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Imaginings of Well-Employed and Wasted Time in 'Bluestocking' Letters and Writings

by

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Abstract

Drawing on the letters and writings of Catherine Talbot, Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, Elizabeth Carter, Mary Delany, and Elizabeth Montagu, this thesis explores bluestocking imaginings of well-employed and wasted time. Specifically, it examines ways in which these five women engaged with differing models of virtue, highlighting how each of these models outlined different versions of how one should employ one's time in order to lead a happy, productive, and moral upstanding life. In this study, I argue that by unpacking how my case studies navigated conflicting models of well-employed time – along with how they used written accounts of themselves navigating these models to cement their relationships with other intelligent and genteel women – we can not only revise the idea of a bluestocking 'circle', but shed new light on the lives and legacies of individual bluestockings.

By highlighting how Talbot negotiated her domestic duties and scholarly ambitions in a manner that she grasped would be relatable to Carter, I challenge her reputation as a lamenting and bitter figure. Through exploring how Lady Mary wrote about time, learning, and custom in ways that she hoped would form emotional ties between herself and her female relatives, I expose that while not often written about as a bluestocking, her writings can be related convincingly to the bluestocking movement. In my examination of Carter's letters, I consider how she used little-studied portrayals of herself walking and sewing to negotiate multiple, conflicting pulls on her intellectual and social lives in her letters to Talbot. Through my discussion of how Delany portrayed her shell crafts as both important and frivolous, improving and wasteful in letters written to her sister over the course of her lifetime, I dispute the popular idea of her reaching her creative peak in old age. Finally, through my analysis of Montagu's adolescent letters, I shine light on how she used her alias 'Fidget' to progress along social and intellectual models of well-employed time, exposing a model of friendship that was crucial to the bluestocking movement.

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I declare that this thesis and the work presented in it is my own and has been generated by me as the result of my own original research.

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<u>Introduction: Of Bluestocking Women, and Conflicting Models of Well-Employed Time</u>

Identifying Catherine Talbot, Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, Elizabeth Carter, Mary Delany and Elizabeth Montagu as bluestockings, this thesis explores imaginings of well-employed and wasted time in bluestocking letters and writings. In particular, it examines how their circumstances as intelligent eighteenth-century gentlewomen exposed them to conflicting models of well-employed time, along with how they used accounts of themselves navigating these models to cement their relationships with other intellectual and genteel women. In this study, I argue that by exploring bluestocking engagement with conflicting models of well-employed time, we can not only challenge traditional ideas of the bluestocking 'circle', but revise popular accounts of the lives and legacies of my five bluestocking case studies.

In her seminal 1990 investigation *The Bluestocking Circle*, Sylvia Harcstark Myers portrays the bluestockings as an 'intellectual' society of literary women who met, corresponded, and wrote in the late eighteenth century, identifying Elizabeth Montagu as the paramount member of this community.[1] Sparking a dynamic new era in the field of bluestocking studies, Myers's work has encouraged scholars to find new, innovative ways of thinking and writing about the term 'bluestocking'. In their 2002 volume of essays *Reconsidering the Bluestockings* for instance, Nicole Pohl and Betty A. Schellenberg call on authors to expand 'the Bluestocking sphere of action to encompass business, social experimentation, self-fashioning, and bodily expression', while in their 2015 study 'Remapping the Bluestocking Heavens', Deborah and Steven Heller challenge the idea of Montagu as the society's 'North Star'.[2]

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[1] Sylvia Harcstark Myers, *The Bluestocking Circle: Women, Friendship, and the Life of the Mind in Eighteenth-Century England* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), p.2. While, as I will explain later in this introduction, Myers acknowledges that both men and women attended the meetings of the bluestocking society, she uses the term bluestocking to refer to the lives, achievements, and ambitions of the female members of the circle.
[2] Nicole Pohl and Betty A. Schellenberg, 'Introduction: A Bluestocking Historiography', in *Reconsidering the Bluestockings*, ed. by Nicole Pohl and Betty A. Schellenberg (San Marino: The Huntington Library Press, 2003), pp.1-20 (p.18), & Deborah and Steven Heller, 'A Copernican Shift; or, Remapping the Bluestocking Heavens', in *Bluestockings Now! The Evolution of a Social Role*, ed. by Deborah Heller (London; New York: Routledge, 2015), pp.17-54 (p.19).

With four of its five chapters dedicated to the writings of Talbot, Carter, Delany, and Montagu (women who are all described as bluestockings in *The Bluestocking Circle*), this study draws heavily on the precedent laid out in Myers's research.[3] At the same time however, this thesis also takes inspiration from recent, revisionist bluestocking scholarship. By exploring Lady Mary's writings for instance, I revise the idea of a bluestocking 'circle', and through examining Delany's creative works, I contest Myers's version of bluestocking intellectual achievement. Ultimately, this investigation uses the word bluestocking not just to refer to Montagu's literary set, but a wider social, cultural, and intellectual movement.

Departing from the existing critical field, in this thesis I explain and explore how bluestocking women navigated conflicting models of well-employed and wasted time. In some instances, I expose their engagement with opposing accounts of how to employ time in an ethical, cultivating, and happy manner. In others, I examine how they negotiated differing versions of virtuous conduct, illustrating ways in which these versions influenced how they imagined and wrote about their moral improvement over time. Faced with competing accounts of well-employed time, Talbot, Lady Mary, Carter, Delany, and Montagu used their letters and writings to make sense of disparate pulls on their intellectual, social, and creative lives, offering us a little-studied method of approaching and thinking about the bluestocking movement.

As well-read women with personal ties to Britain's foremost philosophers and theologians, the bluestockings studied in this thesis all engaged keenly with contemporary Enlightenment debate. In particular, their letters reveal how they all read publications that identified an important, positive relationship between the improvement of intellectual faculties, and moral progress over time; an idea that as we will consider, at once relates to, and can be separated by the contemporary notion of 'perfectibility'. In a letter written on the 29th of February 1751 for instance, Talbot describes her 'pleasure' in reading Robert Bolton's 1750 essay *On the Employment of Time*, in which Bolton contends that by failing to 'improve' our God-given 'rational faculties', we 'waste' and 'misemploy' our time.[4] Insisting that

[3] Myers, p.vii.

[4] Catherine Talbot, 'Miss Talbot to Mrs. Carter. Piccadilly, *Feb*. 29, 1751', in *A Series of Letters Between Mrs Elizabeth Carter and Miss Catherine Talbot. From the Year 1741 to 1770. To which are added Letters, from Mrs.*

through rational improvement, we pass our days in a virtuous manner, these publications render intellectual models of well-employed time.

For the bluestockings, Bolton's straightforward account of well-employed and wasted time was complicated by the widely-held understanding that women were intellectually inferior to men. In his 1787 work *Strictures on Female Education*, John Bennett outlines a useful articulation of this view, arguing that while the female mind can be defined in terms of women's 'restless' and 'unquiet imagination', men possess the greater abilities of 'strong judgement' and 'nice discrimination'.[5] 'The sexes', Bennett reflects, 'were providentially formed as counterparts of one another', contending that men's intellectual 'superiority' over women is in keeping with the will of '[t]he great God of nature'.[6]

Vitally, the idea of sexed mental ability was bound tightly to contemporary notions of masculine and feminine virtue. In his 1781 publication *Liberal Education* for instance, Vicesimus Knox argues that boys should be instructed in an 'antient [sic] system of education', insisting that this mentally 'enlarg[ing]' curriculum is not only best suited to the male 'mind', but 'tends most directly to form the true gentleman', enabling a man to uphold 'the religion', 'virtue', and 'liberties' of his country.[7] When we consult writings on middling to upper ranking women's education however, such as James Fordyce's *Sermons to Young Women*, any demanding form of intellectual study is framed as wholly inappropriate. While arguing that a girl should improve her mental faculties by learning some forms of intellectual accomplishment (noting, for instance, that by studying 'history' she can learn of 'virtues to be imitated', and 'vices to be shunned'), Fordyce upholds Knox's framing of vigorous, 'ancient' forms of education as 'masculine', contending that a 'masculine woman' is an 'unamiable creature'.[8]

Elizabeth Carter to Mrs. Vesey, between the Years 1763 and 1787, 4 vols (London: F. C. and J. Rivington, 1809), II, pp.7-12 (p.9), & Robert Bolton, *On the Employment of Time* (London: J. Whiston, 1750), pp.33 & 77.

[5] John Bennett, *Strictures on Female Education; chiefly as it relates to the culture of the heart, in four essays* (London: T. Cadell, 1787), pp.112 & 107.

[6] Ibid, p.105.

[7] Vicesimus Knox, *Liberal Education: Or, a Practical Treatise on the Methods of Acquiring Useful and Polite Learning*, 7th edn., 2 vols (London: C. Dilly, 1785), I, pp.2-5.

[8] James Fordyce, *Sermons to Young Women*, 7th edn., 2 vols (Dublin: J. Williams, 1767), I, pp.274, 202 & 104.

Fordyce advises that instead, girls should learn ‘elegant accomplishments’ such as dancing, writing that when used with ‘prudence’, dancing cultivates ‘good humour’, ‘kind affections between sexes’, and banishes ‘ungraceful gestures’; attributes that as Soile Ylivuori notes, were understood to improve a girl’s chances of making an advantageous ‘marriage’.[9] He also argues that girls should be instructed in the ‘domestic accomplishments’, stating that they promote the qualities of ‘frugality’, ‘discretion’, and ‘charity’.[10] Notably, Fordyce argues that the domestic accomplishments are not only the best way to nurture a girl into a ‘Virtuous Woman’, but as they are ‘not intricate’ to learn, naturally suited to the female mind, using the idea of limited female intellect to construct an account of feminine virtue.[11]

Confronted with differing versions of how to lead a moral life, the bluestockings constantly navigated conflicting models of well-employed time in their letters and writings. While their scholarly activities resonated strongly with the intellectual models outlined in contemporary philosophical tracts, as gentlewomen they were also encouraged to view their actions in relation to contradictory, feminine models. Although the bluestockings often blurred, confused, and questioned the lines between these models, as well-read women they were always obliged to negotiate them, drawing on these negotiations to strengthen their friendships with others. It is by unpacking these negotiations that this thesis both finds cohesion in bluestocking writings, and considers the lives of individual bluestocking women.

Section 1) What makes a bluestocking a bluestocking? Locating this study’s handling of the term ‘bluestocking’ in the existing scholarly field

From the earliest meetings of the society in the mid-eighteenth century, critics and artists have taken different approaches to defining the members, activities, and significance of the bluestocking society. As

[9] Ibid, pp.234-236, & Soile Ylivuori, *Women and Politeness in Eighteenth-Century England: Bodies, Identities, and Power* (London; New York: Routledge, 2019), p.136.
[10] Fordyce, pp.232-233.
[11] Ibid, pp.211 & 232.

Anne Mellor argues for instance, in Richard Samuel's 1778 painting *Portraits in the Characters of the Muses in the Temple of Apollo* the bluestockings feature as nine 'respected' women in classical clothing, celebrating their achievements as writers, artists, and musicians.[12] In the advertisement to her 1786 poem 'The Bas-Blue', Hannah More depicts the bluestockings as a 'small party of friends' who 'met for the sole purpose of conversation', portraying their conversation in verse as 'The noblest commerce of mankind,/ Whose precious merchandise is MIND!' (296-297).[13] In his 1792 satire *The Female Jockey Club*, Charles Pigott portrays the bluestockings as a literary group that while attracting 'every species of Lady Authors', boasted few members that were 'known to the public by any literary excellence'.[14]

To establish this investigation's understanding and use of the term 'bluestocking', it is necessary for us to examine more recent accounts of the society, beginning with Myers's 1990 book *The Bluestocking Circle.* In the preface to this study, Myers frames her research as a departure from the 'traditional view' of 'the bluestockings as *salonieres* [sic]', as outlined in works such as Ethel Rolt Wheeler's 1910 study, *Famous Bluestockings*.[15] However, since its publication *The Bluestocking Circle* has been frequently cited by scholars as the established version of who and what constitutes a bluestocking, triggering multiple revisionist investigations into membership, achievements, and legacy of the society.

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[12] Anne Mellor, 'Romantic bluestockings: from muses to matrons', in *Bluestockings Displayed: Portraiture, Performance and Patronage, 1730-1830*, ed. by Elizabeth Eger (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), pp.15-38 (pp.15-16). Here, Mellor explains that Samuel's painting is also known by the title *The Nine Living Muses of Great Britain.*

[13] Hannah More, *Florio: A Tale, for Fine Gentlemen and Fine Ladies: and, The Bas Bleu: or, Conversation: Two Poems* (London: T. Cadell, 1786), p.66.

[14] Charles Pigott, *The Female Jockey Club: Or a Sketch of the Manners of the Age*, 3rd edn. (London: D. I. Eaton, 1794), pp.195 & 200.

[15] Myers, pp.viii-ix. Further references to this publication are given after quotations in the text. In the preface to *The Bluestocking Circle*, Myers outlines twentieth-century accounts of the bluestockings as 'salonieres', starting with Wheeler's study. Myers writes that while Wheeler praised the bluestockings as 'extraordinary women' who brought 'salon' intellectual culture to 'England', a 'less enthusiastic account' appeared five years later in Chauncey Brewster Tinker's *The Salon and English Letters* (p.viii). She explains that Ticker 'was not sympathetic to the idea of women with literary ambitions', believing that 'their contribution *should* be to create salons as centres in which men were to develop their literary talents' (p.viii). Myers notes that while in the 1970s, some 'literary feminists' depicted the bluestockings as less 'dependent on male opinion as the French *salonieres*', others continued 'to emphasise the salon aspect of the bluestocking contribution', bringing her twentieth-century bluestocking historiography up to date (pp.ix-x).

‘The informal group of men and women interested in literature and other intellectual matters which we call the “bluestocking circle”’, Myers argues, ‘flourished in England in the last half of the eighteenth century’ (p.2). Beyond her initial recognition of both male and female bluestockings however, she swiftly turns her attention to the scholarly lives and achievements of the female members of the society. Myers explains that by looking to the ‘personal development[s]’, ‘friendships’, and ‘writings’ of these women, her investigation aims not only to trace how meaning of the term ‘bluestocking’ developed over the eighteenth century, but to form a comprehensive account of the arrangement, importance, and legacy of the group (p.2).

With her methodology established, Myers proceeds to acknowledge several notable eighteenth-century women with ‘intellectual interests’, including Lady Mary Wortley Montagu and Jemima Campbell (pp.4-5). She is careful, however, only to attribute the label ‘bluestocking’ to a particular set of learned women; specifically those who attended the London meetings of the society during the late eighteenth century. While first acknowledging Jemima Campbell’s friend Catherine Talbot as ‘one of the bluestockings’, Myers devotes most of her prologue to exploring the activities, writings, and friendships of Elizabeth Montagu, placing this individual firmly at the heart of the circle (p.5).

Giving Montagu prominence of place in the society, Myers upholds a centuries-old critical tradition. As John Wiltshire notes, Montagu’s contemporary Samuel Johnson described her as the ‘Queen of the Blues’, coining an oft-quoted, unofficial title that scholars have often explained by looking to her capacity as a bluestocking host.[16] For example, Barbara Brandon Schnorrenberg argues that while Montagu was not the only one to accommodate the society (reflecting that her fellow host Elizabeth Vesey ‘is probably as deserving of’ Johnson’s accolade), her ‘large house’ in London, ‘money to pay the expenses’, and

[16] John Wiltshire, ‘Women writers’, in *Samuel Johnson in Context*, ed. by Jack Lynch (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), pp.400-406 (p.404).

disposition 'to take the credit' has meant that she was 'at the time and later perceived as the leading figure among that group of friends often called the bluestockings'.[17]

Montagu's reputation as the most significant bluestocking has been further cemented by the vast collection of her manuscript correspondence, which is housed predominantly in The Huntington Library in San Marino, California. As Mary L. Robertson notes, the collection is 'fairly evenly distributed over the years 1740 through 1800', consisting not only of '3,500 letters by Montagu herself', but thousands of others 'written to her by a wide circle of friends and acquaintances'.[18] Shedding light on the historical, social, and cultural circumstances from which the circle developed, Montagu's letters have been referenced time and again by leading bluestocking scholars, helping to perpetuate her image as the linchpin of the society; a narrative that Myers reinforces in *The Bluestocking Circle*, by describing bluestocking correspondence as written exchanges between 'Montagu and her friends' (p.7).

In the prologue to her book, Myers uses Montagu's letters to trace the etymology of the word 'bluestocking', marking its progression from a 1756 in-joke about the scholar Benjamin Stillingfleet (who, she writes, 'seems to have worn blue worsted stockings' to the early assemblies) into a term that by the close of the eighteenth century, had become widely associated with the female scholars of the society (pp.6-11). However, Myers draws most heavily on these materials to explain the origins, formation and values of the bluestocking circle in the first chapter of her study. Quoting extensively from Montagu's 1740s correspondence, here Myers examines the connection between Montagu's early experiences at Bulstrode – 'the country home of Margaret and William Bentick, the second Duke and Duchess of Portland' – and her later activities as 'an indefatigable London hostess' (pp.21 & 44).

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[17] Barbara Brandon Schnorrenberg, 'Montagu [*neé* Robinson], Elizabeth (1718-1800)', in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (published online 21 May 2009), <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/19014> [accessed 3rd September 2018].
[18] Mary L. Robertson, 'The Elizabeth Robinson Montagu Collection at the Huntington Library', in *Reconsidering the Bluestockings*, pp.21-23 (p.21).

'Bulstrode', Myers contends, 'as a setting for congenial family and friends with social and intellectual interests, made a lasting impact on its young visitor' (p.21). She expands that '[t]he Duchess tried to have interesting people to stay', noting how Montagu described the scholars, botanists, and artists who frequented Bulstrode as 'our happy society' in letters written to her friend, Anne Donnellan (pp.35 & 40). While acknowledging that many of Montagu's 'mentors and friends' helped to cultivate her early intellectual interests, Myers argues that her 'visits to Bulstrode and her friendships with the Duchess and Anne Donnellan' most persuasively 'encouraged in Elizabeth a sense of the value of learning', acquainting her with a form of friendship that revered scholarly achievement (pp.43 & 42).

To a lesser extent, Myers also recognises Elizabeth Vesey as a principal bluestocking member. In addition to noting Vesey's good qualities as a host (arguing that whereas Montagu 'imposed a circle on her guests', Vesey shaped her assemblies around the 'needs and interests' of others), Myers uses her correspondence with Montagu to trace the progression of a distinct 'bluestocking philosophy', observing how the two friends lauded the 'intellectual interests' of their fellow blues (pp.253 & 8-9). Myers also counts the translator Elizabeth Carter, the essayist Catherine Talbot, the artist Mary Delany, Montagu's old friend the Duchess of Portland, and the conduct book writer Hester Chapone among Montagu's 'first circle' of bluestocking friends, portraying their social and intellectual activities as the 'point of departure for others' (p.vii & 11). Finally, Myers acknowledges the writers Frances Burney, Hannah More, and Hester Thrale as 'second generation' members of the society, drawing her account of the most significant figures who made up the circle to a close (pp.11).

Although formally identifying at least ten 'bluestockings', Myers devotes the majority of her research to examining just four of these individuals: Montagu, Carter, Talbot, and Chapone. In particular, she explores and celebrates their literary activities, exploring 'Carter's translation of Epictetus (1758)', 'Montagu's *Essay on the Writings and Genius of Shakespear* [sic] (1769)', 'Talbot's posthumous *Reflections on the Seven Days of the Week* (1770)', and Chapone's '*Letters on the Improvement of the Mind* (1773)' as examples of the society's most noteworthy achievements (p.11). Myers contends that as

‘scholars and writers’, these women ‘brought into public notice the idea that respectable women could study, write, and publish’, identifying ‘the “female right to literature”’ as the bluestocking circle’s most important and enduring legacy (p.11 & 12).

While offering us a predominantly literary-based account of the society, Myers draws distinctions between Montagu’s circle of female bluestocking authors, and other well-known eighteenth-century women writers. For example, we can see her make this distinction in her account of the literary life of Montagu’s younger sister, Sarah Scott, who in 1762 published the novel *Millenium Hall*. Beyond noting that Scott’s novel ‘describe[s] the orderly, pious life led by a group of women’, Myers’s analysis of *Millenium Hall* boils down to two main points of interest: that it was written by Montagu’s sibling, and that the author ‘seems to have been hampered in her development by her lack of respect for her own work because she was writing for money’ (p.188).

A Bath-based writer, Scott stands apart from Myers’s London-centric version of the bluestockings, featuring in *The Bluestocking Circle* as an individual who wrote during ‘the generation of the bluestockings’ – not as a bluestocking author in her own right (p.243). However, it is by portraying *Millenium Hall* as a result of the author’s ‘financial problems’ that Myers most pointedly isolates Scott from the circle (p.188). She writes, for example, that Chapone wrote *Letters on the Improvement of the Mind* not for financial gain, but to educate ‘her eldest niece’, arguing that Chapone only published the work after Montagu ‘urge[d]’ her to do so (p.231). Myers therefore draws on the relative affluence of Montagu’s literary set to identify a social and financial form of bluestocking respectability, using this criterion as a further way of defining the circle’s membership.

In *The Bluestocking Circle*, Myers outlines a definition of the term ‘bluestocking’ that Nicole Pohl and Betty A. Schellenberg have argued is in need of revision. In their 2003 edited volume of essays, *Reconsidering the Bluestockings*, Pohl and Schellenberg recognise *The Bluestocking Circle* as ‘the principal study of the group’, arguing that with the event of its publication, ‘the stage was set for’ new

scholarly approaches.[19] Their volume, they explain, follows three post-1990 shifts in the field of eighteenth-century studies, which have each 'influenced work on the Bluestockings': 'the widening debate about the nature and relation of public and private'; discussions 'about sexuality and gender as defined in the eighteenth century'; and the application of '[p]ostcolonial theory' (pp.11, 13, & 14).

While drawing on multiple studies to illustrate their argument, Pohl and Schellenberg's account of Felicity Nussbaum's 1995 book *Torrid Zones* provides us with a powerful example of these disciplinary shifts in action. They argue that in this publication, Nussbaum reveals 'a complex and complicit relationship between colonized and colonizer, between the domesticated European woman and the other, sexualised woman of the colonies' in bluestocking literature (p.14). Specifically, Pohl and Schellenberg highlight Nussbaum's examination of *Millenium Hall*, drawing on her analysis to show how the novel 'maintains an inconsistent racial discourse that is both resistant to, and complicit in, contemporary mechanisms of racial discrimination' (p.14).[20]

Through this line of argument, Pohl and Schellenberg make a significant departure from Myers's approach to explaining the structure and relevance of the bluestocking circle. Whereas Myers focuses on Scott's straitened financial and social circumstances as a writer, they examine the content of her writing, unpacking the author's engagement with issues central to British eighteenth-century society and culture. Pohl and Schellenberg therefore make sense of Scott's relationship with the bluestocking society by looking to how her work relates to recent changes in the scholarly field, identifying her letters as 'bluestocking letters', and her publications as bluestocking 'literary works' (pp.7 & 13).

Pohl and Schellenberg's treatment of Scott as a bluestocking writer also questions Myers's geographical account of the bluestocking circle, an idea that they develop by calling on authors who recognise

[19] Nicole Pohl and Betty A. Schellenberg, 'Introduction: A Bluestocking Historiography', in *Reconsidering the Bluestockings*, pp.1-20 (pp.4 & 11). All further references to this chapter are given after quotations in the text.
[20] In *Torrid Zones*, Nussbaum argues that while 'in favour of a feminontopia', Scott 'substitutes benevolent confinement for colonization and enslavement', 'creating a female empire' that 'empowers women of a certain class and nation' (Felicity A. Nussbaum, *Torrid Zones: Maternity, Sexuality, and Empire in Eighteenth-Century English Narratives* (Baltimore; London: The John Hopkins University Press, 1995), p.161).

bluestocking women who 'had no social contact with the London-based circles' (p.15). In his contribution to the volume for instance, Gary Kelly defines the Ipswich novelist Clara Reeve (1729-1807) as a bluestocking, and looks to her 'ground-breaking work[s] of literary scholarship' to support his definition.[21] The volume also includes research that challenges Myers's version of the bluestocking timeline, as we see in Susan Staves's study. Staves contends that while the word bluestocking was only used 'in the second half of the [eighteenth] century, the kind of high-minded, morally and intellectually ambitious literary woman to which it referred predated the term', labelling the writer 'Mary Astell (1666-1731)' as a blue.[22]

In addition, contributors invite us to look at bluestocking women beyond their capacities as authors. In her essay for instance, Elizabeth Child argues that while Montagu's letters have been most frequently used to frame her 'as a writer, *salonnière*, and patron', these materials also reveal her 'as a Bluestocking businesswoman'.[23] Exploring the 'range of sexualities' communicated in Montagu, Carter, Talbot, Chapone and Scott's writings, Susan S. Lanser unpacks 'the formations within which women's desires were expressed', arguing that '[a]mong the five, Hester Mulso Chapone seems [...] the only one not invested in women in some primary way'.[24] Together, the authors in this volume work to shed new light on the social, intellectual, and emotional lives of the bluestockings, presenting them 'as entrepreneurs and philanthropists, visionaries and reformers, theologians and lovers' (p.19).

