied by the curators of the houses. They are 'best fit' family trees; where there has been a difference in the details supplied, I have used the most likely date based on the widest range of information. It is not possible to guarantee full accuracy, but they offer a good guide based on the material collected.

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### Key

|       |               |
|-------|---------------|
| b.    | Born          |
| d.    | Died          |
| d. of | Daughter of   |
| cr.   | Title Created |

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### **Internet Resources**

*Harewood House* website <<http://www.harewood.org>>

*Temple Newsam House* website <<http://www.leeds.gov.uk/templenewsam>>

*Master Index to Royal Genealogical Data* website <<http://www.dcs.hull.ac.uk/public/genealogy/royal/gedx.html>>

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