Soon after the publication of *Reconsidering the Bluestockings*, Mary Hilton and Karen O'Brien advanced their formative accounts of the society, writing *Women and the Shaping of the Nation's Young* (2007) and *Women and Enlightenment in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (2009) respectively. Defining the bluestockings

[21] Gary Kelly, 'Clara Reeve, Provincial Bluestocking: From the Old Whigs to the Modern Liberal State', in *Reconsidering the Bluestockings*, pp.105-125 (pp.105 & 107).
[22] Susan Staves, 'Church of England Clergy and Women Writers', in *Reconsidering the Bluestockings*, pp.81-103 (p.81).
[23] Elizabeth Child, 'Elizabeth Montagu, Bluestocking Businesswoman', in *Reconsidering the Bluestockings*, pp.153-173 (pp.153-154).
[24] Susan S. Lanser, 'Bluestocking Sapphism and the Economies of Desire', in *Reconsidering the Bluestockings*, pp.257-275 (pp.261-262).

as a Montagu-centred circle of female scholars who gathered and wrote in the mid-to-late eighteenth century, both scholars make moves that are now familiar to us from Myers's research.[25] Simultaneously however, O'Brien and Hilton provide us with a different way of making sense of the bluestockings by viewing their intellectual lives in the context of contemporary Enlightenment debate, identifying the members of this society as Latitudinarian Anglicans.

'[T]he latitudinarian bluestockings', Hilton states, followed a system of ethics that 'emphasized the capacity for human reason and free will to co-operate with divine grace in order for the individual to achieve a holy and happy life'.[26] She continues that '[t]his involved a rejection of the Calvinist orthodoxy that had prevailed since the Reformation, which had stressed the depravity of human nature'.[27] Similarly, O'Brien contends that by examining 'the uses and limits of reason', and heralding 'the salvation that comes, not only from faith, but from active, good works', latitudinarianism nurtured a crucial bluestocking 'notion': that 'through education and personal endeavour, women could attain the status of rational beings, capable of arriving at a reasonably secure level of religious certainty and of acting as both philosophers and effective moral agents'.[28]

To support her argument, Hilton cites latitudinarian publications that were discussed favourably by the bluestockings, quoting Montagu's view of Edmund Burke's 1790 work *Reflections on the Revolution in France* as an 'excellent, incomparable pamphlet'.[29] Hilton also notes that Talbot and Carter were friends

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[25] In her description of the circle, Hilton describes Montagu as 'the leading bluestocking', arguing that by '1761 [her] literary female milieu was well established' (Mary Hilton, *Women and the Shaping of the Nation's Young: Education and Public Doctrine in Britain 1750-1850* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007), pp.39 & 40). To introduce her account of 'Bluestocking Theology', O'Brien outlines Montagu's ties with a previous 'generation of female writers' who were 'seriously concerned with questions of femininity, morality and religion', naming the bluestocking society as 'the bluestocking writers' (Karen O'Brien, *Women and Enlightenment in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), pp.56 & 55).

[26] Hilton, pp.57 & 49.

[27] Ibid, p.49.

[28] O'Brien, pp.5 & 37.

[29] Hilton, p.74. In 'Religious Affiliation and Dynastic Allegiance in Eighteenth-Century England', J. C. D. Clark offers us an influential scholarly account of Burke as a Latitudinarian. Clark writes that 'Burke's relaxed approach to the Church of England's claim about its ecclesiastical polity, his goodwill towards Protestant and Catholic Dissenters, and his function rather than principled view (at least before the 1790s) of the legal defences of the Establishment, the famous trope of "Church and State", were all part of Burke's Protestant latitudinarianism' (J. C. D. Clark,

with the 'latitudinarian Bishop[s]' Thomas Secker and William Talbot, and argues that as a result of 'this theological milieu, these highly intellectual women began to use for themselves discourses of the latitudinarian "religion of reason"'.[30] In her study, O'Brien looks to Talbot and Carter's 'ties' with Bishop Joseph Butler to explain their latitudinarianism, arguing that 'the Bluestockings as a group might plausibly be termed the female Butlerians'.[31] She claims that Butler led them to grasp that 'it was less important to adhere to the orthodox doctrine of the Trinity, for example, than to believe that men and women have reason enough to decipher the laws of nature and [...] religion for themselves'.[32]

Depicting the bluestockings as a society of women who were inspired and united by a coherent set of latitudinarian values, Hilton and O'Brien's thesis has since been hotly contested. In her 2012 study 'Bluestockings and Religion' for instance, Deborah Heller finds several weaknesses in their 'modes of argument', including many of the 'personal ties' that they identify between bluestocking women and supposedly latitudinarian individuals.[33] 'Secker', Heller contends, was 'anything but latitudinarian', before describing Hilton's 'chain of association, in which Carter is five times removed from' other 'allegedly latitudinarian bishops' as 'too tenuous to be taken seriously' (p.260).[34] Heller also claims that the bluestocking 'reading habits' O'Brien and Hilton point to are 'no dependable indicator of theological allegiances', arguing that if Montagu 'once read Samuel Clarke with approval in 1741', one cannot automatically label her as 'a "Clarkist"' (pp.260-261).

As well as finding methodological problems in Hilton and O'Brien's studies, Heller takes issue with the idea of grouping the society under one theological banner, stating that the bluestockings 'were a diverse

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'Religious Affiliation and Dynastic Allegiance in Eighteenth-Century England: Edmund Burke, Thomas Paine and Samuel Johnson', *Jacobitism and Eighteenth-Century English Literature*, 64 (Winter, 1997), 1029-1067 (p.1036)).

[30] Ibid, pp.49 & 52.

[31] O'Brien, p.57.

[32] Ibid.

[33] Deborah Heller, 'Bluestockings and Religion', in *Theology and Literature in the Age of Johnson: Resisting Secularism*, ed. by Melvyn New and Gerard Reedy, S.J. (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2012), pp.255-276 (p.260). Further references to this publication are given after quotations in the text.

[34] Heller refers to the following passage from Hilton's study: 'Elizabeth Carter was the daughter of the scholarly Nicolas Carter, curate of Deal, who was the friend of Sir George Oxendon MP, a close associate of the Prime Minister Sir Robert Walpole, who appointed several latitudinarian bishops' (Hilton, ibid).

lot confessionally [sic]' (p.256). She argues that 'Elizabeth Vesey, though the daughter of an Irish bishop, appears to have been a lifelong religious doubter', and that 'Sarah Chapone, Anne Donnellan, and Mary Delany were followers of the High-Church Hutchinsonian movement' (p.256). Heller also objects to how Hilton and O'Brien's account of the circle excludes Hannah More 'because of her allegedly atavistic religious commitments', arguing that More led 'the Bluestocking's project for women's active engagement in philanthropic and educational enterprises' (pp.258 & 268).

Importantly, Heller insists that even the women who Hilton and O'Brien explicitly identify as bluestockings would have been 'offended at being called latitudinarians', contending that Montagu, Carter, and Talbot in fact 'held to a remarkably orthodox set of religious beliefs' (p.256). She claims that 'Carter regarded Stoicism as vastly inferior to the Christian revelation' due to 'Stoicism's view of human nature omitted original sin and redemption', and that Carter's view of religion (as 'not so much a matter of speculation to the understanding as an object of the affections of the heart') upsets the 'rationalistic and secularizing' values of latitudinarianism (pp.266, 264, & 261). Heller states that while 'the cultivation of reason and education for women' can be described as a key feature 'of Bluestockingness', any attempt to frame these values as latitudinarian 'cannot be squared with the evidence', arguing that the bluestockings were generally 'disposed toward a full acceptance of the full contents of Scripture' (pp.268, 256, & 264).[35]

Since Heller's firm rejection of Hilton and O'Brien's thesis, further, innovative attempts have been made to define the bluestocking society. In her 2013 edited volume of essays *Bluestockings Displayed* for instance, Elizabeth Eger aims to illustrate 'how the original bluestockings inhabited a world in which intellectual women could shine and even dazzle', naming hers as 'the first academic volume to

[35] Here, Heller draws directly from Gerard Reedy's 'study of scripture', arguing that Reedy's research 'gives us a way of understanding how an apologist could claim to use "reason" to prove the Christian faith and yet not be a rationalist' (p.264). Quoting Reedy, Heller explains that while 'reason in the narrow sense "is the reason of philosophy that operates strictly on its own first principles"', 'reason in a wider sense "is the reason that is informed not only by its own laws but by the matter is it investigating', noting that 'this definition means that reason is disposed toward a full acceptance of the full contents of Scripture"' (p.264).

concentrate on the rich visual and material culture that surrounded and supported the bluestocking project'.[36] Two years later, Heller published her edited volume *Bluestockings Now!,* in which contributors extend the term 'Bluestocking' far beyond the parameters of the 'Montagu-Vesey-Boscawen circle'.[37] Heller argues that her work 'represents the very latest, up-to-date work on the Bluestockings', calling 'for a broadened understanding of the label "Bluestocking"'.[38]

While both volumes offer new ways of thinking about the bluestockings, the latter depicts the most revolutionary account of the circle. Whereas Eger's contributors chiefly examine how attendees of Montagu's assemblies 'used portraiture [, performance, and patronage] to advance their work and reputations', Heller's identify 'Bluestocking women of all sorts – transatlantic, continental European, women of diverse social rank and class, or various political and religious affiliations, women of different sexual martial orientations, women who did cultural work of varied kinds'.[39] In the first chapter for instance, Deborah and Steven Heller trace 'the Bluestocking impulse through the anti-slavery campaigns that culminated in the abolitionist legislation of 1807 and 1833', as well as 'the campaigns of female emancipation in the mid-nineteenth century', arguing that 'defining "Bluestocking" as a social role [...] is the optimum way of opening up the subject for future study'.[40]

In addition to finding the bluestocking 'impulse' at the heart of seismic nineteenth-century social movements, *Bluestockings Now!* explores how bluestocking women employed their time in ways that are often dismissed by scholars as frivolous. For example, in 'Bluestockings and the Cultures of Natural History' Beth Fowkes Tobin demonstrates how Montagu, Delany, and the Duchess of Portland were talented 'needleworkers, shellworkers', and 'featherworkers', along with how these activities 'have become emblems of practices that would have interfered with literary and scholarly pursuits'.[41] Fowkes

[36] Elizabeth Eger, 'Introduction', in *Bluestockings Displayed,* pp.1-12 (p.1).
[37] Deborah Heller, 'Introduction', in *Bluestockings Now!,* pp.1-16 (p.1).
[38] Ibid, p.2.
[39] Eger, p.2 & Heller, pp.1-2.
[40] Heller, p.3, & Deborah and Steven Heller, pp.18-19.
[41] Beth Fowkes Tobin, 'Bluestockings and the Cultures of Natural History', in *Bluestockings Now!*, pp.55-70 (pp.57 & 56).

Tobin argues that while the 'natural history collecting and art practices' of the bluestockings 'may not look particularly relevant to their lives as intelligent women', these pursuits required both a 'mastery of technique', and 'an intimate, embodied knowledge of the natural world', challenging standard versions of bluestocking intellectual achievement.[42]

While taking different critical approaches to explaining the nature and implications of the term 'bluestocking', all of the publications in this section have informed this study's grasp (to borrow Heller's terminology) of 'bluestockingness': of women traditionally associated with, but not confined to Montagu's circle of friends; of women who wrote, yet whose intellectual lives were not restricted to their literary achievements; of a society that while commonly dated to the late eighteenth century, has roots that precede, and a life that stretches beyond a specific moment in history. In other words, this thesis uses the term 'bluestocking' not just to identify the female attendees of Montagu's London assemblies, but as a way of referring to a broader cultural, scholarly, and social movement, as defined by how my case studies navigated conflicting models of well-employed and wasted time.

Section 2) 'This is Virtue and Religion': establishing contemporary philosophical writings that emphasised the moral importance of devoting time to rational improvement

In order to establish Talbot, Lady Mary, Carter, Delany, and Montagu's engagement with intellectual models of well-employed time, this section begins by exploring the writings of Bishop Joseph Butler. Although this thesis does not follow O'Brien's example in referring to the bluestockings as 'female Butlerians', by exploring Talbot's correspondence in particular, we can measure the extensive influence that Butler's teachings had over the intellectual lives of individual bluestockings. As his biographer Christopher Cunliffe notes, Butler was 'close friends' with Talbot, having steadily ascended through the

[42] Ibid, pp.57, 56, 59 & 69.

Church of England hierarchy with the aid of her father, Edward Talbot, and her guardian, Thomas Secker.[43]

Born several months after her father's death in December 1720, Catherine Talbot was first introduced to Butler as a member of Secker's household, accompanying Secker on visits to Butler's Stanhope parish from as early as 1725.[44] In a letter written to Carter on the 13th of June 1752, Talbot outlines the power of her youthful impressions of Butler, claiming playfully that 'I could almost say my remembrance of him goes back some years before I was born, from the lively imagery which the conversations I used to hear in my earliest years have imprinted on my mind'.[45] She continues that 'from the first of my real remembrance, I have ever known' him as an 'affectionate friend', describing him warmly as 'the most delightful companion' (p.128).

In addition to framing Butler as a steadfast friend, Talbot depicts him as a loyal mentor in this letter, recalling that even when she 'was quite a child', he presented his services to her as a 'faithful advisor' (p.128). Talbot also represents Butler as a formidable and remarkable intellectual, arguing that he possessed 'a delicacy of thinking', 'vast knowledge of the world', and 'sublimity of genius' that she had 'met with in nobody else' (p.128). '[T]he longer we live', Talbot contemplates, 'the more are [our] hearts attached to that first set of friends amongst whom one's life began, and whose manners, whose sentiments, whose kindnesses are more in agreement with our own ideas', in the process placing her manners, sentiments, and ideas in close alignment with Butler's (p.127).

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[43] Christopher Cunliffe, 'Butler, Joseph (1692-1752)', in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (published online 24 May 2008), <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/4198> [accessed 27 October 2020]. Edward Talbot, Cunliffe explains, did 'much to advance' Butler's early ecclesiastical 'prospects' in the 1710s, while Secker prepared his philosophical tracts 'for publication' in the 1720s. It was this support that helped Butler eventually to gain the coveted Bishopric of Durham in 1750.

[44] Ibid.

[45] Talbot, 'Letter I', in *Memoirs of the Life of Mrs. Elizabeth Carter, with a New Edition of her Poems,* ed. by Montagu Pennington, 2nd edn., 2 vols (London: F. C. and J. Rivington, 1807), I, pp.127-150 (pp.127-128). Further references to this letter are given after quotations in the text. Unmentioned in the *Memoirs*, the date of this letter is identified by Montagu Pennington in his edition of Talbot and Carter's letters (Montagu Pennington, *A Series of Letters Between Mrs Elizabeth Carter and Miss Catherine Talbot,* II, p.79).

To establish the nature and language of Butler's philosophy, this study first turns to his 1726 tract *Fifteen Sermons Preached at the Rolls Chapel*, a publication that as Cunliffe notes, 'is widely accepted as one of the most significant ethical writings of the eighteenth century'.[46] In the first of these *Fifteen Sermons*, Butler contends that 'Virtue' is an inherent trait to humanity, describing it as 'the natural Law we are born under'.[47] 'There is', he states, 'a natural Principle of Benevolence in Man', arguing that our 'Desire of Esteem from others', 'Love of Society', and 'Indignation against successful Vice' all 'lead us to regulate our Behaviour in such a Manner as will be of Service to our Fellow-Creatures' (pp.6, 11 & 12).

While insisting that 'the whole Constitution of Man' is 'plainly adapted to' the practice of virtue, Butler also argues that there remains room for us to develop our natural capacity for good (p.3). He contemplates that although '[i]t is sufficient that the Seeds of it be implanted in our Nature by God [, t]here is, it is owned, much left for us to do upon our own Heart and Temper; to cultivate, to improve, to call it forth, to exercise it in a steady, uniform Manner' (p.8). Depicting the improvement of our virtuous tendencies as humanity's most important task, Butler states plainly to his readership that 'This is our Work: This is Virtue and Religion' (p.8).

Ten years later, Butler published *The Analogy of Religion, Natural and Revealed*, in which we see him renew his examination of human nature and virtue. This time, he advances the notion that humans are innately rational creatures, writing that by 'the appointment of God', we are each born with 'natural faculties of knowledge and experience'.[48] Butler argues that by extending our capacities for reason, we behave in a virtuous manner, depicting the development of our rational facilities as a moral obligation owed by humanity to God. '[W]e may be assured', he writes, 'that we should never have had these

[46] Cunliffe, Ibid.
[47] Joseph Butler, *Fifteen Sermons Preached at the Rolls Chapel* (London: W. Botham, 1726), p.3. Further references to this publication are giving after quotations in the text.
[48] Joseph Butler, *The Analogy of Religion, Natural and Revealed to the Constitution and Course of Nature*, 5th edn., (Glasgow, 1754), p.43. Further references to this publication are given after quotations in the text.

Capacities of improving by Experience, acquired Knowledge, and Habits, had they not been necessary, and intended to be made use of' (p.104).

Significantly, Butler portrays the extension of our rational capacities as a lengthy, life-time process. '[T]here must be sufficient length of time for the complete success of virtue', he contends, adding that 'reaso[n] cannot, from the nature of the thing, be otherwise than gradual' (p.74). Butler then offers us an account of the different stages of virtue, tracing its development from something that we carry out in our daily routines, into a fully-realised aspect of our moral being. '[T]he practice of virtue', he writes, 'has, from the make of our nature, a peculiar tendency to form habits of virtue', elaborating that 'habits of virtue, thus acquired by discipline, are improvement in virtue; and improvement in virtue must be advancement in happiness, if the government of the universe be moral' (pp.117 & 112).

Published ten times in England, and five times in Scotland throughout the eighteenth century, Butler's *Analogy* offered an appealing template for writers to embrace and adapt in subsequent theological writings.[49] In his 1750 work *On the Employment of Time* for instance, Butler's successor to the position of preacher at the Rolls Chapel, Robert Bolton, uses phrases and contentions that we have seen outlined in Butler's tract. Like Butler, Bolton features as both an admirable scholar and affable acquaintance in Talbot's familiar correspondence, as we see demonstrated in a letter written by Talbot to Carter on the 29th of February 1751. 'Did I ever mention to you', she asks her friend, 'an Essay on Employment? We [herself and her mother] read it with much pleasure', before describing 'the author, Dr. Bolton', as 'a very good man, much acquainted with my lord chancellor's family'.[50]

In this publication, Bolton identifies a connection between the prosperity of our moral state, and our efforts to develop our God-given 'rational faculties', contending that 'He, who gave us these faculties, and the ability to improve them, must intend, that we should improve them'.[51] Bolton continues that 'by

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[49] Cuncliffe, ibid.
[50] Talbot, 'Miss Talbot to Mrs. Carter. Piccadilly, *Feb*. 29, 1751', p.9.
[51] Bolton, p.33. Further references to this publication are given after quotations in the text.

frustrating His intention, we incur His displeasure', warning that 'if we incur it, we may justly expect, sooner or later, to feel the effects thereof' (p.33). Bolton states that the 'design' of his tract is to therefore highlight ways in which we can avoid suffering the consequences of God's displeasure, in particular by 'recommend[ing] that employment of time, which suits our respective capacities and stations' (p.111).

To illustrate the moral weight of our rational development, Bolton argues that if we were to pass our days in 'a round of eating, drinking, and sleeping' as animals do, 'our time' would be 'grievously misemployed; there is no surer token of its having been so, than that we have done so little to advance ourselves above the herd, when our Creator had vouchsaf'd us so far superior a capacity' (p.62). He adds that while we must 'give our Bodies such exercise, such rest, and other refreshments, as their subsistence demands', we must also better ourselves by growing our natural capacity for wisdom (p.7). Bolton depicts our assignment to this religious duty as self-evident, contending that once we 'acknowledge the great Wisdom exerted in our Structure', 'we cannot possibly be at a loss to discover what out wise Maker must, in this particular, expect from us' (p.5).

In her replies to Talbot, Carter illustrates her own engagement with tracts that employ language and arguments now familiar to us from Butler's *Analogy*. On the 8th of August 1745 for example, she wrote to her correspondent that 'I have just begun a book which no doubt you have long since read, Dr. Rutherforth's Essay on Virtue', explaining that while finding 'obscurity in his language', 'I am very well pleased with his notions as far as I have read and understand them'.[52] As John Gascoigne notes, in his 1744 publication *An Essay on the Nature and Obligations of Virtue* Rutherford forwards 'a form of Christian utilitarianism, arguing that good actions advanced one's happiness in both this world and the next'.[53]

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[52] Elizabeth Carter, 'Mrs Carter to Miss Talbot. Canterbury, *Aug*. 8, 1745', in *A Series of Letters between Mrs. Elizabeth Carter and Miss Catherine Talbot*, I, pp.106-108 (p.107).
[53] John Gascoigne, 'Rutherforth, Thomas (1712-1771)', in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (published online 23 September 2004), <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/24367> [accessed 3 August 2021].

‘Men’, Rutherforth claims, are intellectual and voluntary agents’, stating that their ‘faculties of reason and liberty have put many parts of the world under the[ir] direction’.[54] He contends, for instance, that these faculties ‘have enabled [man] to improve the gross materials, which nature furnishes him with, and to make them serve for his use and happiness, much farther than they could have done without his art and cultivation’ (p.243). Rutherforth considers that as well as enabling us to improve our material surroundings, our capacity for reason determines how we find moral fulfilment. He argues that ‘the happiness of all beings whatever consists in the perfection of their nature: and we will grant further that a rational being arrives at the perfection of it’s [sic] nature when it is perfectly rational’ (p.221).

As his tract continues, Rutherforth contends that by developing our faculties of reason, we not only provide ourselves with the means to make ourselves happy, but equip ourselves with the tools to further the happiness of others. He considers that this is the case even when we act out of self-interest, writing that ‘every improvement in art and knowledge, though made originally for [our] own sake alone, will in the end be of use and benefit to thousands’ (p.246). Rutherforth argues that these large-scale social benefits are in-keeping with the will of humanity’s ‘benevolent creator’, reflecting that ‘the laws appointed for the government of the natural world are under the direction and administration of the moral one’ (pp.147 & 247).

By looking to Montagu’s letters, we can see how the ‘Queen of the Blues’ also read philosophical writings that stressed the ethical significance of improving one’s rational capacities. On the 23rd of November 1740 for instance, Montagu wrote to Donnellan outlining her understanding of William Wollaston’s 1722 tract *The Religion of Nature Delineated*; a publication that as B. W. Young observes, outlines a narrative in which ‘truth’, as ‘the basis of happiness’, can only ‘be discovered through the

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[54] Thomas Rutherforth, *An Essay on the Nature and Obligations of Virtue* (Cambridge: J. Bentham, 1744), p.243. Further references to this publication are given after quotations in the text.

operation of "right reason".[55] 'I am just reading Wollaston', Montagu explains to her friend, professing to be 'perhaps the fonder of truth as he builds happiness and morality upon it'.[56]

In *The Religion of Nature Delineated*, Wollaston makes the case that it is our moral obligation 'to Worship' God, clarifying that 'by worshipping Him I mean nothing but owning Him to be *what He is*, and ourselves to be *what we are*'.[57] He frames rational improvement as fundamental to fulfilling this obligation, arguing that 'should I, having leisure, health, and proper opportunities, read nothing, nor make any inquiries in order to improve my *mind*, and attain such knowledge as may be *useful* to me, I should then deny my mind to be what it is, and that knowledge to be what it is' (p.24). Wollaston reflects that if we fail to improve our minds, then we fail to live a life of any meaning, contending that '[t]ime and life without thinking are next neighbours to *nothing*, to no-time and no-life' (p.58).

To help prevent his readership from wasting their time, Wollaston outlines advice on how to live a virtuous life. Presenting this advice in the form of a prayer, he at once demonstrates his understanding of the nature of religious truth (reasoning that 'not to apply to Him for what we want is to deny, either our wants, of His power of helping us; and so on: all contrary to truth'), and provides his readers with a clear example of worship to follow in their everyday routines. Wollaston prays 'that, having faithfully discharged my duty to my family and friends, and endeavourd [sic] to improve myself in virtuous habits and useful knowledge, I may at last make a decent and happy exit, and then find myself in some better state' (p.222).

In Mary Delany's letters, we find multiple references to Bishop George Berkeley, a philosopher who as M. A. Stewart explains, was one of Butler's 'clos[e] contacts' in the Anglican church.[58] At first, Berkeley

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[55] B.W. Young, 'Wollaston, William (1659-1724)', in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (published online 22 September 2005) <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/29841> [accessed 3rd September 2018].
[56] Elizabeth Montagu, 'Elizabeth [Robinson] Montagu to Anne Donnellan, 1740, Nov 23rd', MO 810, *Elizabeth Montagu Robinson Papers,* The Huntington Library, San Marino, California.
[57] William Wollaston, *The Religion of Nature Delineated,* 8th edn. (London: J. Beecroft et al, 1759), p.221. Further references to this publication are given after quotations in the text.
[58] M. A. Stewart, 'Berkeley, George (1685-1753)', in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (published online 26 May 2005) <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/2211> [accessed 9th August 2021].

features as a figure of fun in her correspondence, with Delany mocking his choice to 'rise every morning at four o' the clock' to her sister Anne Dewes on the 2nd of March 1733.[59] Over the following years however, she came to write about Berkeley with marked respect and affection, celebrating his chances of receiving 'a good Bishopric', and referring to him as 'a man of [...] merit' in a letter addressed to Dewes on the 28th of June 1745.[60] Notably, it is likely that Delany's regard for the Bishop had grown alongside her increasing acquaintance with him, having married Dean Patrick Delany (who, like Berkeley, was a prominent member of the Church of Ireland) in June 1743.[61]

As well as having a high opinion of Berkeley's character, Delany was familiar with his philosophical works, asking Dewes in a letter written on the 17th of April 1744 whether she had a copy of his 1733 publication *Alciphron: or, The Minute Philosopher*.[62] As Stewart explains, in *Alcipheon* we see 'theist and immaterialist' speakers Crito and Euphranor 'combine their defences against a medley of intellectual trends [...] that Berkeley regarded as obstructive to religion', including the notion that truth and virtue have no basis in human nature.[63] As indicated in the title of this publication, Berkeley identifies the proponents of these trends as 'minute philosophers', employing the characters Alciphron and Lysicles to articulate what he regarded as the most dangerous aspects of this 'free-thinking' philosophy.[64]

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[59] Mary Delany, 'Mrs. Pendarves to Mrs. Ann Granville. L. B. Street, 2 March, 1733-4', in *The Autobiography and Correspondence of Mary Granville, Mrs. Delany: With Interesting Reminiscences of King George the Third and Queen Charlotte*, ed. by Augusta Waddington Hall, Lady Llanover, 6 vols (London: Richard Bentley, New Burlington Street, 1861-2), I, pp.430-433 (p.432). Noting how both Berkeley and his wife woke at this early hour, here Delany writes playfully to her sister that 'they are the most primitive couple that ever I heard of' (p.432).
[60] Delany, 'Mrs. Delany to Mrs. Dewes. Holly Mount, 28 June, 1745', in *The Autobiography and Correspondence of Mary Granville, Mrs. Delany*, II, pp.366-368 (p.367).
[61] Toby Barnard, 'Delany, Patrick (1685/6-1768)', in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (published online 03 January 2008) <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/7443> [accessed 9th August 2021].
[62] Delany, 'Mrs. Delany to Mrs. Dewes, at Calwich. Clarges Street, 17 April, 1744', in *The Autobiography and Correspondence of Mary Granville, Mrs. Delany*, II, pp.292-296 (p.295).
[63] Stewart, ibid.
[64] George Berkeley, *Alciphron: Or, The Minute Philosopher. In Seven Dialogues. Containing An Apology for the Christian Religion, against those who are called Free-Thinkers*, 3rd edn. (London: J. and R. Tonson and S. Draper, 1752). For the introductory description of Alciphron and Lysicles as 'free-thinkers' see pp.3-4. All further references to this publication are given after quotations in the text.

Writing as Crito, the narrator of these dialogues, Berkeley reflects that whereas minute philosophers seek to 'degrade human-kind to a level with brute beasts', 'the great philosophers of former ages' beheld it as their duty 'to remind' humankind 'of the dignity of their nature; to awaken and improve their superior faculties, and direct them to the noblest objects; to possess men's minds with a high sense of the Divinity, of the Supreme Good, and the Immortality of the Soul' (pp.33 & 32). As Euphranor, he insists that 'truth and virtue are natural to man', arguing that through being 'rationally deduced', these traits 'are raised and forwarded' over time (pp.36-37). Berkeley claims that by striving to 'improve and adorn their minds', it is possible for 'mankind' to 'free [themselves] from their errors', describing this demanding course of intellectual improvement as our 'most excellent and useful undertaking' in life (p.7).

Far from only appearing in tracts written by male intellectuals, the relationship between rational and moral improvement was also addressed by contemporary female philosophers, as we can see by examining to Mary Astell's writings. As Ruth Perry notes, Astell was not only 'an important model and inspiration' to Lady Mary, but a fierce champion of her scholarship, composing a preface to her travel writings in 1724.[65] Indeed, in this preface Astell heaps praise upon Lady Mary's writing abilities, warning that 'if the Reader, after perusing *one Letter* only, has not the discernment to distinguish' her 'Elegance', 'gracefulness', and 'Simplicity' as an author, 'let him lay the Book down and leave it to those who have'.[66] As we will consider in chapter two, Lady Mary was in turn hugely influenced by Astell's writings, drawing on her *Letters Concerning the Love of God* (1695) and *A Serious Proposal to the Ladies* (1694) to form imaginings of self in her correspondence.

In 1705, Astell published *The Christian Religion, as Profess'd by a Daughter of the Church of England*, a tract that has been described by Perry 'as a major exposition of her religious credo'.[67] Within this work,

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[65] Ruth Perry, 'Astell, Mary (1666-1731)', in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (published online 23 September 2004) <https://www.oxforddnb.com/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-814?rskey=GaMpoj&result=1#odnb-9780198614128-e-814-div1-d385954e180> [accessed 12th June 2020].
[66] Mary Astell, 'Mary Astell's Preface to the Embassy Letters', in *The Complete Letters of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, Vol.1: 1708-1720,* ed. Robert Halsband (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1967), pp.466-467 (p.466).
[67] Perry, Ibid.

Astell argues that in order to successfully fulfil ‘the Duties of a Christian’, we must each endeavour to ‘improve our Minds’, explaining that this mental process helps up to better perceive and understand religious truths.[68] She reasons that after all, our creator is ‘pleas’d to treat us like what He has made us, Rational Creatures, and allows us to examine the Goodness and Equity of His Precepts’, reflecting that as ‘GOD did not give us any Talent to lay up in a Napkin, we must therefore improve in our Intellectuals as well as in our Morals’ (pp.154 & 288).

To impress the moral importance of rational improvement, Astell frames it as inherent to the everyday routine of a good Christian. She states that even ‘[t]hey who have least Time must not neglect to improve their Minds’, contending that while is it necessary for us ‘to make those Daily Provisions for our Selves and Families which necessarily employ us’, these temporal affairs must be ‘subservient to those Grand Provisions we are to make for Eternity’ (p.301).[69] Astell then contemplates the moral welfare ‘those whom the Bounty of God has left no other [...] business but the Improvement of their Minds’, describing them as ‘Happy People, if they make a right use of these Advantages, but so much the more Miserable for being allw’d them, if they are abus’d or neglected’ (p.302). To conclude her train of thought, Astell implores ‘let us now, even this minute [...], begin to exert our selves’ in rational cultivation, lest we ‘[d]ishonour both our Lord and our Selves’ (p.303).

Together, Butler, Bolton, Rutherforth, Wollaston, Berkeley, and Astell offer us an account of moral and intellectual improvement that at once resonates with, and can be set apart from the idea of ‘perfectibility’, as outlined by other philosophers in this period. In his *Discourse on Inequality* for instance (a tract that was first published in French in 1755, before being translated into English and published in Britain in 1761), Jean-Jacques Rousseau frames perfectibility as man’s ‘Faculty of Improvement’, identifying it as

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[68] Astell, *The Christian Religion, as Profess’d by a Daughter of the Church of England* (London: S. H., 1705), p.297. All further references to this publication are given after quotations in the text.

[69] For ‘[t]hey who have least time must not neglect to improve their minds’, see section 309 of the Table of Contents.

the key 'Difference between Man and Beast'.[70] Although arguing that it 'successively unfolds all other Faculties', Rousseau primarily thinks about man's perfectibility in terms of the 'the Progress of the Mind', along its happy and unhappy consequences for humanity.[71]

As John Duncan usefully summarises, Rousseau explains the nature of perfectibility by 'imaginatively reconstruct[ing]' human history into three 'natural', and three 'artificial' stages, separating the 'hand of God' from this history so that 'conditions transform according to their own logic'.[72] While, Duncan expands, Rousseau argues that perfectibility enabled small advances in language and reasoning during the first three natural stages, he insists that it was with the 'inexplicable' invention of 'metallurgy and agriculture' that our intellect (as driven by an 'artificial desire' for property and possessions) rapidly developed in the latter three, outlining a process in which this faculty draws us away from our natural state.[73] Vitally, Rousseau argues that it is through perfectibility that man 'produces his Discoveries and Mistakes, his Virtues and his Vices, and, at long run, renders him both his own and Nature's Tyrant'.[74]

Whereas Rousseau outlines a situation in which perfectibility leads both to social inequality, and man's estrangement from his natural self, Butler, Bolton, Rutherforth, Wollaston, Berkeley, and Astell offer an account of mental improvement that leads to the happy moral progress of humanity. They do not regard God as separate to this process, but depict him as fundamental to it, arguing that by improving our God-given intellectual faculties we please our creator, and act in harmony with nature. Importantly, it is the language of moral and intellectual progress over time that we encounter in the philosophical writings of these philosophers – rather than that of perfectibility – that underpins this thesis.

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[70] Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *A Discourse upon the Origin and Foundation of the Inequality among Mankind* (London: R. and J. Dodsley, 1761), pp.37-38.
[71] Ibid, pp.37 & 41.
[72] John Duncan, 'Perfectibility, Chance, and the Mechanism of Desire Multiplication in Rousseau's *Discourse on Inequality*', in *Rousseau and Desire*, ed. by Mark Blackell, John Duncan, and Simon Kow (Toronto; Buffalo; London: University of Toronto Press, 2009), pp.17-45 (for Duncan's summary of Rousseau's account of the natural stages of human history, see pp.23-25. For his summary of the artificial stages, see pp.34-35).
[73] Ibid. For Duncan's summary on Rousseau's version of the inexplicable event of metallurgy and agriculture, see pp.25-27. For his summary of the role that artificial desires play in Rousseau's history of humanity, see pp.35-38.
[74] Rousseau, p.38.

Importantly, the bluestocking women studied within this investigation engaged with philosophical tracts that outlined an intellectual model of well-employed time, framing the cultivation of knowledge, reason, and mental agility as paramount to finding happiness in this life and the next. Distinguished by intellectual activity and achievement, the bluestockings led lives that resonated strongly with this model, devoting large amounts of their time towards reading, writing, and other forms of scholarly endeavour. As we will consider in the following section however, this straightforward conception of a life well-lived found friction with contemporary understandings of the nature of female intellectual ability, along with customary understandings of female education and virtue.

Section 3) Of male and female intellect: introducing masculine and feminine models of well-employed time

'The conceptions of a girl', writes the clergyman and writer John Bennett in his 1787 publication *Strictures on Female Education*, 'instantaneous as lightening [sic], astonish and surprise. She interests us by the liveliness, with which she enters into all our instructions', while '[h]er fancy gives a pleasing hue to every image she receives'.[75] Bennett continues that because this 'unquiet Imagination and ever restless sensibility afford not opportunity or *leisure* enough for *deep* meditation', women 'cannot, like the men, arrange, combine, contrast, abstract, pursue, and diversify a long strain of ideas'.[76] '[T]here seems to be an error and absurdity', he reflects, in drawing 'comparison[s]' between the minds of the two sexes, as they 'were providentially formed as counterparts of one another', describing 'superiority of strong judgement' and 'nice discrimination' as the 'peculiar prerogative of men'.[77]

Bennett was far from alone in drawing distinctions between the mental abilities of men and women. In his 1797 work *An Enquiry into the Duties of the Female Sex*, Thomas Gisborne argues that while 'the Giver

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[75] Bennett, p.106.
[76] Ibid, p.112.
[77] Ibid, pp.110 & 107.

of all good' gave men the 'powers of close and comprehensive reasoning', 'in sprightliness and vivacity', 'the female mind is unrivalled'.[78] William Alexander, in his 1782 study *The History of Women*, contends that '[w]hen we consider the two sexes into which the human genus is divided [...], the Author of nature has placed the balance of power on the side of the male', granting him 'a mind endowed with greater resolution'.[79] In his 1688 book *The Lady's* [sic] *New-year's Gift*, William Savile, Marquis of Halifax states that 'there is Inequality in the *Sexes*, and that for the better Oeconomy of the World, the *Men*' have 'the larger share of Reason bestow'd upon them'.[80]

Overwhelmingly, women were viewed, portrayed, and treated as man's intellectual inferiors in eighteenth-century Britain. As Michèle Cohen argues in her 2006 investigation '"A Little Learning"?', this wide-spread understanding shaped conventional methods of education for middling to upper-ranking members of society, which were 'fundamentally about the definition of gender difference'.[81] By exploring contemporary educational and conduct literature, we can grasp how common forms of male and female genteel education – as determined by wide-spread perceptions of male and female intellectual ability – were tied to ideas of virtue, forming ethical frameworks against which bluestocking women were encouraged to compare their scholarly ambitions and achievements.

'[T]he male educational curriculum', writes Arianne Chernock in her 2009 study *Men and the Making of Modern British Feminism*, 'was somewhat in flux over the eighteenth century'.[82] She explains that on one hand, established institutions such as 'grammar schools, along with Oxford and Cambridge' continued their centuries-old 'training in the classics', as well as teaching 'mathematics, philosophy, and in some

[78] Thomas Gisborne, *An Enquiry into the Duties of the Female Sex* (London: T. Cadell jun. and W. Davies, 1797), pp.21-22.
[79] William Alexander, *The History of Women, from the Earliest Antiquity, to the Present Time*, 3rd edn., 2 vols (London: C. Dilly, 1782), I, p.501.
[80] William Savile, Marquis of Halifax, *The Lady's New-year's Gift: or, Advice to a Daughter*, 5th edn. (London: M. Gillyflower, 1696), p.26.
[81] Michèle Cohen, '"A Little Learning"? The Curriculum and the Construction of Gender Difference in the Long Eighteenth Century', *British Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies,* 29 (2006), 321-335 (p.321).
[82] Arianna Chernock, *Men and the Making of Modern British Feminism* (Standford: Stanford University Press, 2010), p.39.

cases, the sciences'.[83] Chernock continues that while upholding the standard 'pattern' of male education in Britain, these educational bodies began to face 'competition from the private, and especially nonconformist, institutions, which' placed 'fresh emphasis on practical and useful subjects such as science and industry'.[84] As Raymond Williams notes in his 1961 book *The Long Revolution*, many of the old institutions responded to this competition by creating greater space for subjects suited to practical vocations in their curriculum, in particular 'mathematics and the sciences'.[85]

Opening up new possibilities for the nature, priorities, and implications of male education in Britain, these curriculum shifts soon drew commentary from the country's leading educational writers. Chief among them was the essayist and teacher Vicesimus Knox, who was in 1778 appointed to the position of headmaster at Tonbridge School.[86] In 1781, Knox published his influential manifesto *Liberal Education*; a work that, as Philip Carter and S. J. Skedd explain, was '[e]agerly purchased by the public', having not only 'proved indispensable as a professional handbook for fellow schoolmasters', but 'an invaluable guide for parents who were debating how and where to educate their children'.[87]

Within this work, Knox argues that by studying arithmetic, a young man may excel in professions that are of great use to society. He reasons that after all, a firm grasp of the subject is 'absolutely necessary to the merchant', who is, in turn, 'highly useful to all'.[88] It is when arithmetic is 'studied as a science for its own sake' however, that Knox portrays the subject to be most advantageous to those who study it, contending that in this context, it 'assumes new grace, and furnishes a fine exercise for the mind in its favourite employment, the pursuit of truth' (p.140). Drawing on the Roman educator Quintilian's argument that '*The Knowledge of numbers is necessary for every one* [sic] *who is acquainted with the first elements of*

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[83] Ibid.
[84] Ibid.
[85] Raymond Williams, *The Long Revolution* (New York; Chichester; West Sussex: Columbia University Press, 1961), p.134.
[86] Philip Carter and S. J. Skedd, 'Knox, Vicesimus (1752-1821)', in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (published online 03 January 2008), <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/15792> [accessed 19th August 2021].
[87] Ibid.
[88] Knox, pp.139-140. Further references to this publication are given after quotations in the text.

learning', Knox contends that while a mathematical education may help a boy to find useful employment later in life, its most noble end is to develop his capacities for learning (p.139).

At the same time as acknowledging arithmetic's potential as 'a fine exercise for the mind', Knox only goes so far as to describe the discipline as one of the 'first elements of learning', adding that it 'should not form the whole of education, nor even the chief part of it, even when the student is designed for a mercantile life' (p.140). 'For', he asks his readership, 'what is the proposed end of a mercantile life? The accumulation of money. And what is the use of money? To contribute to the enjoyment of life. But is life to be enjoyed with a narrow and unenlightened mind?' (p.140). Crucially, Knox portrays learning as both the ultimate goal of a male education, and the hallmark of a gentlemen, arguing that even '[a] rich man, without liberal ideas, and without some share of learning is an unfit companion for those in the rank to which he is advanced' (p.141).

Knox argues that in order to be truly learned, a man must be instructed in an 'antient [sic] system of education, which consists in a classical discipline' (p.2). He explains that this discipline is built on the study of Latin and ancient Greek, describing them as languages that not only 'qualif[y] the student to correspond with the learned in all countries', but offer a gateway to the wisdom of the ancient world (p.82). '[H]e who is conversant with the best Greek and Roman writers', Knox writes, 'with a Plato, a Xenophon, and a Cicero, must imbibe, if he is not deficient in the powers of intellect, sentiments no less liberal and enlarged than elegant and ingenious' (p.3). Importantly, Knox contends that the 'enlargement, refinement, and embellishment of the mind, is the best and noblest effect of classical discipline', which 'tends most directly to form the true gentleman' (pp.3 & 5).

In addition to framing classical learning as a reliable, masculine method of social advancement, Knox argues that by studying Latin and Greek, a man becomes a valuable instrument of civic virtue. Indeed, whereas he only describes arithmetic as 'useful' to the running of society, Knox states that 'antient learning' enables a man to uphold 'the religion, the virtue, and I will add the liberties of our countrymen', attributing '[t]rue patriotism and true valour' to 'the generous spirit of antient virtue' (p.3). *Liberation*

Education therefore paints a picture in which by pursuing classical learning, a man may not only thrive as a scholar and gentlemen, but enlighten, inspire, and instruct those around him, employing his intellectual faculties to ensure his country's future as a moral and prosperous nation.

When we consult the forms of curriculum that were offered to middling and upper-ranking women in eighteenth-century Britain, a very different version of what was understood to be a socially appropriate, and morally upstanding form of education appears. In his 1766 publication *Sermons to Young Women*, the minister and moralist James Fordyce provides us with a useful set of tools with which to navigate this alternative version, dividing the female curriculum under the three categories of 'Intellectual', 'Elegant', and 'Domestic' accomplishments.[89] As his biographer Alan Ruston observes, Fordyce's *Sermons* 'went to numerous reprints and was translated into several European languages' soon after its publication, offering us a popular, contemporary description of a respectable female education.[90]

Fordyce contends that in order for a girl to become intellectually accomplished, she must adhere to a particular reading programme. He writes, for instance, that by reading 'History' books she may further her intellectual horizons by learning 'of the passions operating in real life and genuine characters', along with 'virtues to be imitated', 'vices to be shunned' and 'the conduct of divine providence' (p.274). Fordyce 'also recommend[s] books of Voyages and Travels', as they both enhance 'our prospects of mankind', and 'inspire gratitude for the peculiar blessing bestowed upon our country' (p.275). In addition, he states that a young woman should read books on the topic of 'Astronomy', arguing that these publications 'dilate and humanize the heart', and 'remind us that we are citizens of the universe' (p.276).

In a manner similar to Butler, Fordyce depicts humanity's efforts to improve their intellectual abilities as pleasing to God, stating that 'the cultivation of' our mental 'powers to every valuable purpose, is unquestionably a duty which we owe to [our] author' (p.271). At the same time as acknowledging that

[89] Fordyce, p.210. Further references to this publication are given after quotations in the text.
[90] Alan Ruston, 'Fordyce, James (1720-1796)', in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (published online 03 January 2008), <https://www.oxforddnb.com/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-9879?rskey=jRgLvl&result=2> [accessed 25 August 2020].

God gave 'the capacities of intellectual improvement' to both sexes however, Fordyce contends that our creator intended for woman to possess fewer intellectual powers than man (p.287). 'Nature', he reflects, 'appears to have formed the [mental] faculties of your sex for the most part with less vigour than those of ours', listing man's dominance in matters of 'war, commerce, politics [...], abstract philosophy, and all the abstruser [sic] sciences' to support his contention (p.271-272).

Framing man's intellectual superiority as a fact made evident by religious (and by extension, natural and social) law, Fordyce portrays rigorous female learning as a corruption of God's will. He refers to women who strive to achieve the same level of learning as men as 'masculine', reasoning that as a 'masculine woman must be naturally an unamiable creature', 'I do not wish to see [the female world] abound with metaphysicians, historians, speculative philosophers, or Learned Ladies of any kind' (pp.104 & 201-202). Notably, he recognises the study of 'philosophy and languages ancient and modern' as the most notable example of inappropriate female learning, supporting Knox's account of Latin and ancient Greek as inherently masculine forms of intellectual accomplishment (p.202).

Whereas Fordyce takes care to separate female and male types of intellectual accomplishment, the moralist describes all forms of elegant accomplishment as suitable 'for female hands' (p.256). As Soile Ylivuori explains in her 2019 study *Women and Politeness in Eighteenth-Century England*, these elegant skills were also commonly referred to as 'polite accomplishments' in this period, having been designed to cultivate a person's 'gracefulness of movement', and aptitude for 'ornamental' talents; qualities that were seen to greatly enhance a woman's value on the 'marriage market'.[91] Ylivuori expands that while the precise nature of these accomplishments 'varied slightly from writer to writer', they typically 'included singing, playing the harp, pianoforte, or harpsichord, drawing, painting, needlework, and other kinds of handicrafts, as well as dancing and modern languages'.[92]

[91] Ylivuori, pp.117 & 136.
[92] Ibid, p.136.

In his *Sermons*, Fordyce focuses chiefly on the elegant accomplishment of dancing, arguing that by mastering this skill a young woman may reap several benefits (p.235). Besides giving this activity happy religious connotations (observing that ‘in the parable of the prodigal son our Saviour mentions dancing, as making a part of the friendly and honest festivity indulged on his return’), he argues that it ‘promote[s] health and good humour’, while also nurturing ‘kind affections between sexes’ (pp.235-236). Further emphasising the visually pleasing nature of this accomplishment, Fordyce defines dancing as ‘the harmony of motion rendered more palpable’, reflecting that the ‘[a]wkwardness, rusticity’, and ‘ungraceful gestures’ that it helps to prevent ‘can never surely be meritorious’ (p.236).

Simultaneously, Fordyce states that a woman should use ‘temperance and prudence’ while dancing, noting that many ‘scrupulous minds have’ viewed the activity as 'exceptionable’ (pp.236 & 235). He writes that ‘I cannot much approve of a young lady’s dancing often in public assemblies’ as it compromises ‘that lovely bashfulness’ that becomes the female sex, claiming that instead, a girl ought only to dance in ‘circles consisting chiefly of friends and relations’ (p.237). Fordyce thereby contends that while it is appropriate for a young woman to learn to how dance, this activity has the potential to render her vain and unseemly; moves that cast this noted elegant accomplishment as both proper and improper, flattering and unflattering, improving and detrimental.

Finally, Fordyce argues that a girl’s ‘study’ of ‘domestic accomplishments’ should encompass the following disciplines: ‘[t]he learning to write a fair hand, and to cast accounts with facility; the looking into the dispositions and practices of servants; the informing [them]selves about the prices of every thing needful for a family’, and ‘the nursing, management, and education of children’ (pp.232-233). Anticipating that high-ranking women with help from ‘domestics’ may see little value in learning these household skills for themselves, Fordyce reasons that because ‘the future is uncertain’, all girls ‘ought to acquire them in case of need’ (p.232). He adds that moreover, these disciplines cultivate ‘the general principles’ of ‘frugality’, ‘discretion’, and ‘charity’; traits that he describes as ‘useful’ to any woman, regardless of her ‘situation’ in life (p.232).

Of the three forms of accomplishment identified in his *Sermons*, Fordyce frames the domestic as the most virtuous form of female education. For instance, he notes how they abound within the Book of Proverbs, writing that within this religious narrative we see ‘the most beautiful picture that was ever drawn of the Virtuous Woman’ (p.211). This paragon of virtue, Fordyce writes, shows her ‘superior qualities’ by rising early ‘to make provision for those who are to go abroad to work in the fields, and to set her maidens their several tasks at home’; by ‘continually improving’ her ‘husband’s estate’, while taking care to ‘avoid’ his ‘displeas[ure]’; by making ‘modest’ clothes and textiles at her ‘spindle’; by guiding the ‘manners’ of her domestics through her own ‘soft’ example; and by tending to the ‘provision’ and ‘education’ of her children (pp.223 & 213-220).

Managing her household affairs with ‘a gentle mind and a tender heart’, this woman demonstrates what Fordyce identifies as a distinctly feminine set of virtuous behaviours (p.220). Just as we have seen him describe ‘war, commerce’, and ‘politics’ as man’s dominion, Fordyce writes to his female readers that ‘there is an empire which belongs to you, and which I wish you ever to possess: I mean that which has the heart for its object, and is secured by meekness and modesty, by soft attraction and virtuous love’ (p.272). Demonstrating her meekness by adhering to her husband’s will, her softness through her address, her modesty through her clothes, and her love by tending to her children, the woman in the Book of Proverbs embraces her domestic duties as a means of cultivating her natural feminine virtues, earning Fordyce’s praise as an honourable example of womanhood.

Fordyce also argues that by employing ‘oeconomy [sic] and prudence with regard to all affairs at home’, this ‘Virtuous Woman’ passes her days through acts of civic duty, and by extension, social virtue (p.212). He explains that this is because by proving herself to be a reliable and thoughtful housekeeper, she helps to instil a sense of ‘perfect confidence’ in her husband, allowing him ‘go abroad, and attend to public business, without the smallest anxiety about his domestic concerns’ (p.212). She therefore ensures that her male head of household is able to go forth and act as a happy, effective, and benevolent moral agent in

society, freeing him from 'the least temptation to enrich himself at the expence [sic] of other men' (p.212).

Beyond framing the domestic accomplishments as an 'ancient', powerful vehicle of feminine virtue, Fordyce portrays this third branch of female education as naturally suited to women's limited, inferior intellect. For instance, he argues that housekeeping 'and such like articles' are 'not intricate' to learn, while at the same time stating to his female readers that they 'will, if I mistake not, furnish ample scope for the exercise of your faculties'; a point of view that supports his argument that God purposefully designed the female mind to lack the 'depth and force' of the male (pp.232, 233 & 282). In short, Fordyce draws on his understanding of women's lesser intellectual capacities to inform his account of how the female sex can further their moral progress in life, framing the easy study of domestic accomplishments as a sure way for womankind to live in harmony with God's will.

By highlighting Fordyce's argument, this investigation by no means wishes to suggest that customary forms of eighteenth-century female education were, as a matter of fact, intellectually undemanding. As Katherine Sutherland argues in her 2000 study *Writings on Education and Conduct*, there is nothing 'unrigorous nor merely auxiliar' in an education that encompasses 'household management', 'translations of the classics', 'French and English', as well as 'botany', 'geology', 'astronomy', 'geography', 'chronology', and 'history'; methods of study that as Sutherland note, all feature in Hester Chapone's account of an appropriate female education.[93] What Fordyce's *Sermons* does show however, is that by pursuing forms of education that were commonly viewed as mentally challenging, women could be dismissed as unnatural, unfeminine, and unvirtuous by their peers.

Crucially, the women who take centre-stage in this thesis faced conflicting accounts of how they should employ their time. While engaging with tracts that extolled the virtues of devoting one's life to

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[93] Katheryn Sutherland, 'Writings on education and conduct: arguments for female improvement', in *Women and Literature in Britain, 1700-1800*, ed. by Vivien Jones (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp.25-45 (p.29).

intellectual improvement, they lived in a society that viewed female intellectual achievement as inappropriate, with moralists framing elegant and domestic accomplishments as far better suited to their feminine natures. Over the coming chapters of this investigation, we will consider how each of my five case studies confronted, negotiated, and complicated contrasting models of well-employed time in their writings, revealing new ways to think about the nature of the bluestocking movement, and the lives of bluestocking women.

Section 4) Of Talbot, Lady Mary, Carter, Delany and Montagu: five bluestocking case studies

'Another week is past; another of those little limited portions of time, which number out my life'.[94] So reflects Catherine Talbot, in her essay 'Reflections on a Saturday: The Importance of Time in relation to Eternity'. 'Let me stop a little here', she continues, 'before I enter upon a new one', arguing that while the passing of a week may appear to be of little consequence, how we choose to employ even the smallest portion of time can 'determine our everlasting state' (pp.42-43). 'Let me think, then, and think deeply', she writes, 'how I have employed this week past. Have I advanced in, or deviated from the path that leads to life? Has my time been improved or lost, or worse than lost, misspent' (p.45)?

As her essay progresses, Talbot proceeds to outline different ways to interpret her moral progress over time, rendering contradictory pulls on her social and intellectual lives. For example, she asks whether she has devoted enough of her week to ensuring 'the happiness and ease of those [she] live[s] with', illustrating her engagement with domestic models of well-employed time (pp.45-46). Talbot also questions whether she has been 'mild, peaceable and obliging', viewing her past actions in relation to the typically feminine virtues of modesty and meekness (p.45). Simultaneously however, she deliberates whether she has kept her 'understanding clear', and depicts an imagining of herself 'think[ing] deeply'

[94] Catherine Talbot, 'Saturday: The Importance of Time in Relation to Eternity', in *The Works of the Late Miss Catherine Talbot*, ed. by Montagu Pennington, 9th edn., (London: F. C. and J. Rivington, 1819), pp.42-48 (p.42). Further references to this essay are given after quotations in the text.

about the ethical nature of her employments, displaying a keen awareness of intellectual models of virtuous behaviour (pp.45-46).

Offering us not one, but multiple versions of the true 'path to life', Talbot's essay has played a crucial role in establishing the shape of this investigation into bluestocking imaginings of well-employed and wasted time. Her writings therefore occupy the first chapter of this thesis, in which I challenge popular, long-standing understandings about the character, life, and legacy of this bluestocking writer. Specifically, I argue that by unpacking how Talbot navigated conflicting models of well-employed time in ways that she understood others would find relatable, humorous, and hopeful, we can not only revise her long-standing reputation as one who wrote 'bitterly' about her time and employments, but find a useful set of tools with which to read bluestocking letters and writings in general.[95]

As we considered in the first section of this introduction, there have been multiple attempts to free the term 'bluestocking' from the boundaries of Montagu and Vesey's late eighteenth-century London gatherings. Inspired by this critical trend, the second chapter of this thesis recognises the writer and traveller Lady Mary Wortley Montagu as a bluestocking. Famous, as her biographer Isobel Grundy notes, for introducing the Turkish method of smallpox inoculation to Britain 'during the 1720s', Lady Mary is rarely viewed in relation to the society; a critical tendency that I will now depart from, by returning us to Susan Staves's definition of the bluestockings.[96]

Crucial to Staves's version of 'the kind of high-minded, morally and intellectually ambitious literary woman to which' the term bluestocking refers, is her account of how these women found 'various kinds of education and literary assistance' from 'Church of England clergymen'.[97] She notes, for instance, that

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[95] Montagu Pennington, *A Series of Letters between Mrs. Elizabeth Carter and Miss Catherine Talbot,* I, p.ix.
[96] As Lady Mary's biographer Isobel Grundy notes, 'Lady Mary's most important activity during the 1720s, for the world if not for herself, was the introduction to Western medicine of inoculation' (Isobel Grundy, 'Montagu, Lady Mary Wortley [*née* Lady Mary Pierrepont]', in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (published online 23 September 2004), <https://www.oxforddnb.com/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-19029?rskey=Eep7N2&result=2> [accessed 13 August 2020]).
[97] Staves, p.81

Elizabeth Carter was educated by her father, '[t]he Rev. Nicholas Carter', using this criterion to also describe Mary Astell (who was 'educated by her uncle, the Rev. Ralph Astell') as a bluestocking.[98] According to this argument, Lady Mary can also be considered as a bluestocking woman, having been supported by the Anglican Bishop Gilbert Burnet in her efforts to transcribe the *Enchiridion* of the ancient Greek philosopher, Epictetus, from Latin into English.

This is not to say that Staves's research holds the definitive answer to who or what constitutes a bluestocking, or that all scholars must regard Lady Mary as a member of the society. Rather, that by exploring lesser-studied areas in Lady Mary's intellectual life, we find important common ground between her and widely-acknowledged bluestocking women, helping us to rethink the nature and shape of the bluestocking movement. For instance, like Lady Mary, Carter not only undertook her own translation of Epictetus' teachings, but appealed to a high ranking member of the Church of England – Bishop Thomas Secker – for guidance with her project. Lady Mary's translation also relates to Talbot's account of outstanding intellectual achievement, with Talbot writing to Carter on the 9th of February 1747 that an 'elegant translator is a character of the highest virtue in the literary republic'.[99]

Importantly, Lady Mary writes in her correspondence with Burnet that by translating ancient philosophy from Latin into English, she was pursuing a conventionally masculine form of 'stud[y]'.[100] Like the rest of the bluestockings in this thesis therefore, Lady Mary used her letters to negotiate disparate versions of well-employed time, arguing that although upsetting popular societal views of female virtue, learning offered 'Women of Quality' a happy, improving way to pass time in solitude.[101] While, as we will consider in chapter two, Lady Mary's aristocratic privileges often complicated her imaginings of self as an uncustomary female scholar, she embraced the conflict that she perceived between her intellectual and

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[98] Ibid.
[99] Talbot, 'Miss Talbot to Mrs. Carter. Cuddesden, *Feb*. 9, 1747', in *A Series of Letters Between Mrs. Carter and Miss Talbot*, I, pp.190-192 (p.190).
[100] Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, 'To Gilbert Burnet *20 July 1710*', in *The Complete Letters of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, Vol.1: 1708-1720*, ed. by Robert Halsband (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1967), pp.43-46 (p.44).
[101] Ibid, p.45.

social models of well-employed time to make emotional connections with her granddaughters, making her a useful, relevant case study to include in this thesis.

Whereas Lady Mary's described her translation of the *Enchiridion* of Epictetus from Latin into English as 'the Work of one Week' of 'solitude', Elizabeth Carter's unprecedented translation of the complete works of Epictetus from ancient Greek into English took seven years to complete.[102] Not only was this literary feat of a more lengthy and arduous nature than Lady Mary's Latin translation, but as Judith Hawley notes, 'often interrupted' by Carter's 'domestic responsibilities', as dictated by the needs of her family household in Deal.[103] To illustrate this argument, Hawley quotes from a letter written by Carter to Talbot on the 5th of March 1755, in which the Greek scholar (by this time six years into her translation) laments that '[w]hoever that somebody or other is, who is to write the life of Epictetus, seeing I have *a dozen shirts to make*, I do opine, dear Miss Talbot, that it cannot be I'.[104]

Lesser explored in critical discourse is how Carter also chose to punctuate her writing schedule with lengthy, solitary rambles around the Deal countryside. In part, this was because she grasped that this activity was good for her health, claiming to Talbot on the 10th of December 1753 that walking had helped her to relieve a lengthy, 'almost uninterrupted' headache that had recently brought 'poor Epictetus' to 'a stand'.[105] In addition, Carter grasped that her lone walks enabled her to create an important mental and physical distance between her and her domestic duties, at times associating these duties with periods of 'stupidity' in her letters.[106] Chiefly however, she comprehended that walking alone

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[102] Ibid, p.44.

[103] Judith Hawley, 'Carter, Elizabeth (1717–1806)', in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (published online 21 May 2009), <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/4782> [accessed 1 March 2017]

[104] Ibid. Although omitted in Hawley's article, the exact date of this letter is given in the second volume of Pennington's edition of Carter and Talbot's correspondence (Carter, 'Mrs Carter to Miss Talbot. Deal, *March* 5, 1755', in *A Series of Letters Between Mrs. Carter and Miss Talbot*, II, pp.202-204 (p.202)).

[105] Carter, 'Mrs. Carter to Miss Talbot. Deal, *Dec*. 10, 1753', in *A Series of Letters between Mrs. Elizabeth Carter and Miss Catherine Talbot,* II, pp.147-150 (p.149).

[106] Ibid.

improved her mental abilities, viewing herself as following in the ancient 'peripatetic' intellectual tradition.[107]

Sensitive to how her solitary walks could be seen to confront the 'dignified', 'chaste' and 'modest' conduct that as Amanda Vickery notes, gentlewomen were expected to display in this period, Carter regularly used rambling movement to depict her uncustomary intellectual ambitions in her writings.[108] At the same time, however, Carter would juxtapose these rambling imagining of self with that of her acting in accordance to the wants and needs of others, illustrating her desire to adhere also to popular societal versions of appropriate feminine behaviour. The third chapter of this investigation therefore explores how Carter drew on conflicting portrayals of motion to acknowledge, navigate, and complicate intellectual and social models of well-employed time, focusing in particular upon how she did so in her letters to Talbot.

While the first three chapters of this thesis examine how Talbot, Lady Mary, and Carter contrasted their scholarly ambitions with popular notions of feminine virtue, the forth considers bluestocking depictions of customary elegant female accomplishments. Specifically, it explores the conflicts that underpin Mary Delany's depictions of her shell crafts in letters written to her sister Anne Dewes, tracing her imaginative relationship with a creative employment in which she excelled from her childhood to old age. Through highlighting this particular aspect of Delany's writings, this study revises her reputation as a creative 'late bloomer', as determined by the critical acclaim of the botanical paper cuttings that she made in her seventies and eighties.[109]

As Elizabeth Eger and Beth Fowkes Tobin argue, both the social significance, and the intellectually and technically demanding nature of Delany's shell craft work has traditionally been underestimated in

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[107] Carter, 'Mrs. Carter to Miss Talbot. Deal, May 24, four in the morning [year unspecified]', in *A Series of Letters between Mrs. Elizabeth Carter and Miss Catherine Talbot,* I, pp.56-60 (p.58).

[108] Amanda Vickery, *The Gentleman's Daughter: Women's lives in Georgian England* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 1999), p.23.

[109] Anonymous, 'The British Museum: Objects in Focus: Late Bloomer: The Exquisite craft of Mary Delany', *The British Museum* website (published online 2019), <https://blog.britishmuseum.org/late-bloomer-the-exquisite-craft-of-mary-delany/> [accessed 14th May 2020].

critical literature. In her nineteenth-century analysis of Delany's letters for instance, Augusta Waddington Hall, Lady Llanover contends that this bluestocking viewed her shell crafts as mere 'amusement[s]', expanding that her 'taste for shells' improved when she began to value them as collectable items.[110] In response to this narrative, Eger highlights how Delany used her shell crafts to cement 'some of the most important friendships of her life', while Fowkes Tobin illustrates the extensive 'knowledge' and 'technique' that eighteenth-century shell work required.[111]

In a letter written to Dewes on the 6th of October 1750, Delany renders an imagining of herself gladly devoting 'hours' and 'industry' to constructing a 'shell-lustre', confusing Llanover's critical insight.[112] In the same letter however, Delany also refers to her natural history-based craft works as 'trifling' and 'insignificant', complicating Eger and Fowkes Tobin's revisionary analysis.[113] Indeed, here Delany confesses to her sister that when she surveys her craft tool store-room, 'I feel a consciousness that my time might have been better employed', anticipating that Dewes would also be obliged to navigate different accounts of a life well lived.[114] Exposing a gap in the critical field, Delany portrays her shell crafts as both frivolous and important, using written portrayals of her crafts to contemplate contrasting interpretations of her moral progress over time.

To explore how 'the Queen of the Blues' made sense of conflicting versions of well-employed time, the final chapter looks to Elizabeth Montagu's adolescent correspondence. Written decades before the first meetings of the bluestocking society, in these letters we see Montagu strengthening her first, formative friendships, most notably with Anne Donnellan and the Duchess of Portland. As illustrated by Myers's research, scholars have traditionally examined Montagu's early friendship with the Duchess of Portland

[110] Augusta Waddington Hall, Lady Llanover, *The Autobiography and Correspondence of Mary Granville, Mrs. Delany*, ed. by Augusta Waddington Hall, Lady Lllanover, 6 vols (London: Richard Bentley, New Burlington Street, 1861-2), I, p.484.
[111] Elizabeth Eger, 'Paper Trails and Eloquent Objects: Bluestocking Friendship and Material Culture', *Parergon*, 26 (2009), 109-138 (p.118), & Fowkes Tobin, 'Bluestockings and the Cultures of Natural History', p.57.
[112] Mary Delany, 'Mrs Delany to Mrs. Dewes. Deville, 6 Oct. 1750', in *The Autobiography and Correspondence of Mary Granville, Mrs. Delany,* II, pp.598-601 (p.598-599).
[113] Ibid, p.601.
[114] Ibid.

through her experiences at the Duchess's Bulstrode estate. By contrast, this chapter sheds light on the literary techniques that Montagu used to ensure her place in the Bulstrode friendship circle, unpacking the letter-writing culture behind this bluestocking blueprint.

In a letter written to Donnellan on the 18th of July 1741, Montagu gives an account of friendship, morality, and well-employed time that hinges on giving and receiving of truth. '[A]ccording to the improvement of our allotted hours', she reflects, 'there is no hour well spent that does not lay up happiness for future days', before stating to her correspondent that 'being & having a true friend is the greatest happiness that we can enjoy'.[115] By looking to the role that Montagu's little-studied adolescent alias 'Fidget' played in her epistolary friendships with Donnellan and the Duchess however – along with the techniques that she used to animate herself as this character – we see her complicate this straightforward description of moral improvement over time.

A satirical version of self based on observations of Montagu's youthful enthusiasm, 'Fidget' relates to the 'sensory', 'imaginative', and 'intellectual' modes of pleasure identified by the philosopher Bishop George Berkeley, in his 1713 article 'Thoughts on Public Schools and Universities'.[116] To animate herself as this alias, Montagu portrayed herself as lively and prating, yet respectful and deferential, organising both the graphic composition and contents of her letters to illustrate how she was at once similar and dissimilar to this character. Vitally, Montagu used the imagining of herself as 'Fidget' to participate in a model of friendship that coveted and celebrated mental agility, allowing her to practise the social and intellectual skills that she later demonstrated as a bluestocking host.

Exploring the writings of only five women, this thesis by no means exhausts the topic of bluestocking imaginings of well-employed and wasted time. For instance, there remains ample room for future studies

[115] Montagu, 'Elizabeth [Robinson] Montagu to Anne Donnellan, 1741, July 18th, MO 822, Elizabeth Montagu Robinson Papers, The Huntington Library, San Marino, California.
[116] George Berkeley, 'Essays in the Guardian: Thoughts on Public Schools and Universities', in *The Works of George Berkeley*, *D. D. Formerly Bishop of Cloyne*, ed. by Alexander Campbell Fraser, 3 vols (Oxford: Oxford Clarendon Press, 1871), III, pp.165-168 (p.167).

to explore Hester Chapone's rendering of well-employed time in *Letters on the Improvement of the Mind*, Hannah More's accounts of virtue before and after her conversion to Evangelicalism, and the nature of moral progress over time as described by the bluestocking Sylph, Elizabeth Vesey. Nevertheless, Talbot, Lady Mary, Carter, Delany, and Montagu's writings provide us with a useful starting point into this little-explored subject, offering insightful takes on a shared set of bluestocking concerns. With our five case studies established, it is time for us explore how these women approached Talbot's question, as posed in 'Reflections on a Saturday': '[h]as my time been improved or lost, or worse than lost, misspent'?

Chapter One) Of Thorns, Thistles, and Weeds: Reconsidering Critical Accounts of Catherine Talbot's Writings on Time and Moral Improvement

In his influential 1809 edition of Catherine Talbot's correspondence with Elizabeth Carter, the writer and editor Montagu Pennington outlines an account of Talbot's life that continues to shape popular accounts of her character and legacy. Here, Pennington recognises the difficulties that Talbot faced over the course of her lifetime, including how her uncertain position as 'a posthumous child' encouraged her to greatly rely upon the social, financial, and emotional support of her guardian, Bishop Thomas Secker as an adult.[1] He continues that Talbot's extensive domestic employments in Secker's household often 'prevented her from devoting so much time to mental improvement as she wished to do', arguing that she 'bitterly' complained about these confining circumstances in letters written to her long-suffering correspondent.[2]

Describing the conflict that Talbot rendered between her domestic duties and intellectual ambitions as 'bitter', Pennington depicts his subject's writings on time, employment, and moral improvement in unflattering, problematic terms. By doing so, he iterates a moral tradition upheld by theologians such as James Fordyce, who in the previous century stigmatised women who expressed boredom or discontent towards their customary household employments. Although today, scholars tend to frame Talbot as an unfortunate (as opposed to an unnatural, or immoral) individual, the tendency to portray her reflections on time and employment as self-centred, depressive, and burdensome persists within critical literature.

In response to this long-standing critical trend, I argue that while Talbot sometimes voiced discontent towards her domestic routines, she most commonly navigated conflicting models of well-employed time in ways that were humorous, relatable, and hopeful. Specifically, this chapter demonstrates how this is the case even in Pennington's editions of her correspondence and essays, illustrating how her writings within

[1] Montagu Pennington, *A Series of Letters between Mrs. Elizabeth Carter and Miss Catherine Talbot, From the Year 1741 to 1770. To which are added Letters, from Mrs. Elizabeth Carter to Mrs. Vesey, between the Years 1763 and 1787*, ed. Montagu Pennington, 4 vols (London: F. C. and J. Rivington, 1809), I, p.vi.
[2] Ibid, p.ix.

these publications can be used to contradict his editorial commentary and influence. Importantly, Talbot understood that although her position in Secker's household could prevent her from devoting time to 'mental improvement', the process of writing about her frustrations provided her with a different form of mental cultivation, offering her an alternative way to ensure her moral progress over time.

As we will consider with reference to their May 1762 correspondence, there were moments in which Talbot's vexation at her lack of time for intellectual cultivation could strain her relationship with Carter. At the same time however, these letters also illustrate how Talbot embraced her vexations not only as a playful, thoughtful, and hopeful subject of writing, but as a way of cementing her relationship with her friend. She understood that as a gentlewoman with conflicting intellectual ambitions and domestic duties, Carter would also understand the difficulties of having too little time to pursue her interests, using this understanding to point towards a shared emotional and imaginative experience.

While utilising multiple strategies to make sense of conflicting pulls on her time, Talbot found it most helpful to use literary motifs to address her discontent towards her domestic routines. Often, she used biblical and pastoral modes in her letters, as illustrated by her imagining of self uprooting weeds as 'honest Welch Betty'.[3] By handling weeds as symbols for her everyday frustrations for instance, Talbot drew from the second creation story in the Book of Genesis, helping her to view her frustrations as both an inevitable part of living in the fallen world, and a means of improving her imperfect state. A rustic version of self, this portrayal also shows Talbot's engagement with pastoral traditions, enabling her to make sense of her everyday troubles through depictions of simple, timeless, and untroubled rural labour.

As well as appearing in Talbot's letters, biblical and pastoral modes enabled her to navigate the subjects of time and moral growth in her essays. In 'Reflections on a Wednesday' for instance, she depicts life's difficulties as the 'thorns and thistles' with which God punished Adam in the Book of Genesis, arguing

[3] Catherine Talbot, 'Miss Talbot to Mrs. Carter. Lambeth, *May* 21, 1762', in *A Series of Letters between Mrs. Elizabeth Carter and Miss Catherine Talbot*, III, pp.9-13 (p.9).

that by overcoming these obstacles with cheer, we can find happiness both in this life and the next.[4] In 'On our Passage through life', Talbot expands on these ideas, arguing that after struggling against thorns and thistles on the path to religious 'truth', one is rewarded with 'Experience', 'Philosophy', and 'evenness of temper'.[5] Vitally, these techniques allowed Talbot to view her discontent as a means of finding solace, wisdom, and happiness, helping her to look upon the conflict that she perceived between domestic and intellectual models of well-employed time as a way of ensuring her moral growth.

Section 1) The mark of a bitter woman: explaining Pennington's unflattering reading of Talbot's character, life and legacy

Fundamental to Pennington's damning interpretation of Talbot's writings on time, employment, and moral improvement, are concepts and arguments outlined by James Fordyce in his *Sermons to Young Women.* As we considered in the introduction to this thesis, Fordyce's *Sermons* were reprinted regularly after their initial publication in 1765, offering us useful, valuable insights into the types of moral frameworks that were popular in eighteenth-century Britain. Although we are now familiar with Fordyce's framing of the 'domestic accomplishments' as the most 'virtuous' form of female education, we have yet to consider his account of the unhappy consequences that a young woman may face, if she comes to view her household duties with disdain, resentment, or boredom.[6]

In his *Sermons*, Fordyce argues that for nurturing the virtues of 'meekness and modesty', as well as being 'not intricate' to 'study', the domestic accomplishments are naturally suited to the female temper and

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[4] Talbot, 'Reflections on a Wednesday: On the humble and religious Enjoyment of the Blessings of Life', in *The Works of the Late Miss Catherine Talbot*, ed. Montagu Pennington, 9th edn., (London: F. C. and J. Rivington, 1819), pp.17-23 (p.17).
[5] Talbot, 'On our Passage through Life; a Reverie', in *The Complete Works of the Late Miss Talbot*, pp.170-178 (pp.174-175).
[6] James Fordyce, *Sermons to Young* Women, 7th edn., 2 vols (Dublin: J. Williams, 1767), I, pp.210-211. For Fordyce's account of the three types of female accomplishments, see pp.31–35 of this thesis. Further references to this publication are given after quotations in the text.

intellect, framing them as the most improving aspect of a female education (pp.272 & 232). At the same time however, he also argues that domestic skills such as writing in 'a fair hand', managing 'accounts', and overseeing the 'practices of servants' are 'detail[ed]' in nature, and take time to master, reassuring his female readers that they 'will employ your minds innocently, and virtuously, at hours which you might be tempted to spend in a very different manner' (p.232). Fordyce therefore contends that while an effective vehicle of feminine virtue, the domestic accomplishments also aid a woman's moral growth simply by keeping her busy, outlining a feminine, domestic, and unstimulating model of well-employed time.

Anticipating that in spite of these arguments, some women may still feel 'tempted' to pursue alternative, more exciting avenues of education and employment, Fordyce warns his female readers that they should never look upon any of their domestic accomplishments 'as trivial or dull' (p.233). 'If they should seem either', he cautions, 'you must give me leave to say the fault is in you. If on any pretence whatever you should affect to call them so, I should deem it a mark of – But I forbear' (p.233). Presenting this 'mark' as something too terrible to commit to paper, Fordyce implies that if a woman should ever harbour feelings of discontent towards her customary domestic responsibilities, she should learn to hide and suppress these feelings, or else risk being rejected by society as a social outcast.

Chastising women who felt discord between their domestic routines and personal ambitions, Fordyce articulates an account of female morality that we see being adapted by Pennington decades later, in his introduction to Talbot and Carter's familiar correspondence. Although not setting out to compose a moral tract like Fordyce, Pennington justifies his publication by arguing that 'if the vital spirit of Christian piety, breathed in language always persuasive, and often elegant, can engage the public attention; then it may be hoped, unless the Editor's partiality misleads him, that these Letters will not have been written in vain'.[7] Like Fordyce therefore, he viewed his publication as a work of ethical significance, regarding it as his religious duty to help his readers interpret the moral significance and implications of the letters.

[7] Pennington, p.xxi. Further references to Pennington's introduction are given after quotations in the text.

As Gwen Hampshire notes in her 2005 publication *Elizabeth Carter, 1717-1806: An Edition of Some Unpublished Letters*, the sense of religious duty that persuaded Pennington to write this introduction also encouraged him to adjust the content of the letters that passed between Talbot and Carter. Hampshire explains that just as Pennington understood 'that the purpose of biography was to improve and instruct the mind by recounting the lives of the good, wise, and learned', he bore 'the same objective in mind' when 'he published *A Series of Letters*', making a series of 'selections and omissions' to help him achieve this aim.[8] Hampshire continues that apart from the selection presented in her publication, the 'manuscripts of' Talbot and Carter's 'letters have not been found', meaning that at present, scholars chiefly read their correspondence in a form shaped by the biases that Pennington exhibits in his introductory remarks.[9]

'Whoever reads Miss Talbot's Letters', Pennington argues, 'will not need to be told with how much care her religious education was attended to', claiming that 'from her earliest youth to the day of her death', she viewed her 'application' to this 'most important of all sciences' as 'her highest pleasure' (p.viii-ix). At first, Pennington places Talbot's dedicated religious education in the context of her position in Bishop Secker's household, noting that from 'the age of five' she was raised and educated in Anglican 'see[s]' and 'rector[ies]' (p.vii-viii). However, Pennington then explains Talbot's life-long enthusiasm for this subject by framing it as an important part of her intellectual life, contending that she viewed religious study as a powerful instrument of both moral and 'mental improvement' (p.ix).

Through this argument, Pennington acknowledges Talbot's engagement with a theological movement that not only framed religious study as a method of mental improvement, but mental cultivation as a method of moral improvement. In particular, his account of the connections that Talbot drew between her moral and intellectual lives returns us to the philosophical teachings of her friend and mentor Joseph Butler, who – as we saw in the introduction to this thesis – argued that God would 'never have' given humanity

[8] Gwen Hampshire, *Elizabeth Carter, 1717-1806: An Edition of Some Unpublished Letters*, ed. by Gwen Hampshire (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2005), p.15.
[9] Ibid.

the ‘Capacities of improving by Experience, acquired Knowledge, and Habits, had they not been necessary, and intended to be made use of’.[10] By making these moves, Pennington recognises Talbot’s desire to further her moral progress through mental application, activity, and achievement, identifying her keen awareness of intellectual models of well-employed time.

As his analysis continues, Pennington expands that although Talbot viewed her religious education as ‘the dearest object of her constant study’, and sought to tend to it with ‘unremitted application’, two obstacles persistently hindered her ‘from devoting so much time to mental improvement as she wished’ (pp.viii-ix). In the first instance, he notes that Talbot suffered from ‘continual ill health’, highlighting a physical hindrance to her desired course of education (p.ix). Indeed, from her description of being ‘unfit’ to read letters while recovering from ‘a long illness’ in June 1742, to Carter’s claim that ‘nothing in your illness so terrifies and dispirits me as your being so extremely thin’ in October 1769, representations of Talbot’s debilitating ill health feature regularly throughout her familiar correspondence, supporting Pennington’s editorial analysis.[11]

Secondly, Pennington argues that Talbot was regularly frustrated in her religious studies by ‘the duty which she owed to the society in which her situation in the world placed her’, referring to the difficult circumstances that surrounded her birth.[12] As her biographer Rhoda Zuk notes, while Catherine’s father Edward Talbot hailed from a wealthy family (and had himself held the position of ‘archdeacon of Berkshire’), when he died of smallpox in December 1720 he left ‘few resources’ for his pregnant widow Mary Talbot, leaving her dependant on the support of her friends and family.[13] Although help arrived in

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[10] Joseph Butler, *The Analogy of Religion, Natural and Revealed to the Constitution and Course of Nature*, 5th edn., (Glasgow, 1754), p.43. For Talbot’s close relationship with Butler, a more detailed account of his teachings, along with the impact that his teaching had on Talbot’s intellectual life, see pp.16–19 of this thesis.

[11] Talbot, ‘Miss Talbot to Mrs Carter. Piccadilly, June 1, 1742’ in *A Series of Letters between Mrs. Elizabeth Carter and Miss Catherine Talbot,* I, pp.14-16 (p.15), & Elizabeth Carter, ‘Mrs Carter to Miss Talbot. Deal, Oct. 2, 1769’, in *A Series of Letters between Mrs. Elizabeth Carter and Miss Catherine Talbot,* II, pp.193-195 (p.194).

[12] Ibid, p.ix.

[13] Rhoda Zuk, ‘Talbot, Catherine’, in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (published online 23 September 2004), <https://www.oxforddnb.com/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-26921?rskey=gl3mHm&result=1> [accessed 23 August 2020].

the form of her friend Catherine Benson (who swiftly invited the mother and her unborn child to live with her, housing Mary when she gave birth to Catherine in May 1721), Edward's death left the Talbots in an uncertain social and financial position.

After Benson's marriage to Thomas Secker in April 1725, Mary found a lasting solution to her predicament, with Secker welcoming her and her young daughter into his household. As Pennington notes, under Secker's care Catherine Talbot not only received a religious education, but was instructed in customary 'female' intellectual accomplishments such as 'astrology', 'geography', and 'French' (pp.ix-x). He adds that she also learnt 'graceful arts' such as 'drawing' and 'music', noting the 'particular delight' that she took 'in painting flowers from nature' (p.viii). Pennington therefore highlights how Talbot was educated in talents that were designed to increase her chances of making an advantageous marriage, indicating that she possessed the tools to find and flourish within her own household as an adult (p.viii).

As to any instruction that Talbot received in the domestic branch of female education, Pennington makes no mention in his editorial analysis. However, by looking to more recent critical accounts of her life and activities we can see that by adulthood, Talbot was well versed in domestic skills that were crucial to the everyday running of the Secker household. As Zuk notes, by her late thirties she 'carried out the quotidian business of being [Secker's] housekeeper, personal secretary, and companion', upholding this busying round of domestic tasks until his death in 1768.[14] Remaining a useful member of the Secker household above pursuing her own romantic interests, it appears that Talbot felt, to at least some degree, morally obliged to return her guardian's kindness; a possibility that resonates with Pennington's description of 'the duty which she owed to the society in which her situation in the world placed her'.[15]

[14] Ibid.

[15] As Zuk observes, 'in 1758' Talbot 'refused a proposal of marriage to George Berkeley on the grounds that the friends of neither would approve', adding that '[w]hen Berkeley married in 1761, she was deeply grieved'. Although Zuk does not explicitly identify Secker as a disapproving party, Talbot's position in his household would have made her greatly dependent on his will and approval (Zuk, ibid.).

While at first acknowledging the physical restraints and social obligations that sometimes prevented Talbot from tending to her religious education, as Pennington's commentary unfolds he recasts Talbot from an object worthy of our pity, into a self-pitying figure. He contends that instead of accepting her limited 'time to mental improvement' with grace, she chose to 'bitterly and often (perhaps it may be thought too often) lament' her circumstances in letters written to his late aunt, Elizabeth Carter (p.ix). Continuing to frame Talbot as an 'amiable egotist' who 'naturally unburdened the fullness of her heart to one whose affection she was well assured would pity, console, and reconcile her to herself', Pennington renders her not just as self-indulgent figure, but emotionally taxing to her correspondent (p.ix).

In addition to framing Talbot's letters as burdensome to Carter, Pennington implies that they could be seen as a negative influence on his readership's moral welfare. 'If it be said that some Letters of this kind might have been omitted', he writes, 'the Editor would have done so, had there been any reason to fear the spreading of encouragement of her enthusiasm in these days' (p.ix). As Misty G. Anderson notes, in eighteenth-century Britain the term 'enthusiasm' was utilised to define 'religious feeling in excess of rational moral principles', adding that it could also 'be used to condemn religious irregularity while evading the burden of any specific charge'.[16] Notably, this euphemistic word enabled Pennington to depict Talbot's writings on moral improvement as overly emotional, without explicitly accusing his late relative's friend of indulging in immoral tendencies.

Having dealt with these troublesome aspects of Talbot's character, Pennington proceeds to highlight what he regarded as her more admirable qualities. For instance, he lauds her 'sweetness of temper', and quotes contemporary verses written in celebration of her wit and beauty.[17] However, by treating the task of outlining these qualities as secondary to that of excusing her egotism and enthusiasm, Pennington's commentary overwhelmingly depicts Talbot as a problematic figure. By describing the dissatisfaction that

[16] Misty G. Anderson, *Imagining Methodism in Eighteenth-Century Britain: Enthusiasm, Belief, & the Borders of the Self* (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 2012), pp.49-50.
[17] Pennington, p.x-xiii.

she felt towards her 'situation in the world' as 'bitter', he iterates Fordyce's caution toward women who resented their domestic employments, criticising her for not hiding her corruptive thoughts from others.

In recent critical literature, scholars have tended to refrain from depicting Talbot's writings on time, employment, and improvement as immoral, focusing instead on what caused the frustrated nature of her writing. For instance, in *Dr Johnson's Women* Norma Clarke argues that from a young age Talbot faced immense pressure to better herself, referencing a letter written by Secker to his (then) thirteen-year-old charge to support this contention. Depicting Talbot's mental and moral growth as vital to ensuring his, his wife, and Mary Talbot's happiness, here Secker claims that '[t]he only way our enjoyment of life can much increase is by seeing your mind and temper and behaviour coming near to what we wish it'.[18] Clarke contends that when viewed in light of such great expectations, 'it is little wonder that Catherine Talbot grew up dissatisfied with herself'.[19]

In *Madam Britannia*, Emma Major takes a different approach to explaining Talbot's dissatisfaction, outlining how her social duties as a gentlewoman living in Secker's household took up more time than she desired. 'Talbot was very uneasy about the amount of socialising she had to do', Major writes, noting how 'the practice of piety in a fashionable context is repeatedly debated in her correspondence'.[20] In a manner reflective of Zuk's analysis, Major also observes how Talbot's domestic duties could curtail her intellectual ambitions. She contends that Talbot was both 'constrained by the timetable of the household in which she lived', and 'frustrated by the demands of visiting and correspondence'.[21]

While portraying Talbot as an unfortunate, rather than morally objectionable figure, these narratives ultimately handle her writings on time and moral improvement as a poor reflection on her character. For example, after acknowledging Talbot's limited financial and social prospects, Zuk then claims that she

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[18] Thomas Secker, as quoted by Norma Clarke in *Dr Johnson's Women* (Hambledon and London: London, 2000), pp.51-52.
[19] Norma Clarke, ibid.
[20] Emma Major, *Madam Britannia: Women, Church, and Nation 1712-1812* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), p.89.
[21] Ibid.

'engaged in agonizing introspection, and was afflicted with self-loathing'.[22] In her analysis, Clarke also depicts Talbot as being prone to 'introspection', arguing that her 'self-denigration often called forth quiet rebukes from' Carter.[23] Finally, Major contends that 'Carter' often had to 'remin[d] Talbot that she should aim to fulfil earthly duties rather than long for perfection, and make the best use she can of the opportunities for conversing with people'.[24] As such, Zuk, Clarke and Major all follow Pennington's example of framing Talbot's writings on time and employment as emotional, self-pitying, and vexing, offering little change to popular imaginings of her legacy and character.

Section 2) 'I will not sit down and lament, but get up and amend': how Talbot and Carter's familiar correspondence can be used to challenge Pennington's analysis

On the 14th of May 1762, Talbot wrote to Carter from Lambeth, eager to address and resolve an argument that had tainted their last parting. In this letter, Talbot outlines how Carter's comments on her 'low spirits' during a recent visit to Secker's Lambeth household had culminated in a disagreement, persuading Carter to leave without bidding her a proper farewell.[25] 'I thought my only grief was to feel myself perfectly useless to you', Talbot writes, 'but I have been worse, I have been hurtful to you' (p.2). Of all Talbot's letters, this example lends the greatest weight to her popular legacy as both a pitiable and self-pitying figure, depicting a scenario in which her frustration towards her ill health and daily routine could compromise even her closest relationships.

At first, Talbot both apologises for, and expresses her determination to improve on her recent melancholy conduct. For instance, she writes how 'no effects of an illness, however severe, no uniformity of life, no petty cares and attentions' could ever 'totally excuse such a disposition', adding how 'it is, as you said,

[22] Zuk, ibid.
[23] Clarke, ibid.
[24] Major, pp.89-90.
[25] Talbot, 'Miss Talbot to Mrs. Carter. Lambeth, May 14, 1762', in *A Series of Letters between Mrs. Elizabeth Carter and Miss Catherine Talbot,* III, pp.1-5 (p.2). Further references to this letter are given after quotations in the text.

truly the only temptation that I have to guard against' (pp.2-3). However, as her letter progresses Talbot dwells upon her 'low spirits', explaining that by leaving Lambeth abruptly in the wake of their argument, Carter had worsened her unhappy state. 'I believe you would have come into my room again that night', she writes, 'as I wished you then, and as I am now glad you did not, had you been aware into what a solemn train of thought I was led by the shutting of the door' (p.3).

Offering little resistance to her 'only temptation', Talbot proceeds to relate her unhappy thoughts to Carter. She explains how she reflected that '[n]ow she is absolutely gone – I have not even a moment to beg her pardon, or to make out that I have not been quite so much to blame', portraying herself as a helpless, injured party (p.3). Talbot then uses the 'this golden now' motif employed in Matthew Prior's poem 'Celia to Damon' to lengthen her train of thought, adding '*[w]hen* we may meet again is uncertain as human life. *How* we may met again, is uncertain as human happiness. In this *Now* of health, and prosperity, and ease, with every thing dearest to me around, I have always received her with infectious dejection and uncomfortable gloom' (p.3).[26] Shedding new light on her solemn mood, as well as asking Carter to shoulder some of the 'blame' for her ongoing discontent, Talbot lends credence to her reputation as an introspective and burdensome figure.

In her reply to this letter, Carter describes herself as making 'a thousand reproaches' for contributing towards her friend's anguish.[27] 'I had no idea', she explains, 'that I had left such painful impressions on your mind as your Letter shows me I did', adding how 'it would have been impossible for me to have left you if I had, without endeavouring to remove them'.[28] Carter continues that her 'real intention' in talking

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[26] The relevant passage (as taken from Matthew Prior, *Poems on Several Occasions*, 6th edn. (London: H. Lintot, and J. and R. Tonson, 1741)) from 'Celia to Damon' reads: 'Yet thus belov'd, thus loving to Excess,/ Yet thus receiving and returning Bliss,/ In this great Moment in this golden Now,/ When ev'ry trace of What, or When or How,/ Shou'd from my Soul by raging Love be torn,/ And far on swelling Seas of Rapture born;/ A melancholy Tear afflicts my Eye;/ And my Heart labours with a sudden Sigh:/ Invading Fears repel my Coward Joy;/ And Ills foreseen the present Bliss destroy' (27-36).

[27] Elizabeth Carter, 'Mrs. Carter to Miss Talbot. Deal, *May* 17, 1762', *A Series of Letters between Mrs. Elizabeth Carter and Miss Catherine Talbot,* III, pp.5-8 (p.5).

[28] Ibid, p.6.

to Talbot had been ‘to remove the painful imagination that there was any thing voluntary in an inactivity, the mere effect of constitutional disorder’, supporting the idea that her friend’s unhappiness lay in being unable to employ her time in a useful and constructive manner.[29] Identifying Talbot’s resentment at her ‘inactivity’ as the root of their argument, Carter portrays her as both a pitiable and self-pitying character, depicting herself, by contrast, as the more reasonable influence on their relationship.

While in some respects supporting Pennington’s unflattering account of Talbot’s character, other aspects of these letters – as presented in his edition of her familiar correspondence with Carter – can be utilised to challenge his analysis. For instance, at the close of her letter Talbot attaches a note depicting a different imagining of self after Carter’s departure, this time expressing her determination to place her low spirits behind her. ‘I will not sit down and lament’, she resolves, ‘but get up and amend’, reassuring her friend that ‘[y]ou have done me infinite good, and let that give you pleasure’ (p.5). This note also shows Talbot’s ability to write knowingly about her frustrated attempts towards bettering her moral and intellectual self. Sensitive to the sorrowful figure she had cast at their last parting, she writes that ‘I beseech you form a smiling and sparkling idea of me’, adding that ‘I trust it shall be a true one’ (p.5).

In addition, far from retracting the critical sentiments that she made at Lambeth, Carter uses her letter to find new ways of explaining and justifying them. ‘Your mind’, she writes to her friend, ‘has the dispositions of angelic natures: but your constitution has alas too much of the weakness of frail mortality, to assist you in all the high attempts at which your virtue aims’.[30] She even goes so far as to make light of the pressure Talbot felt to improve herself, adding teasingly that ‘you might just as reasonably accuse yourself for not being able to fly, when by flying no doubt you might in many instances be exceedingly useful’.[31] Although eager to comfort and reassure her correspondent, Carter also viewed Talbot as a rational figure, understanding that her friend was capable of receiving and acting on contrastive criticism.

[29] Ibid, pp.6-7.
[30] Carter, ibid, p.7.
[31] Ibid.

Importantly, the May 1762 letters highlight a rare moment in which Talbot's desire to employ her time in ways beyond her means caused disharmony in her relationship with Carter. More frequently, we see Talbot handling the conflict she at times felt between her confining domestic circumstances, and her desire to further her moral and intellectual lives as an engaging subject in their familiar correspondence. In a letter written to Carter from Cuddesden on the 14th of November 1746 for instance, she depicts this conflict humorously by portraying herself as host to two warring inclinations: her sense of duty to uphold her round of domestic tasks in Secker's household, and her desire to pursue alternative forms of employment, imagined here her through her long-suppressed wish to find time to write to her friend.

Snatching the first sentence of this letter, Talbot's domestic imagining of self writes 'I have absolutely no time', contending that she should put down her pen immediately, and tend to her other responsibilities.[32] '-well, that is no matter', her friendly imagining of self interjects, 'for you shall write to Miss Carter, before you are half an hour older' (p.174). '[H]alf an hour', the former voice retorts incredulously, 'why in that half an hour I have half an [sic] hundred things to do' (p.174). 'Notwithstanding that multiplicity of business', counteracts the latter, 'Miss Carter must be writ to I tell you', urging Talbot to 'write at least a line every day' if that was all she could manage in her present demanding circumstances (p.174). Finding this argument the most persuasive, Talbot finally puts her quarrelling inclinations to rest in order to address Carter directly, determining to continue writing 'till I have furnished out a decent Letter to thank you for your kind enquiry after me' (pp.174-175).

As her letter continues, Talbot contemplates that in spite of her busy routine, she felt that she was achieving little of consequence, imagining this phenomenon as 'some strange witchcraft that makes all my time glide away without suffering me to do any thing in it to any purpose' (p.175). In particular, she represents her present domestic tasks as fragmented and whimsical in nature, portraying them as pulling

[32] Talbot, 'Miss Talbot to Mrs Carter. Cuddesden, *Nov* 14, 1746', in *A Series of Letters between Mrs. Elizabeth Carter and Miss Catherine Talbot,* I, pp.174-177 (p.174). Further references to this letter are given after quotations in the text.

her between different household locations instead of allowing her to invest her time in a coherent, satisfying manner. ''Tis a note to this body', she writes, 'a message to that, an errand to one end of the house, and a whim that send me to the other: a robin to be fed at this window, and a tom-tit to be attended to at another, cats, or chickens, or spinsters, or ague patients' (p.175).

This is not to argue that because Talbot portrays these household tasks as frivolous in this letter, she beheld them as worthless. As Jeremy Gregory notes, by 1746 Secker had not only been appointed to the bishopric of Bristol, but was a member of the House of Lords, where 'he regularly attended debates' and voted on legislation.[33] By conveying 'messages' and 'notes' to people visiting Secker's household in Cuddesden, Talbot was therefore not only helping her guardian, but likely tending to the administrative engine that ensured the day-to-day running of the country and Church of England. In addition, by helping vulnerable members of society such as 'ague' (malaria) patients and 'spinsters', Talbot was carrying out significant charitable works. Acting to support her country, church, local community, and household, these domestic tasks offered Talbot multiple ways of imagining her steady moral progress over time.

Instead of taking Talbot's portrayal of her employments as a literal, straightforward representation of how she felt towards her daily routines, it is important for us to acknowledge how these portrayals were informed by her sense of dependency upon Secker's favour and generosity. Depicting the vital task of looking after the poor, needy, and sick as on par with walking the length of the house to feed a bird at one window (and then travelling to another as mere 'whim'), Talbot suggests that through being shaped by circumstances beyond her control, all the employments that she carried out in this environment could seem to lack purpose. She therefore depicts her time within this house as both busying and idle, structured and chaotic, occupying and vacant, mobilising the image of herself wandering from room to room as a metaphor for her desire to find other, more fulfilling forms of employment.

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[33] Jeremy Gregory, 'Secker, Thomas (1693-1768)', in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (published online 05 January 2012), <https://www.oxforddnb.com/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-24998?rskey=FA286Z&result=2> [accessed 31 August 2020]

Far from reflecting upon this inner conflict in the lamenting, agonising, and bitter manner, Talbot proceeds to address it with creativity and good humour. In particular, she employs well-known literary references to help navigate her conflicting inclinations, while at the same time using these references to engage and entertain her correspondent. In order to make sense of her unoccupied version of self for instance, Talbot draws on their shared knowledge of biblical literature, referencing the figure who, according to the Book of Genesis, lived for 'nine hundred sixty and nine years' (Genesis 5.27).[34] 'To be sure Methusalem was a happy man', she writes light-heartedly to her friend, 'if he had any genius for filling up his time' (p.175).[35]

While likening her own complicated emotional experiences to those of this ancient figure with humour, through this continuation one can see Talbot making a universal comment upon the human condition. The uncomfortable sensation of feeling one's time slipping away unaccountably is not peculiar to her, her writing suggests, but inherent to all humanity, regardless of how long a life one lives. Through then sharing this suggestion with Carter, Talbot emphasises her comprehension of the universality of this sensation, writing from a point of understanding that her friend must sometimes feel her time gliding away from her too. Writing in ways she anticipated would be familiar, humorous, and relatable to Carter, Talbot embraces this emotional difficulty as an opportunity to cement their friendship.

Talbot then uses a more contemporary literary reference to render her occupied imagining of self, this time drawing on the character 'Hilpa' from Joseph Addison and Richard Steele's publication *The Spectator*. Like Methusalem, Hilpa lived to an extraordinarily old age, with Addison establishing her longevity by writing that she both lived at a time before the flood (making her, as Talbot notes, an 'antediluvian' figure), and received offers of marriage long after reaching the age of one hundred and

[34] *The Bible: Authorized Version (the King James Version)*, as accessed through the Oremus Bible Browser website <bible.oremus.org>. This version has been selected for being contemporary to the bluestockings, and is referenced throughout this thesis.
[35] By 'Methuselam', Talbot refers to the figure referred to in Genesis as Methuselah.

seventy (p.175).[36] Although featuring in only two of *The Spectator*'s five hundred and fifty-five papers, Talbot mentions her name without context or explanation, confident of her correspondent's knowledge of this well-known publication.

Whereas she turned to Methusalem to form an imagining of self struggling to fill her time in ways she found constructive and satisfying, Talbot calls on Addison's creation to depict a version of self longing for more of this resource. Consistent with her reference to Methusalem however, Talbot mobilises this character to highlight what she comprehended to be a collective experience with her correspondent, depicting her desire to have more time as understandable, relatable, and human. 'In so short a life as fourscore or an hundred years', she writes to Carter with irony, 'one has really no leisure for writing long Letters', adding that '[h]ad I been Miss Hilpa, the antediluvian damsel, and you such another, how we should have corresponded' (p.175)!

Notably, Talbot not only outlines a fanciful depiction of self having an endless resource of time in this instance, but invites her correspondent to imagine herself as a fellow 'antediluvian damsel'. Through this invitation, Talbot communicates her understanding that as an intellectually ambitious gentlewoman with domestic responsibilities, Carter would also sometimes wish to have more time to pursue her own scholarly interests. Importantly, by framing herself and Carter as ancient, 'antediluvian' figures writing and swapping letters freely with one another, Talbot gestures towards what she viewed as another point common ground between herself and her friend, using this shared emotional experience to further strengthen their relationship.

While it would be wrong to say that by drawing on Methusalem and Hilpa, Talbot was able to neatly resolve her frustrations, these literary figures did help her to view the discontent that she could feel

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[36] Ibid, & Joseph Addison, 'No. 584, *Monday*, *August* 23, 1714', in *The Spectator*, ed. by Donald F. Bond, 5 vols (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), IV, pp.596-598 (pp.596-598). In Genesis, Adam's descendants (leading up until the time of the flood, a period referred to here by Talbot as the 'antediluvian' age) are described to have lived long lives. For instance, the fifth book stipulates that Adam lived for 'nine hundred and thirty years', his son Seth 'nine hundred and twelve years', Seth's son Enos 'nine hundred and five years', and so on, eventually reaching Methusalem's record-beating age (Genesis 5.5-11).

towards her domestic routines from a playful and thoughtful distance. They enabled Talbot to look on the duties that pulled her about Secker's household not just as a way to form a connection with Carter, but a chance to prove her virtue as her friend. She does so by bringing our attention back to the act of her writing this letter, presenting a final, unified version of self as Carter's loyal correspondent. '[B]e silent ye chirpers without your breakfast', Talbot commands, 'for write to Miss Carter I must, since she is so kind as to inquire after me' (p.175).

With her current position at her writing desk established ('[h]ere I am then, dear Miss Carter, just where the last Letter left me'), Talbot moves on to offer us a more flattering account of her life in Cuddesden (p.176). She portrays herself as writing from 'the prettiest place, the happiest situation, the sweetest retirement, that perhaps is to be met with', even going so far as to render her tendency to illness in a positive light ('I think a little disorder now and then', she reflects, 'makes one enjoy health the better') (p.176). While noting that in such a remote place 'one must learn to like the people one sees', Talbot considers that having been situated 'in a very agreeable neighbourhood', this seclusion posed no issue, portraying her current situation with humour and gratitude (pp.176-177).

Crucially, Talbot's depiction self finally finding time to write to Carter marks a pivotal shift in the tone of this letter. Whereas before she offers us depictions of conflict and disorder, from this moment on she centres her letter on portrayals of harmony and gratitude. Through this transition, Talbot highlights how she embraced their correspondence not as a chance to simply dwell upon her feelings, but identify and organise them. Although at times unable to devote as much time to religious study as she wished, through writing about her discontent to Carter, Talbot was able to find humour, happiness, and ample cause for mental play in her limited conditions.

Section 3) Of weeds, rural labour, and 'honest Welch Betty': Talbot's mobilisation of biblical and pastoral modes of writing in her letters to Carter

As we have seen through her irreverent references to Methusalem and Hilpa, Talbot found it helpful to draw on well-known literary motifs to organise, articulate, and negotiate the frustration that she at times felt towards her daily routine. Although turning to multiple literary motifs and traditions, Talbot most commonly mobilised biblical and pastoral modes of writing to bring her contemplations on the nature of time, employment, and moral improvement to constructive and hopeful conclusions. In order to introduce Talbot's use of these modes in Pennington's edition of her correspondence, this section turns to a letter that she wrote to Carter on the 21st of May 1762, returning us to the period of their written communications that followed Carter's hasty departure from Lambeth.

In her opening addresses, Talbot thanks her correspondent for her recent 'kind' and 'useful' advice, as outlined by Carter in her 17th of May letter.[37] 'I have studied it over and over', she claims, 'not I hope to the purpose of making myself vain, but to that of improving by advice so gently given, and of [i]ncreasing my affection gratitude to the adviser' (p.9). As well as recognising Carter's kindness however, Talbot also uses these opening remarks to acknowledge the more critical aspects of her friend's letter. In particular, she recognises how the description of her 'high attempts' at 'virtue' had been designed to emphasise how they could achieve the opposite, a criticism that Talbot agrees with by expanding on Carter's (equally double-edged) description of her 'angelic natures'. Sensitive to how it was her *un*angelic tendencies that had caused their argument, Talbot writes with no small degree of irony to that 'I will [...] allow my disposition to be naturally angelical as you please' (p.9).

Having recognised both the affectionate and critical components of her friend's letter, Talbot describes her determination to abandon her disruptive tendencies. Notably, she does by inviting Carter to imagine an untamed landscape being transformed into one of order and plenty, arguing 'that by the best of cultivation... wild nature has been improved in many instances into somewhat very different' (p.9). Talbot then imagines herself as a rural worker bringing about this pleasant transformation, using the act of

[37] Talbot, 'Miss Talbot to Mrs. Carter. Lambeth, *May* 21, 1762', (p.9). All further references to the letter are given after quotations in the text.

pulling up unwanted vegetation as a metaphor for her ongoing, difficult efforts to manage and overcome her frustration. '[I]t is my duty', she writes, 'not to sit down discouraged at the infinite that still remains to be amended; but like honest Welch Betty, to root up one weed after another from day to day, and try, if I can, to sing and look cheerful at my work' (p.9).

Through this imagining of self, Talbot pulls together multiple literary precedents, including the second creation story as rendered in the Book of Genesis. In the second chapter of Genesis, we see God create 'Adam' from 'the dust of the ground', before instructing the first man to 'till' and 'keep' the 'garden of Eden' (Genesis 2.7 & 15). Seeing that '[i]t is not good that the man should be alone', God then makes Adam 'a helper', creating the first woman (who is later referred to as 'Eve') from his rib to work alongside him (Genesis 2.18 & 21). While stipulating that Adam and Eve worked in the garden of Eden, this narrative makes no mention of their employment being arduous or unpleasant; only that God told Adam that apart from 'the tree of knowledge', 'Of every tree of the garden thou mayest [sic] freely eat' (Genesis 2.17).

In the third chapter of Genesis, Adam and Eve incur God's wrath and retribution by eating the fruit of the tree of knowledge. At first punishing Eve with 'pain' in childbirth, God then chastises Adam by condemning the ground from which he was made, telling him that 'cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life; Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee; and thou shalt eat the herb of the field; In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return to the ground; for out of it wast thou taken' (Genesis 3.16-19). Although this punishment is given directly to Adam, as Adam's helper, partner, and flesh Eve must also suffer its consequences, with God subjecting them and their descendants to a life of difficult rural toil.

By looking to a letter written by Talbot to Carter on the 24th of February 1756, we can see how she regarded thorns and thistles as a useful metaphor for the moral imperfections of the temporal world. As Pennington explains, this letter was written shortly after the devastating 'earthquake at Lisbon' in

November 1755, an event that caused Talbot to reflect on the urgency of living in a virtuous manner.[38] Despairing of 'the false politeness of the world which banishes every subject that is interesting and delightful, if it bears but the name of seriousness', she argues that while God 'calls upon us by the loudest alarms to hasten and finish our appointed work', 'we carelessly divert our attention to objects and underserving the serious contemplations of a monkey'.[39] 'Alas', she reflects, 'in a soil where the world so plentifully sows its weeds and thorns, little lasting good can be expected without a daily preparation of the ground begun in humility and continues with patience'.[40]

Although not mentioning thorns or thistles explicitly, by portraying an imagining of self uprooting undesirable, unruly, and perpetually growing weeds, Talbot draws heavily on the Book of Genesis in her May 1762 letter to Carter. Through her depiction of this invasive and unwanted organic matter for instance, she is able to render her own imperfect moral state, giving symbolic form to the vexation that she could feel towards her ill health and domestic responsibilities. By imagining herself pulling up these weeds, Talbot illustrates how she viewed it as her religious duty to avoid this discontent, and learn to look upon her difficult circumstances with 'cheer'. Rendering herself going about this work 'day to day', Talbot frames this task as a life-long undertaking, echoing God's declaration to Adam that he must struggle against thorns and thistles 'all the days of your life'.

For depicting an imperfect version of self encountering perpetual difficulty and frustration, Talbot's letter can be mobilised to support her popular legacy as a bitter and agonising figure. However, this letter also highlights how the story portrayed in the Book of Genesis provided Talbot with a way of reading her everyday frustrations with hope. While on one hand illustrating her fallen condition, the weeds rendered

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[38] Pennington, *A Series of Letters between Mrs Carter and Miss Talbot*, II, p.217. As Robert Yeats argues, much of '[w]estern society was shocked that one of the most beautiful and prosperous cities in Europe could suffer such a fate'. Not only was the city 'destroyed', but '[a]bout 40,000 people, one-fifth of Lisbon's population, lost their lives, and another 10,000 died in Morocco to the south' (Robert Yeats, *Earthquake Time Bombs* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), p.159).

[39] Talbot, 'Miss Talbot to Mrs. Carter. St Paul's, *Feb. 24*, 1756', in *A Series of Letters between Mrs Carter and Miss Talbot*, II, pp.215-222 (pp.217-218).

[40] Ibid, p.218.

in this letter also demonstrate Talbot's understanding that she could improve on her imperfect state. As she reflects in her essay 'Reflections on a Wednesday', '[t]he blessed promise of our redemption was uttered in the same moment with the doom of our mortality', meaning that '[p]ain, and suffering, and sorrow, became remedies to cure our corrupted nature'.[41]

Importantly, Talbot understood that by overcoming her everyday frustrations with cheer and resolve, she could root out her discontent, and further her moral progress over time. She viewed the process of corresponding with Carter as crucial to fulfilling this programme of moral improvement, as she makes plain in this present letter. 'I have gone on with more cheerfulness ever since my mind was relieved by writing its overflowings [sic] to you', she reflects, adding that 'it has been greatly assisted by your very kind answer' (p.10). Relaying how she and her mother had 'enjoyed' an exciting spell of 'thunder' and lightning' on a recent walk, 'seen many agreeable people' ('Lady Charlotte Finch', she writes for instance, 'who is most truly amiable and charming, brought her daughter hither in a most friendly manner'), and been 'as jolly as can be at meals', Talbot uses the rest of this letter to illustrate her improved mood, depicting a happy and occupied version of self to her friend (pp.10-11).

Alongside these biblical references, Talbot also calls on pastoral modes of writing to make sense of her moral state in this letter. As Stephen Bending and Andrew McRae argue in their 2003 anthology *The Writing of Rural England*, 'the origins of the term' pastoral are rooted in classical portrayals of 'shepherds and shepherdess' ('"pastor"', they explain, 'is Latin for "shepherd", "bucolic" is from the Greek for "herdsman"'), a tradition that we see Talbot playfully acknowledge in a letter written to Carter on the 6th of January 1745.[42] 'When I came first into the country', she writes to her friend, 'I was all

[41] Talbot, 'Reflections on a Wednesday', p.19.

[42] Stephen Bending and Andrew McRae, 'Introduction', in *The Writing of Rural England 1500-1800,* ed. Stephen Bending and Andrew McRae (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), pp.xi-xxxiv (p.xxi).

pastoral in my notions; I fancied that all shepherds could play on the flute and talk eclogues', adding wryly that '[s]ome years have set me right on this head'.[43]

Bending and McRae continue that '[w]hile we may tend to think of pastoral as denoted by shepherds and shepherdesses', 'in practice it has always had wider concerns'.[44] For instance, they note that pastoral forms of writing enables one to juxtapose rural with urban environments, arguing that the mode 'looks from the city to the country but also uses this imagined country to look back at the city: it faces in opposing directions simultaneously'.[45] They also acknowledge definitions of pastoral that illustrate how the mode 'invites a comparison between the past and the present', as well as 'simplicity' and 'complexity', drawing on these ideas to contend that pastoral's 'representation of the past is fundamentally concerned with the expression of longing in the present'.[46]

In his 2013 study *Green Retreats*, Bending offers us examples of how pastoral tropes are mobilised in bluestocking writings. He highlights their deployment, for example, in a letter written by Elizabeth Montagu to Elizabeth Vesey in July 1786, in which Montagu describes gardening work that was being undertaken at her Sandleford Priory estate. Here, Montagu portrays herself looking out of her dressing room window onto 'a most delightful pastoral scene, which was yesterday rendered more gay by 33 Women & girls singing while they were weeding & picking up stones'.[47] She reflects that while "[m]y Nymphs were not such as the Poets describe the Arcadian Shepherds to have been', 'the tones of joy & gladness are ever touching to ye human heart, & mine sympathised in their chearfulness [sic]'.[48]

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[43] Talbot, 'Miss Talbot to Mrs. Carter. Cuddesden, *Jan* 6, 1745', in *A Series of Letters between Mrs. Elizabeth Carter and Miss Catherine Talbot,* I, pp.84-88 (p.88).
[44] Bending and McRae, p.xxi-xxii.
[45] Ibid, p.xxi.
[46] Ibid, p.xxii.
[47] Elizabeth Montagu, as quoted by Bending in *Green Retreats: Women, Gardens and Eighteenth-Century Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), p.17.
[48] Ibid.

Montagu, Bending argues, frames her garden as pastoral in this instance 'by marginalising and making labour anonymous', providing no detail of the personalities or appearances of her workers.[49] To this argument, this investigation adds that by making her workers anonymous, Montagu is also able to depict them as timeless figures, writing that while they may not be the 'Arcadian Shepherds' rendered in ancient Roman poetry, they still evoke the imaginative presence of classical pastoral characters.[50] Bending continues that although apparently at 'the centre of this sentimental scene', these women ultimately 'focus attention on the benevolence and sympathy of their landowning employer'.[51] Montagu therefore also frames this scene as pastoral in terms of the pleasure that she derived from viewing their timeless rural labour from her window, creating a physical and imaginative gap between herself – an affluent London hostess – and her rustic band of weeder women.

Through the imagining of herself as 'honest Welch Betty', Talbot offers as an alternative view of the pastoral scene rendered in Montagu's letter. By inviting us to imagine her personally pulling up and discarding weeds for instance, she portrays an account of self in the thick of rural labour, drawing on the georgic literary mode that as Richard F. Thomas notes, places emphasis on the arduous nature of rural 'toil'.[52] Talbot also uses this imagining to cast herself as an impoverished figure, departing further from the easy, affluent imagining of Montagu watching her workers from a distance. As Pamela Sharp argues, 'as a cheap source of labour', low-ranking and 'unmarried' women were regularly employed for tasks such as 'weed gathering' in eighteenth-century Britain; a notion that Talbot appears to draw on in this present letter, to acknowledge her social status as an unmarried woman working in Secker's household.[53]

[49] Bending, *Green Retreats*, p.17.
[50] As Richard Jenkyns argues, we find 'Arcadians and the name of Arcadia' in the ancient Roman poet Virgil's *Eclogues* – a collection of poems that Jenkyns describes as 'the fountainhead from which the vast and diverse tradition of pastoral in many European literatures was to spring' (Richard Jenkyns, 'Virgil and Arcadia', *The Journal of Roman Studies*, 79 (1989), 26-39 (p.27)).
[51] Bending, ibid.
[52] Richard F. Thomas, *Georgics: Books I-II*, ed. Richard F. Thomas (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p.16.
[53] Pamela Sharpe, 'The Female Labour Market in English Agriculture during the Industrial Revolution: Expansion or Contraction?', *The Agricultural History Review*, 47 (1999), 161-181 (p.162-164).

At the same time however, Talbot wrote this letter as a well-read, well-connected gentlewoman, representing herself as undergoing work that she understood to be below the dignity of her genteel social status – not as a rural labourer outlining a straightforward account of her daily employments and toils. Nor do we see Talbot turning to this letter as a means of conveying her desire to swap her confining, but comfortable life in Secker's household for one of rural labour. Indeed, in her essay 'On the Employment of Time in the different Situations in Society', she mocks 'people of easy and affluent circumstances' who cannot walk 'by a neat cottage' without forming romantic notions of its 'pastoral inhabitant', or view 'every laborious situation happier than their own' (it is only in a passing 'splenetic moment', Talbot argues, that one would 'wish' for 'an exchange with the plough-man, the shepherd, or the mechanic').[54]

Importantly, by inviting us to imagine her as 'honest Welch Betty', Talbot persuades us to contemplate how dissimilar her life was to that of an impoverished weeder woman's. She mobilises this dissonance to create a satirical space between herself as the refined writer of this letter, and those who are obliged to work the land for money, demonstrating that while socially and financially dependent on her guardian, Talbot had a keen sense of self as a dignified gentlewoman. Just as we have seen Montagu use anonymous, pastoral weeder women to illustrate her own affluent position therefore, Talbot draws upon the rustic character type 'honest Welch Betty' to assert and own her gentlewomanly status.

Through her figurative depiction of self as a weeder woman, Talbot also juxtaposes her emotional and practical difficulties in Secker's household with an idealised, simpler state of living. While arduous and low-ranking work, the task of uprooting weeds 'day after day' can also be handled as a symbol for repetitive, uncomplicated, and absorbing employment, tying in with what Bending and McRae name as a further, important feature of pastoral: 'the state of otium, an escape from business and worry [...] and an opportunity to cultivate true happiness'.[55] Whereas Montagu describes herself as deriving cheer from

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[54] Talbot, 'On the Employment of Time in the different Situations in Society', in *The Works of the Late Miss Talbot,* pp.49-57 (p.49).
[55] Bending & McRae, p.xxii.

viewing a pastoral scene, Talbot does so by playfully imposing herself on one, using the image of herself pulling up weeds as a form of escape from the difficulties, worries, and complexities of the present.

This is not to argue that every time Talbot depicts herself uprooting weeds in her correspondence, she reflects upon her moral or emotional state. In a letter written to Carter on the 27th of November 1759 for instance, she depicts herself as a weeder woman while resolving to fix her 'bad habit' of using 'varying phrases and turning periods' as a writer, arguing to 'have the finest opportunity imaginable for rooting many weeds out of my own bad soil, that through years of neglect are grown wilder than I was aware of'.[56] What is important for us to acknowledge however, is that by bringing biblical and pastoral tropes together in the imagining of herself as a weeder woman, Talbot was able to transform her everyday frustrations into a happy way of imagining her moral progress over time. As we will now consider, biblical and pastoral representations of thorns, thistles and weeds also offered Talbot useful tools to use in her essays, enabling her to write about moral improvement in more expansive, universal terms.

Section 4) Of Thorns and Thistles : Talbot's use of biblical and pastoral modes of writing in her essays

Less than a year after Talbot's death in January 1770, Carter published a series of her late friend's essays entitled *Reflections on the Days of the Week*, offering a brief description of the author in the advertisement to this work as a woman of 'good Sense' and 'exalted Piety'.[57] Two years later, Carter released two further volumes of Talbot's other written works (including her essays, dialogues, and poetry) called *Essays on Various Subjects*, this time providing no introductory advertisement.[58] Eventually, all of these writings came to be compiled and published by Montagu Pennington, who – in a manner similar to

[56] Talbot, 'Miss Talbot to Mrs. Carter. Lambeth, *Nov. 27*, 1759', in *A Series of Letters between Mrs Carter and Miss Talbot*, II, pp.301-303 (p.301).
[57] Carter, 'Advertisement', in *Reflections on the Seven Days of the Week,* ed. by Elizabeth Carter, 2nd edn. (London: John and Francis Rivington, 1770). Advertisement is presented before the title page in the text.
[58] The first page of this publication takes us straight to 'Essay I' of Talbot's writings, and is not preceded by any form of preface or introduction (*Essays on Various Subjects. By the Author of Reflections on the Seven Days of the Week,* ed. by Elizabeth Carter, 2nd edn., 2 vols (London: John and Francis Rivington, 1772), p.1).

his edition of Talbot and Carter's letters – uses the preface to *The Works of the Late Miss Catherine Talbot* to outline a long, detailed, and morally instructive 'account' of Talbot's life to his readers.[59]

While describing his subject's character and activities, Pennington returns us to many of the arguments that he outlined in his *Series of Letters*. For instance, he writes that although Talbot was given an 'accurate knowledge of the Scriptures' by Secker in her youth, as an adult her religious studies became fettered by 'her domestic employments', 'ill health', and duties 'to the neighbouring poor', causing her to 'bitterly lamen[t]' her lack of time to moral improvement.[60] As well as making these now familiar moves, Pennington frames Talbot as an individual who longed for a release from life, arguing that '[h]er whole life had been a preparation for death'.[61] In this final section, we will consider how Talbot's essays not only confuse Pennington's account of her as one who wrote 'bitterly' about time, employment, and moral improvement, but his description of her enduring life as a mere prelude to death.

In her essay 'Reflections on a Wednesday: On the humble and religious Enjoyment of the Blessings of Life', Talbot outlines an account of life on earth before and after the moral corruption of humanity. She begins by quoting a passage from the first creation story in the Book of Genesis, referring specifically to the moment on the sixth day, in which God finished creating the heavens and earth: 'And God saw every thing that He had made, and behold it was very good' (Genesis 1.31).[62] Having located her essay in the context of this biblical tradition, Talbot proceeds to build upon both the first Genesis creation story, and the second story that we addressed in the previous section of this chapter, in the process creating her own version of the difficulties, pleasures, and purpose of life in the present.

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[59] Pennington 'Some Account of the Life of Miss Talbot', in *The Works of the Late Miss Talbot*, pp.vii-xxxii. Here, Pennington laments Carter's shortcomings as an editor, noting how her lack of detail prevented him from being able to place Talbot's writings in chronological order. 'It is much to be wished', he writes, 'that Mrs. Carter had endeavoured to assign [...] proper dates to' Talbot's 'different productions, which probably she could have done, but which it is in vain now to attempt. For no part of the Memoirs of genius is more interesting than that which shews the development of mind' (p.xv).

[60] Ibid, pp.x, xvii, & xx.

[61] Ibid, p.xxx.

[62] Talbot, 'Reflections on a Wednesday', p.17. Further references to this essay are given after quotations in the text.

Within both Genesis creation stories, the unfallen world is described to us predominantly through descriptions of its physical features. In the first story for instance, God is portrayed as creating light and dark, the earth and seas, vegetation and animals, and so on in sequence, culminating in the image of the first man and woman presiding over their surroundings (Genesis 1.3-31). The second relates the methods through which God made the earth, the first man, Eden, and the first woman respectively, this time concluding with the description of Adam and Eve living together naked in Eden (Genesis 2.4-25). While the first story tells us that God beheld his creation as 'very good', neither narrative describes Adam or Eve's opinion of their surroundings; only that in their uncorrupted state, they were 'not ashamed' of their nakedness (Genesis 1.31 & 2.25).

In a manner that both builds on and departs from these influential biblical narratives, Talbot provides us with her own account of 'the face of things at creation' (p.17). She does so by concentrating solely on the first Genesis story's description of the earth as 'good' and 'very good', choosing to represent this space not in terms of its physical characteristics, but as a series of pleasing emotional states. Instead of renderings of light and dark, heaven and earth, sea and soil, plants and animals, and the first man and woman therefore, we are only told in Talbot's essay that '[e]very view, that could be taken, was a view of order and beauty, of happiness and pleasure' (p.17).

Importantly, by describing the world's first age as a collection of pleasant and orderly views, Talbot encourages us to draw on our own notions of order, beauty, happiness, and pleasure to form an image of the earth at creation. At the same time however, the temporal and spatial distances that Talbot renders between us and 'the face of things at creation' makes it clear that she is inviting us to imagine an inaccessible, idealised state of affairs, as imagined from the perspective of an imperfect present. After all, we are being told an account of how the earth 'was', looking at this space not from a first-hand perspective, but a faraway 'view'. In other words, Talbot invites us to look upon 'the face of things at creation' through our sense of longing for a better life in the present, using a pastoral lens to encourage her readership to look back upon their current, imperfect state.

According to the Book of Genesis, the only people to 'see' the earth in its original state were Adam and Eve (Genesis 1.29). Although, as we have already considered, we are given little insight into the inner lives of the first man and woman in this narrative, we are told that they felt no shame in being naked, encouraging us to think about these ancient figures through their lack of negative emotion. While not explicitly mentioned in Talbot's account of God's uncorrupted creation, the presence of Adam and Eve is made implicit through the views that are described in her essay, with Talbot framing their untroubled perspective as key to viewing the earth before the fall. Through this framing, she portrays Adam and Eve in a similar manner to how Montagu depicted her anonymous, yet cheerful weeding women, imagining them as the first happy cultivators of the earth.

'Too soon', Talbot continues, 'by the frailty and by the guilt of man, this happy state was changed', explaining that 'through sin, death and misery entered into the world' (p.17). Representing the moral state of man, and the prosperity of the earth from which he was made as intrinsically linked, Talbot goes on to outline ways in which 'the sad effects of sin' shaped '[e]very part of our world' (p.17-18). She writes that at the very moment of man's fall from grace, '[t]he earth produced thorns and thistles', '[t]he seasons became unfavourable', and [t]he beasts grew wild and savage', drawing on God's punishment to Adam to reflect that from then onwards, '[t]oil and weariness' became an inevitable part of life in the 'mortal and corruptible' world (p.17).

Having established the tiring and difficult nature of man's labour in the fallen world, Talbot proceeds to detail the emotional, imaginative, and mental turmoil she saw as an ongoing, 'natural consequence' of original sin (p.17). Our 'fear of death and suffering', she argues, along with 'the disorder of our minds, the vehemence of our passions', and 'the dimness of our understandings', are all 'the bitter fruits of the original corruption of human nature in the first of men, our common parent' (pp.17-18). Importantly, these bitter fruits return us to the ill health, lack of time for mental improvement through religious study, and emotional discontent that Talbot renders in her correspondence, offering her a further way of giving metaphorical representation to her imperfections and frustrations.

After this contemplation, Talbot recognises how our chances of leading a contented and virtuous life while confined to our corrupt state may appear to be remote. Specifically, she anticipates that upon considering how even 'our first parents' (figures described here as 'infinitely superior certainly to whatever we can imagine of good or excellent among ourselves') proved themselves to be 'such frail, such wretched creatures', one might be tempted to exclaim 'Good God! then what is the very best of us' (p.18)! Yet by employing a despairing and excitable narrative voice to articulate this notion, Talbot characterises this point of view as unhelpful and unenlightened, an implication that she makes explicit by proceeding to outline a more optimistic and constructive train of thought.

'Strange as it may seem', a more rational narrative voice considers, 'after these considerations to mention a happy and cheerful enjoyment of our beings, as a serious and important duty' (pp.18-19). She writes that while inevitable and unhappy aspects of our fallen condition, the punishments of '[p]ain, suffering and sorrow' are also 'remedies' that enable us 'to cure our corrupted nature', describing them as a 'purifying fire' with which 'to prove and refine our virtue' (p.19). Talbot contends that from the 'moment' these afflictions were 'uttered' into the world by God, 'all was good again', depicting the task of meeting our troubles with cheer and good humour as both an obligation owed by humanity to 'our heavenly Father', and a course of moral improvement over time (p.19).

In her following remarks, Talbot portrays 'death' as 'a kind release from toil', looking on the process of dying as 'a happy admission into a better paradise' (p.19). However, it is with caution that we should read Pennington's editorial comment that '[t]o her, like the Apostle, *to die* was *to gain*. Her whole life had been a preparation for death'.[63] While Pennington goes on to frame this preparation as both wise and admirable (arguing that 'her last hours were therefore not likely to be disturbed by the horrors of a

[63] Pennington, *The Works of the Late Miss Catherine Talbot*, pp.xxix-xxx.

wounded conscience, or the agonies of mental disquietude'), his statement implies that Talbot viewed life as a mere, vexing stage that one must struggle against, in order to find a better, future state.[64]

A more constructive approach to explaining Talbot's view of present and future happiness can be found in the opening lines of this essay, where she invites us to imagine the earth at the moment of its creation. While highlighting how in our current state, our ability to see (as determined by our ability to feel) the untroubled view enjoyed by Adam and Eve in Eden is limited, her invitation operates on the premise that the notions of happiness and pleasure are, at least to some degree, familiar to us in the present. Importantly, she grasped that by accepting the tools of our redemption '[w]ith joyful gratitude' (depicting this acceptance as crucial to being a 'good Christian'), we can 'make the world look beautiful around us', identifying a happy process of moral refinement that at once prepares us for, and enlarges our prospect of happiness in heaven (pp.20 & 22).

In her concluding remarks to this essay, Talbot outlines ways in which we can bring about this virtuous condition, insisting to her readership that '[h]appiness [...], a great degree of it, is in our power, even at present' (p.22). For instance, she contends that by moderating '[o]ur desires', we can 'pass easily and quietly through life', and that by freeing ourselves 'by private interests and selfish views, we shall have no rivalries nor contests with our neighbours' (p.21). Finally, Talbot argues that all forms of 'industry' can transform 'the barren wilderness' of the fallen world 'into a fertile pleasant land: and for thorns and thistles plants the rose-tree and the vine: or sows the tender grass and the useful corn' (p.22). By tending to our allotted work with cheer, she reflects, we improve the quality of the world around us, bringing the earth closer to its original, perfect state.

In her essay 'On our Passage through Life', Talbot expands upon these notions, this time by rendering herself falling 'into a deep *Reverie*'.[65] She writes that at the beginning of this reverie, 'my thoughts were

[64] Ibid, p.xxx.
[65] Talbot, 'On our Passage through Life; a Reverie', p.170. Further references to this essay are given after quotations in the text.

[...] filled with many beautiful images of the nothingness and vanity of human life', reflecting that although we may be 'attached to it by [...] many tender ties', we live in the world in a '[m]ost miserable state' (p.171). As her account of her reverie progresses, Talbot proceeds to imagine herself as a traveller, confronted with multiple, conflicting paths stretching out over a vast landscape before her. Vitally, she handles these paths as metaphors for the possible ways in which she could progress through life, assessing how each of them could either help or hinder her moral progress over time.

In a style similar to the opening of her 1746 letter to Carter, Talbot portrays herself as the host of two disparate, battling inclinations: one encouraging her to walk the 'narrow and long' path that leads to religious 'truth', and another tempting her to find this same destination by straying into the 'wild of errors' (p.171). The voice of encouragement is first to speak, arguing that one must necessarily go through a lengthy and arduous process in order to arrive at a state of mental and moral enlightenment. '[I]s it not me thinks so strange', this voice contemplates, 'that one should not step to the end of' this path 'at once', before warning Talbot to bear the 'gradual' passage to her journey's end with fortitude and patience (p.172).

Reluctant to tread this long and difficult passage, the other voice persuades Talbot to imagine the pleasures that she may find by breaking free from it, contending that by escaping through the 'thick dark hedge[s]' that ran along 'either side' of this path, she may 'view the fair varieties of the universe' (p.172). In turn, the voice of encouragement mocks this suggestion, asking Talbot how she would be able to 'distinguish' her way to truth in 'the midst of the vast', 'trackless', and 'open' landscape that lay beyond the 'safe' confinement of the 'hedges' and 'trees' that lined her own path (pp.172-173). Undeterred, the voice of temptation tells Talbot to '[a]muse yourself, look round you', gesturing towards a 'much fairer' path 'passing over a much nobler eminence'; an idea that causes the voice of encouragement to sigh 'O thou spirit of disorder and confusion, canst thou not be contended to move in the way allotted thee' (p.172)?

Ultimately, Talbot portrays the voice of encouragement as the most compelling and persuasive. She agrees that while other shorter, easier, and more pleasant paths may lie beyond her confining passage, they would only lead her to false truths, causing her to '[d]eviate... into ruin' (p.172). At the same time however, the voice of 'disorder and confusion' continues to appear in this essay, observing and lamenting the 'dirt', 'cloudy weather', and 'despicable things' that fettered Talbot's 'vulgar' path to truth (pp.172-173). Through this sustained discontented presence, Talbot highlights her understanding that even after having the best moral course shown to us, we may still suffer pain and doubt as we travel towards our goal.

To cheer and comfort Talbot, the voice of encouragement reassures her that the 'rain that displeases you here, is nourishing sweet herbs and delicious fruits, that will refresh you a few furlongs hence' (p.172). This wise voice also observes how Talbot may yet find happiness along her narrow path, adding that '[t]hese thorns that sometimes pull you back, are often crowned with gay and fragrant blossoms, to make the tedious journey seem less irksome' (p.173). Notably, this observation not only evokes thorns and thistles in the Book of Genesis, but the 'crown' of 'thorns' worn by Christ before his crucifixion, as rendered in the gospels of Matthew, Mark, and John (Matthew 27.29, Mark 15.17, John 19.2). Talbot therefore acknowledges the Christian tradition that through suffering and dying for our sins, Christ made heaven accessible to humanity, offering us happiness in life as well as death.

Finally, the voice of encouragement claims that it is only by taking a 'gradual' approach to the truth that one can successfully view and understand it, echoing Joseph Butler's framing of mental and moral improvement as a 'gradual' process.[66] It explains that this is because by approaching the truth slowly, we acclimatise to its light, arguing that the trees and hedges 'that bar your wandering view are' also 'drest in a soft verdure that relieves your eye, and enables it sometimes to take a better glimpse through the branches, on objects that it could not dwell upon, till it becomes stronger' (p.173). Significantly, reason

[66] Butler, p.74.

emphasises that while the truth may dazzle to those who seek to find it through short cuts and deceit, those who ‘keep but steadily in the right path, and gently and patiently remove’ its ‘thorns and briars’ may better enjoy the rewards of religious truth (pp.173-174).

‘Immediately’, Talbot continues, ‘my *Reveries* transported me into a fair’, in the process dispersing her quarrelling inner voices (p.174). She describes being greeted by ‘a hag of a very untoward look, bent almost double with the weight of her years’, who forces her to accept ‘a filthy basket, covered at the top with thorns’ (p.174). While at first ‘displeased’ with the woman’s appearance, Talbot observes that upon turning ‘away, a smile that began to brighten on her solemn face, discovered to me that she was the good Fairy *Experience*’ (p.174). Reassured by this revelation, Talbot proceeds to ‘disentangle’ the thorns covering the basket, observing how these were the very thorns that ‘had perplexed and torn my clothes, as I past along the narrow path’ (pp.174-175).

In this basket, Talbot finds ‘a row of inestimable pearls, equal, in number to the briars, large, even, round, and of an exquisite polish’, along with ‘a script of paper’ reading as follows: ‘Philosophy and evenness of temper are pearls, which we purchase at the price of those vexations and crosses in life, that occur to us every day’ (p.175). Boasting briars and pearls in equal measure, this basket symbolises the rewards that Talbot grasped we reap for persevering with toils of life. Each disappointment we encounter nurtures our ability to think clearly, and judge wisely, carrying the moral that we can only gain these virtues from experience. Gifted with hard-won moral and intellectual clarity, Talbot portrays herself to no longer need the voice of wisdom to guide her, having reached the end of her path wiser, contented, and at peace.

Of thorns, thistles, weeds and hope: concluding remarks on the nature of time and moral improvement in Talbot’s letters and writings

As the letter that she wrote to Carter on the 14th of May 1762 demonstrates, Talbot’s poor health, domestic duties, and emotional obligations could prevent her from employing her time as she wished.

This letter also shows that by encouraging her to sometimes indulge in melancholy trains of thought, the frustration that Talbot felt towards these obstacles could strain her relationship with Carter, adding weight to Pennington's account of her bitterly lamenting her difficult and confining circumstances. Simultaneously however, there are other aspects of this letter – along with numerous other passages in Talbot's writings, as presented in Pennington's editions of her correspondence and essays – that can be used to challenge his dismissive account of her character. They highlight that while illness and domestic duty could keep Talbot from pursuing her desired course of religious education, she regarded the process of overcoming her frustrations as an alternative, creative, and reliable method of moral improvement.

In her 14th of November 1746 letter to Carter, Talbot illustrates how she viewed her domestic tasks as both engaging and dissipating, important and frivolous, as shown by her account of self walking about Secker's household with too much and too little time on her hands. Instead of despairing of this conflict, she embraces it as a cause for engaging, humorous, and optimistic writing, drawing on the literary figures Methusalem and Hilpa to present her ideas in ways that were relatable to her friend. Although drawing inspiration from numerous literary precedents, Talbot most commonly turned to biblical and pastoral modes to navigate conflicting pulls upon her time, as displayed through the metaphorical portrayals of thorns, thistles and weeds that we see throughout her letters and writings.

Through the imagining of herself uprooting perpetually growing weeds, Talbot draws on the Book of Genesis, enabling her to view her fettered intellectual ambitions as an opportunity for moral cultivation. By portraying herself doing so as the rustic character type 'honest Welch Betty', she incorporates pastoral traditions into this imagining, enabling her to at once express longing for a past, simpler, and idealised manner of existence, and assert her status as an intellectual and sophisticated gentlewoman in the present. Within her essays, Talbot uses the thorns and thistles rendered in the Book of Genesis to contemplate the struggles of living in the fallen world, looking on her efforts to remove and overcome these obstacles as a means of progressing along the path to happiness, moral improvement, and religious truth.

Chapter Two) Employing Time in Solitude as a Learned 'Woman of Quality': Two Solitary Episodes from the Letters of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu

Famed for her 'feminist' travel writings, 'convention-defying' role in promoting small pox inoculation, and the 'drama' of her relationship with Alexander Pope, Lady Mary Wortley Montagu has long been recognised as a woman who challenged eighteenth-century British notions of genteel female conduct.[1] It is by examining how she navigated conflicting models of well-employed time in her letters and writings however, that we encounter her most impassioned depictions of the social and cultural restraints that were faced by 'Women of Quality' in this period.[2] She grasped that because gentlewomen were educated to delight and entertain others above improving their mental capacities, they were unable to pass time alone in a productive and happy manner. When faced with solitude, she argued, many of her well-bred female peers found themselves burdened with 'many hours they know not how to Employ', and as such fell 'into Vapours or something worse'.[3]

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[1] These three claims about Lady Mary's legacy have been made as follows:
Humberto Garcia, '"To Strike out a New Path": Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, Mary Astell, and the Politics of the Imperial Harem', in *Under the Veil: Feminism and Spirituality in Post-Reformation England and* Europe, ed. by Katherine M. Quinsey (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2012), pp.113–144 (p.113). Garcia frames the letters Lady Mary wrote 'between 1717 and 1718 while she was travelling to the Ottoman Empire' as 'feminist', highlighting her account of female veiling practices working as vehicle of female sexual liberation.
Isobel Grundy, 'Montagu, Lady Mary Wortley [*née* Lady Mary Pierrepont]', in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (published online 23 September 2004) <https://www.oxforddnb.com/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-19029?rskey=Eep7N2&result=2> [accessed 13 August 2020]. Grundy argues that when regarded in terms of 'her rank and gender', Lady Mary 'defied convention most memorably by her pioneering of inoculation, a course of action unparalleled in the annals of medical advance'.
Robert Halsband, 'Pope, Lady Mary, and the *Court Poems* (1716)', *Modern Language Association*, 68 (March 1953), 237-250 (p.237). Halsband introduces his article by writing '[s]o much ink had already been spilt in discussing the relationship between Alexander Pope and Lady Mary Wortley Montagu that one may very well hesitate before adding his jot. Yet the interaction of these two uncomfortably brilliant personalities is of exceptional interest both for their psychological drama and for the literature they wrote because of each other'.
[2] Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, 'To Gilbert Burnet *20 July 1710*', in *The Complete Letters of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, Vol.1: 1708-1720*, ed. by Robert Halsband (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1967), pp.43-46 (p.45). Further references to this letter are given after quotations in the text.
[3] Wortley Montagu, 'To Lady Bute [*Jan 1750*]', in *The Complete Letters of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, Vol.2: 1721-1751*, ed. by Robert Halsband (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1967), pp.449-450 (p.450).

Throughout her familiar correspondence, Lady Mary outlines a straightforward solution to this problem. She portrays scholarship as key to passing extensive periods of time in retirement pleasantly, claiming to 'know by Experience it is in the power of Study not only to make solitude tolerable but agreeable'.[4] It is only because of custom, she insists, that women are 'debarr'd' learned instruction and 'educated in the grossest ignorance', depicting her own scholarship as an enlightened departure from convention.[5] In this chapter, I argue that while her aristocratic status, and unhappy experiences of living alone could confuse this argument, Lady Mary continued to frame learning as an unusual, but happy way for a woman to pass time in solitude in her letters, illustrating her keen engagement with the conflicting models of well-employed time that we find throughout bluestocking writings.

In order to navigate Lady Mary's reflections upon female learning and social custom, it is helpful for us to first consider how these issues are addressed in Mary Astell's correspondence and writings. As we considered in the introduction to this thesis, the rationale that enabled Susan Staves to frame Astell as a bluestocking has helped this study think about ways in which Lady Mary can also be identified as a blue, highlighting that while writing years before the official bluestocking assemblies, both women – like other widely-recognised bluestockings – furthered their intellectual lives by appealing to members of the Church of England.[6] In addition to offering us a convincing bluestocking precedent, Astell's letters and tracts are relevant to this chapter due to their role in shaping the form and content of Lady Mary's writings, helping her to create accounts of self as an uncustomary, learned woman.

Educated in the Cambridge Platonist tradition by her uncle, the Reverend Ralph Astell, from a young age Astell was encouraged to interrogate the nature and authority of custom, mastering techniques that

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[4] Wortley Montagu, 'To Lady Bute *6 March* [*1753*]', in *The Complete Letters of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, Vol.3: 1752-1762*, ed. by Robert Halsband (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1967), pp.25-28 (p.26).

[5] Wortley Montagu, 'To Lady Bute *10 Oct*. [*1753*]', in *The Complete Letters of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu,* III, pp.38-41 (p.40).

[6] For Staves's framing of Astell as a bluestocking women, see Susan Staves, 'Church of England Clergy and Women Writers', in *Reconsidering the Bluestockings*, pp.81-103 (p.81). For my use of Staves's argument in relation to Lady Mary's place in this study into bluestocking letters and writings, see pp.37-38 of the introduction to this thesis.

informed her later criticisms of customary forms of female instruction.[7] In her 1693 correspondence with John Norris for instance (which was later published in 1695 under the title *Letters Concerning the Love of God*), Astell satirised the social conventions that stigmatised learned women, and in her 1694 work *A Serious Proposal to the Ladies: for the Advancement of the True and Greatest Interest*, set out a vision of female scholarly 'retirement'.[8] It is only by being educated away from the 'world and its impertinencies', she wrote, that women could go forth 'to do the greatest good in it', outlining an uncustomary, intellectual model of well-employed time for her female peers to pursue (p.14).

Writing in the late seventeenth century, Astell established a formative body of writings for the young Lady Mary to draw upon in the early eighteenth century, helping her to organise her thoughts on custom, learning, and solitude. Like Astell, she critiqued conventional methods of female instruction in letters written to contemporary intellectuals, arguing to the Bishop of Salisbury, Gilbert Burnet in 1710 that they render gentlewomen the 'most uselesse and most worthlesse part of the creation' (p.45). She continues that for daring to undermine custom's pervasive authority, women who try to cultivate their emotional, moral, and intellectual lives through scholarship can expect to face hostility and ridicule from their peers. 'There is hardly a character in the World more Despicable or more liable to universal ridicule', Lady Mary reflects to Burnet, 'than that of a Learned Woman' (p.45).

Describing her enclosed translation of the *Enchiridion* of Epictetus from Latin into English as a feat for which she 'ought to ask pardon', in this letter Lady Mary frames herself firmly as a socially-transgressive, widely-despised learned women (p.44). On one hand, in many respects Lady Mary's aristocratic privileges complicated this imagining of self, as we can see by looking to the safe, entitled, and uninterrupted manner of solitude in which she went about her translation. At the same time however, as a

[7] Ruth Perry, 'Astell, Mary (1666-1731)', in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (published online 23 September 2004) <https://www.oxforddnb.com/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-814?rskey=GaMpoj&result=1#odnb-9780198614128-e-814-div1-d385954e180> [accessed 12th June 2020].

[8] Mary Astell, *A Serious Proposal to the Ladies: for the Advancement of the True and Greatest Interest. Part I. By a Lover of her SEX*, 4th edn. (London: R. Wilkin, 1701), p.14. All further references to this edition are given after quotations in the text.

woman Lady Mary was denied the formal types of classical education that her male peers were able to enjoy at university, and embraced solitude as a means of disguising the extent of her studies to her family. While translating Latin texts into English may have been customary for an aristocrat, going about this task as a woman was not, obliging Lady Mary to contemplate how her scholarship upset popular ideas of appropriate and improving female conduct.

Notably, the privileged solitude in which Lady Mary undertook her Latin translation can be juxtaposed with the ten uncertain, vulnerable, and increasingly unhappy years of solitude that she passed in the Italian province of Brescia. While professing to pass much of her time in learned and contented employment in letters written to her daughter, Lady Mary outlines a vastly different account of her experiences during this period in her 'Italian Memoir'. Here, she reveals that while she had first arrived in the region in 1746 of 'her own free will', as time passed she began to realise that her host, Count Ugolino Palazzi, was holding her there against her will.[9] Beginning her attempts to leave Brescia for Venice in 1754, Lady Mary was only able to make good her escape in 1756, composing her memoir as a record of her ordeals in 1758.

Although the 'Italian Memoir' shows how even with learning, Lady Mary could encounter problematic forms of solitude, in her letters home she continued to recommend a scholarly education for her granddaughters. She argued that as they were to be raised, and possibly live their whole lives on the remote Isle of Bute, her young relatives would benefit from being educated in learned disciplines, framing 'reading' as a 'cheap' and easy way to find 'entertain[ment]' in retirement.[10] At the same time, Lady Mary also argued that her granddaughters must 'conceal' their learning from the world as they would 'hide crookedness or lameness', sensitive to the criticism that they may receive from their peers.[11] Vitally, these letters reveal how Lady Mary embraced her experiences of navigating intellectual and social

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[9] Wortley Montagu, 'Italian Memoir', in *Lady Mary Wortley Montagu: Romance Writings,* ed. by Isobel Grundy (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), pp.81-105 (p.90).
[10] Wortley Montagu, 'To Lady Bute *28th Jan.* [*1753*]', in *The Complete Letters of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu*, III, pp.20-24 (p.21).
[11] Ibid, p.22.

versions of well-employed time as a way of forming an emotional connection with her granddaughters, providing her with a source of happiness and comfort during her difficult Brescia solitude.

Section 1) Righting the wrongs of a conventional female education: locating Lady Mary's writings upon time, custom, learning, and solitude into a broader contemporary intellectual movement

As Humberto Garcia argues in his study '"To Strike out a New Path": Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, Mary Astell, and the Politics of the Imperial Harem', it is in many ways remarkable that Lady Mary and Mary Astell commended each other's writings. 'What would Astell', Garcia asks, 'a Tory and Church of England supporter, find so appealing in a heretical travel account that exalts "Turkish women as the only free people in the empire?" And why would Montagu', he continues, 'a Whig and radical dissenter, glorify Astell's "English Monastery," a proto-Catholic's defence of female self-segregation in England?'[12] In answer to these questions, Garcia contends that 'Tory feminism' (a concept that he defines as 'a malleable political theology that employs the language of royal prerogative, passive obedience, and hierarchal privilege to articulate biblical precepts about gender equality') enabled the two women to reach similar conclusions about the virtues of religious practices, while maintaining their differing theoretical views and approaches.[13]

Through this argument, Garcia provide us with a clear, useful methodology with which to explain Astell's esteem for the female religious observations that we see detailed in Lady Mary's *Turkish Embassy Letters*. For example, he explains that while '[f]or Astell, the Pauline practice of veiling precludes female promiscuity', and '[f]or Montagu, the veil allows women to own their bodies', both women were eager 'to recover the veil's feminist significance beyond the gender inequality of the marriage contract'.[14] However, by focusing predominantly upon Astell's welcoming response to the unconventional sentiments

[12] Garcia, ibid.
[13] Ibid.
[14] Ibid, p.133.

posed in Lady Mary's travel writings, his examination leaves the matter of why Lady Mary would in turn 'glorify' Astell's reflections on the topic of 'female self-segregation' largely unexplored.

In order to resolve Garcia's second question, this investigation turns to a letter that Astell wrote to the philosopher John Norris in September 1693, addressing a matter of ethical 'difficulty' that she had found in the 'third volume' of his *Practical Discourses Upon Several Divine Subjects*.[15] Although written while Lady Mary was only four years of age, Astell's letter would go on to have considerable implications for how she recognised, articulated, and navigated social and intellectual models of well-employed time as an adult. Significantly, by unpacking the form and content of Astell's letter to Norris, along with the tract that she published soon afterwards, we can better understand the literary precedent that Lady Mary drew upon to depict herself as an unconventional, learned woman as an adult.

Although at the time of writing her letter, Astell was a self-professed '[s]tranger' to Norris, due to her scholarly education she was well-acquainted with the philosophical content of his tract (p.2). As Ruth Perry notes, '[h]er paternal uncle Ralph Astell, curate of St Nicolas's, Newcastle upon Tyne, was an intellectual and a man of letters', and like Norris had studied the works of 'Platonists like Henry More and John Smith' at Cambridge.[16] Not only had Ralph Astell 'educated his young niece' in this Cambridge Platonist tradition, Perry explains, but he is believed to have bequeathed her his extensive library, equipping her with the resources to engage critically with Norris' *Discourses*.[17] Notably, the tutelage that Astell received from her uncle has encouraged some critics to view her as a bluestocking, featuring in

[15] Perry, ibid, & Mary Astell, 'Letter I. *To Mr*. Norris', in *Letters Concerning the Love of God, Between the Author of the Proposal to the Ladies and Mr. John Norris: Wherein his late Discourse, shewing, That it ought to be intire and exclusive of all other Loves, is further Cleared and Justified,* 2nd ed. (London: Samuel Manship, 1705), pp.1-5 (pp.2 & 3). Further references to Astell's first letter to Norris are given after quotations in the text.

[16] Perry, ibid.

[17] Ibid. As Perry elaborates, 'Norris had argued that one ought to love God as the efficient cause of one's pleasure. Astell countered that since God was the efficient cause of all sensation one was forced to the conclusion that pain, given his responsibility for it, may in fact do one good'.

Susan Staves's account of the circle as 'intellectually ambitious women' who 'sought out Church of England clergymen for various kinds of educational and literary assistance'.[18]

Structured around the study of philosophical texts that dated from ancient Greece to seventeenth-century Britain, Astell's education was highly uncustomary according to contemporary ideas of an appropriate female education.[19] As Bridget Hill notes, 'at the beginning of the [eighteenth] century a suitable education for the daughters of the middle and upper classes consisted of essentially useful accomplishments – cooking, sewing, embroidery, spinning, housewifery – all of which would later enable her as a wife and mother to run the household economically and efficiently, and to entertain elegantly'.[20] Although, and as Nancy Armstrong has observed in her publication *Desire and Romantic Fiction*, conduct manuals were also 'typical' in encouraging women to read 'British classics' such as John Milton, William Shakespeare, and Edward Young, 'these books distinguished a female education both from that of a male and more importantly from the classical education associated with aristocratic tradition'.[21]

Through noting this distinction, this study by no means seeks to suggest that customary forms of eighteenth-century female education offered women no opportunity to further their intellectual lives. As Michèle Cohen argues, '[c]ontemporary educationalists such as Maria Edgeworth' comprehended that the art of 'social conversation' (into which 'youths of both sexes' were instructed) enabled gentlewomen to develop the skills of 'intellectual inquiry and critical reflection'.[22] Cohen adds that while often dismissed

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[18] Staves, ibid.

[19] G.A.J Rogers, 'The Other-Worldly Philosophers and the Real World: The Cambridge Platonists, Theology and Politics', in *The Cambridge Platonists in Philosophical Context: Politics, Metaphysics, and Religion*, ed. by G.A.J Rogers, J.M. Vienne and Y. C. Zarka (Berlin; Heidelberg: Springer Science & Business Media, 2013), pp.3-15 (p.4). Here, Roger argues that while 'it has often been said that the so-called Cambridge Plantonists [such as More and Ralph Cudworth] were in reality much closer to Plotinus [born 205 AD] than to Plato [born in the decade 420 BC]', the movement remained 'firmly based in Plato's… commitment to the central place occupied by reason in intellectual enquiry'.

[20] Bridget Hill, *Eighteenth-Century Women: An Anthology* (London; Boston; Sydney: Routledge, 2012), p.45.

[21] Nancy Armstrong, *Desire and Domestic Fiction: A Political History of the Novel* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), p.111.

[22] Michèle Cohen, ''Familiar Conversation': The Role of the 'Familiar Format' in Education in Eighteenth- and Nineteenth- Century England', in *Educating the Child in Enlightenment Britain: Beliefs, Cultures, Practices*, ed. by Mary Hilton and Jill Shefrin (Farnham: Ashgate, 2009), pp.99-116 (p.109). On page 102, Cohen sites the famous example of how 'Elizabeth Robinson, the future Elizabeth Montagu who became the first 'bluestocking', was

by critics as 'informal and domestic', these conversations operated outside the 'shackle[s]' of the 'ancient system of education' prescribed to men, and 'could thus innovate and experiment'.[23] As we will consider in the third section of this chapter, at times Lady Mary expressed this idea in her correspondence, viewing the informalities of female scholarship as a welcome change to traditional institutional instruction.

What does remain important for us to recognise however, is how many of Astell and Lady Mary's contemporaries understood that a gentlewoman's education should cultivate her domestic and elegant talents, above developing her capacity for rigorous scholarly thought. Because of this prevalent understanding, women who pursued a learned education were commonly seen as uncustomary, and by extension, problematic members of society. In her 1673 *Essay to Revive the Antient Education of Gentlewomen, in Religion, Manners, Arts, and Tongues* for instance, we see the writer and teacher Bathsua Makin employ apocalyptic imagery to address the scorn female scholars frequently suffered from both their male and female contemporaries. Makin argues that although women 'formerly Educated in the knowledge of Arts and Tongues' made vital contributions humanity's moral and intellectual progress, because of recent, 'barbarous custom', '[a] Learned Woman is thought to be a Comet, that bodes Mischief, when ever it appears'.[24]

Writing just twenty years after Makin published her *Essay*, Astell grasped that while she was well-qualified to address Norris' arguments, her writing to this renowned scholar as a learned woman could be interpreted by their contemporaries as a controversial act. She therefore dedicated the introduction of her letter to the vital task of identifying, confronting, and undermining this interpretation. 'Though some morose Gentlemen wou'd perhaps remit me to the Distaff of the Kitchin', Astell wrote, 'or at least to the Glass and the Needle, the proper Employments as they fancy of a Woman's life; yet expecting better things from the more Equitable and ingenious Mr Norris, who is not so narrow-Soul'd as to confine

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required by her step-grandfather to provide an account 'of the learned conversations' he hosted and at which she was frequently present' to support her critical insight.

[23] Ibid, pp.99 & 109.

[24] Bathsua Makin, *An Essay To Revive the Antient Education of Gentlewomen, in Religion, Manners, Arts & Tongues, with An Anfwer to the Objections against the Way of Education* (London, 1673), p.3.

Learning to his own Sex, or to envy it in ours, I presume to beg his Attention a little to the Impertinences of a Woman's Pen' (pp.1 & 2).

Unlike Makin, Astell does not explicitly name 'custom' as the main adversary of female scholarship in this instance. Nor does she use the disastrous forms of imagery that we have seen Makin employ, in order to portray the consequences that female learning was popularly seen to wreak upon society, religion, and nature. In a manner similar to Makin however, Astell depicts antagonistic attitudes towards female scholarship as irrational, born from fear and superstition as opposed to reasoned thought and discussion. It is only because female scholarship challenged popular imaginings of 'proper' domestic female employment, Astell stresses, that she must allocate the beginning of her letter not to questions of scholarship, but the business of addressing and pardoning her sex.

While at least to some degree apprehensive of Norris's reception to her letter, Astell had reason to anticipate that he would take a kinder view of her scholarship than many of her contemporaries. As Ann Jessie Van Sant argues, in their 'Platonist epistemology, living according to custom is equivalent to being entrapped in the sensory world, to being cut off from the intelligible world'.[25] In the second of his *Discourses* Norris supports this view, framing custom as a way of perpetuating evil and corruption in society. By 'conform[ing] to this world', he writes, we 'embolden those whom we imitate, and cause others to imitate us, and they again will be a Precedent to others, and so on, till Vice pretend to the Right of Custom and Prescription'.[26] By portraying those who would scorn her scholarship as morose merely because of social precedent, Astell uses her knowledge of Norris' works to endear herself to her correspondent, inviting him to join her as a standard bearer for an alternative, more enlightened way of looking upon female learning.

[25] Ann Jessie Van Sant, '"Tis better that I endure": Mary Astell's Exclusion of Equity', in *Mary Astell: Reason, Gender, Faith*, ed. by William Kolbrener and Michal Michelson (London; New York: Routledge, 2016), pp.127-144 (p.128).
[26] John Norris, 'A Discourse Concerning Religious Singularity', in *Practical Discourses upon Several Divine Subjects*, 6th edn., 8 vols (London: S. Manship, 1716), II, pp.49-75 (pp.68-69).

In the opening of his reply to this letter, Norris acknowledges the unusual nature of Astell's address. After apologising for the slow nature of his reply, he writes that 'I hope you will in Equity allow me some time to recover my self out of that wonder I was cast into, to see such a Letter from a Woman, besides what was necessary to consider the great and surprising Contents of it'.[27] However, as his letter unfolds Norris goes on to praise and encourage Astell's scholarship, confirming himself as her intellectual ally. 'I find you thoroughly comprehend the Argument of my Discourse', he writes, 'in that you have pitch'd upon the only material Objection to which it is liable'.[28] After devoting thirteen pages to solving her 'difficulty', Norris brings his letter to a close by 'assuring' Astell 'that whenever you shall be pleas'd to do me that Honour [of writing] again, you shall have a speedier Answer'.[29]

As Perry summarises, over the following 'months [Astell] and Norris corresponded about the philosophical contradictions of living a spiritual life: whether one owed love to God or to his creatures, how to respond to life's pain and misfortune, and whether God or the material world was the efficient cause of all sensation'.[30] Impressed with the quality and progress of their conversation, soon afterwards Norris asked Astell's permission for their letters to be published, writing that 'I do verily think nothing can be more conducive (next to the Breathings of the holy Spirit, and the Writings by him inspired) to promote the Love of God, than your Divine Discourses'.[31] With the stipulation that she was to remain anonymous, Astell gave her blessing for Norris to publish their *Letters concerning the Love of God*, thereby showcasing the prowess of her female scholarship – along with her making fun of the conventions that would have her condemned for it – to a wider audience upon the publication's release in 1695.

In recent years, scholars have taken different approaches to explaining the relationship between Astell's 1693 correspondence with Norris, and her own 1694 tract *A Serious Proposal to the Ladies*. In some instances, this relationship has been rationalised in terms of the proximity of their publication dates, with

[27] Norris, 'Letter II. *Mr*. Norris's *Answer*', in *Letters Concerning the Love of God,* pp.6-21 (p.6).
[28] Ibid.
[29] Ibid, p.20.
[30] Perry, ibid.
[31] Norris, 'To the Reader', *Letters Concerning the Love of God*, pp.i-xxii (p.xx).

critics suggesting ways in which Norris' issuing of the former persuaded Astell to publish the latter. For example, in her 2005 study *The Eloquence of Mary Astell*, Christine Mason Sutherland offers us a version of events in which Astell had been waiting for the opportune moment to print her tract, arguing that '[t]here can be little doubt that Astell agreed to the publication of the *Letters* principally to attract a wider public for *A Serious Proposal*'.[32] In their 2017 edition of the *Letters*, Derek Taylor and Melvyn News propose that it might have been Norris's praise of Astell's letters that encouraged her to swiftly publish her *Proposal*, writing that his 'serious and respectful treatment of her ideas in 1693 may have emboldened Astell to speak her mind for the first time (albeit anonymously) to a public audience in 1694'.[33]

In other instances, scholars have sought to connect the two works by drawing parallels between their structure and arguments, portraying a narrative in which Astell's *Proposal* developed alongside her correspondence with Norris. For example, in her 1996 article 'Mary Astell's "Excited Needles": Theorizing Feminist Utopia in Seventeenth-Century England', Alessa Johns contends that in her letters to Norris 'Astell asks searching questions on passion and charity, and these show Astell generating the theory behind her female monastery'.[34] In his 2016 study 'Astell's "Design of Friendship" in Letters and A Serious Proposal, Part I', William Kolbrener argues that 'the tropes of humility that characterize her introduction to the letters, and persistent use of the categories from *Letters* in *A Serious Proposal*' implies Astell drew on her discussion with Norris to help shape her own publication.[35]

While Norris's arguments, encouragement, and decision to publish their correspondence no doubt greatly informed both the structure and production of *A Serious Proposal*, by returning to Astell's first letter to this esteemed philosopher we can find a further, more compelling connection between the two

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[32] Christine Mason Sutherland, *The Eloquence of Mary Astell* (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 2005), p.51.
[33] E. Derek Taylor and Melvyn New, *Mary Astell and John Norris: Letters Concerning the Love of* God, ed. by E. Derek Taylor and Melvyn New (Oxford; New York: Routledge, 2017), p.11.
[34] Alessa Johns, 'Mary Astell's "Excited Needles": Theorizing Feminist Utopia in Seventeenth-Century England', *Utopian Studies*, 7 (1996), 60-74 (p.61).
[35] William Kolbrener, 'Astell's "Design of Friendship" in Letters and A Serious Proposal, Part I', in *Mary Astell: Reason, Gender, Faith*, ed. by Michal Michelson and William Kolbener (London; New York: Routledge, 2016), pp.49-64 (p.49).

publications. Crucially, Astell's motivation in writing her *Proposal* is outlined clearly in the series of negotiations she was obliged to undertake in the first of her *Letters*, while helping Norris overcome his possible reservations at entering into a scholarly correspondence with a woman. In the former instance, she only had the space to briefly satirise those who opposed female learning, before moving on promptly to discuss the content of his *Discourses*. Through writing her own tract, Astell was able to not only renew and flesh out these grievances, but launch a comprehensive attack upon conventional methods of (as well as popular attitudes towards) female education.

Within her *Proposal*, Astell names 'that Tyrant Custom, which is the grand motive to all those irrational choices which we daily see made in the World' as the adversary of female intellectual growth (p.11). Strikingly, this portrayal of custom resonates with its rendering in the French Renaissance Philosopher Michel de Montaigne's influential series of *Essays*, which were first published in English by John Florio in 1603, and again by Charles Cotton in 1685-6. While, as Karen Green notes, Montaigne's 'suggest[ion] that morals' have 'no objective reality' extended a 'challenge to those, like Astell, who were confident in the possibility of knowledge of moral and political truths', in his *Essays* he offers an account of custom suited to her Cambridge Platonist views.[36] It is therefore possible that although reading Montaigne's works to criticise his philosophy, through encountering his depiction of custom's 'angry tyrannic countenance' Astell found inspiration for her *Proposal*.[37]

This 'Tyrant', Astell continues, teaches gentlewomen to take greater pleasure from their interactions with the material world than the cultivation of their moral and mental capacities. For instance, she argues that because society teaches them to participate in the 'constant flattery of external objects', to be happy they 'must be cocker'd and fed with Toys and Baubles'; frivolous entertainments that result in the

[36] Karen Green, *A History of Women's Political Thought in Europe, 1700-1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), p.32.
[37] Michel de Montaigne, 'On habit (or Custom): and on never easily changing a traditional law', in *Michel de Montaigne: The Complete Essays*, trans. & ed. by M. A. Screech (London: Penguin Classics, 2003), pp.122-139 (p.122). In his introduction to this Essay, Screech argues that the terms 'custom, usage, manners, habits' all function as valid translations of Montagu's original French title of the chapter ('De la coustume').

development of 'a poor weak Mind' and 'very childish Humour' (p.27). Astell also contends that the conversational mode of female education often exposed women to vice. ''Tis become no easy matter to secure out Innocence in our necessary Civilities and daily Conversations', she writes, while being exposed to '[a] constant Scene of Temptations and the infection of ill company' (pp.27 & 28).

Among the greatest damages inflicted by this customary 'road of Vanity and Folly', Astell argues, is that gentlewomen are educated in a manner that encourages them to waste their 'time, a Treasure whose value we are too often quite ignorant of till it be lost past redemption' (pp.3 & 28). She reasons that because of 'the continual hurry we are in, we can find no opportunities for thoughtfulness and recollection; we are so busied with what passes abroad, that we have no leisure to look at home, nor rectif[y] the disorders there' (p.28). '[W]hat a loss of Time and Study such irregular and useless Thoughts occasion', Astell reflects, 'what a Reproach they are to our Reason', and how they cheat us with a *shew* [ibid] of knowledge' (p.93). Using tropes now familiar to us through Talbot's letters and writings to relate the moral damage of this loss of time, she argues that as a result of this intellectual negligence women's 'souls' are 'suffer'd to over-run with weeds, lie sallow and neglected, unadorn'd with any Grace' (p.3).

At the close of her first letter to Norris, Astell wishes her correspondent 'a quiet convenient Retirement', describing this environment as 'all the Happiness that can be had on this side of Heaven' (p.5). In *A Serious Proposal* she both returns to, and expands upon this notion, identifying retirement as the 'perfect and happy' answer to the ills wrought by customary forms of female education (p.4). '[T]he most probable method to amend the present, and improve the future Age', Astell writes, 'is to erect a *Monastery*, or if you will (to avoid giving offence to the scrupulous and injudicious, by names which tho' innocent in themselves, have been abus'd by superstitious Practices), *Religious Retirement*' (p.14). 'For here', Astell claims, 'those who are convinc'd of the emptiness of earthly Enjoyments', and 'are sick of the vanity of the world and its impertinencies' will be able to 'attend the great business they came into the world about': 'the service of GOD and improvement of their own Minds' (p.14).

By proposing this remedy to her female readers, Astell brings us back to what Garcia identifies as her 'proto-Catholic defence of female self-segregation in England'. However, as Astell takes care to establish both in this instance, and in the contents page of this tract, '[t]he Design of the propos'd Retirement' is 'rather Academic than Monastic', intended to facilitate women's spiritual growth through the cultivation of their scholarly capacities (p.vii). In particular, Astell recommends the 'serious perusal of such Books as are not loosly [sic] writ, but require an Attent [sic] and Awakened Mind to apprehend, and to take in the whole force of 'em, obliging our selves to Understand them thoroughly' (p.93). She argues that by attending this scholarly manner of female retirement women could not only ensure the 'due management' of their time, but through retreating 'from the World' learn 'to do the greatest good in it' (pp.28 & 17).

Over the course of her *Letters* and *Serious Proposal*, Astell outlines a key argument to her readership: because custom fetters the path of female learning with stigmas, for women to cultivate their intellectual and spiritual capacities they must pursue their own scholarly education at a distance from society. By doing so, she was far from the only contemporary writer to articulate these ideas. In his 1697 publication *An Essay upon Projects* for instance, the novelist, pamphleteer, and journalist Daniel Defoe writes that 'I have often thought of it as one of the most barbarous Customs in the world, considering us as a Civiliz'd and a Christian Country, that we deny the advantages of Learning to Women'.[38] 'An Academy for Women', Defoe argues, could offer an effective solution to this problem, explaining that besides from being built in such a manner 'to render *Intrieguing* dangerous', this academy 'should differ but little from Publick Schools, wherein such Ladies as were willing, shou'd have all the advantages of Learning suitable to their Genius'.[39]

Nor, as John William Klein notes, was Astell 'the first Anglican to argue for women's colleges', quoting from the divine George Hickes' April 1684 sermon at St. Bride's Church to illustrate his argument.[40] 'I

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[38] Daniel Defoe, *An Essay Upon Projects* (London: R. R., 1697), p.282.
[39] Ibid, pp.286-288.
[40] John William Klein, 'Susanna Hopton and Mary Astell: Two Women Spiritual Writers Among the English Nonjurors', *Anglican and Episcopal History,* 88 (June 2019), 156-175 (p.172).

will also put you in mind', Hickes proposed, 'of establishing a Found for Endowing of poor Maids... and of building Schools, or Colleges for the Education of young Women much like unto those in the Universities, for the Education of young Men'.[41] Earlier still, in 1675 the author and Anglican priest Clement Barksdale wrote his *A Letter Concerning a Colledge* [sic] *of Maids*; a letter that as Deirdre Raftery argues, closely followed the publication of Makin's *Essay*.[42] Hoping to shield his idea for an all-female college from 'ridicule', Barksdale sets out a fifteen-point plan for the running of this institution, explaining that its goal would be 'to improve ingenuous Maids in such qualities as best become their Sex, and may fit them for a happy Life in this, and much more in the next World'.[43]

Demonstrably, there existed more than one contemporary vision of learned female retreat for the young Lady Mary to draw on. Astell's publications, however, remain the most useful for us to place alongside her letters and writings. Importantly, as men Defoe, Hickes, and Barksdale had each received a formal learned education, meaning that their proposals for female education were articulated from a position of intellectual privilege. As Defoe argues in his *Essay*, '[w]e reproach the [female] Sex every day with Folly and Impertinence, while I am confident, had they the advantages of Education equal to us, they wou'd be guilty of less than our selves'.[44] By contrast, as a female scholar Astell wrote from an uncustomary position, as we see reinforced by the shock Norris professed to have felt upon receiving her letter. Crucially, it was is through rendering herself as an unusual, learned female that Astell lay down the most appealing blueprint for Lady Mary to consult decades later, in order to organise her reflections upon time, custom, learning, and solitude.

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[41] George Hickes, *A Sermon preached at the Church of St. Bridget, on Easter-Tuesday, being the first of April, 1684, before the Right Honourable Sir Henry Tulse, Lord Mayor of London, and the Honourable Court of Alderman, together with the governors of the hospitals, upon the subject of alms-giving* (London: W. Kettilby & R. Kettlewell, 1684), pp.26-27.

[42] Deirdre Raftery, 'Education to Women in Nineteenth Century England: "Unexpected Revolution" or Inevitable Change?', *Higher Education Quarterly,* 56 (October 2002), 330-346 (pp.336-337). 'Colledge' is in-keeping with the spelling in the original title.

[43] Clement Barksdale, *A Letter Concerning a Colledge of Maids, or, A virgin-Society* (London: s. n., 1675, published online by Early English Books Online Text Creation Partnership, 2011) <https://quod.lib.umich.edu/e/eebo2/A31301.0001.001> [accessed 14 April 2021].

[44] Defoe, ibid, p.282.

Section 2) An early encounter with solitude: how Lady Mary's formative scholarly experiences at once departed from, and related to the arguments conveyed in Astell's *Letters* and *A Serious Proposal*

Although the exact age at which Lady Mary first encountered Astell's works is unclear, scholars have theorised that she was at least familiar with ideas outlined in *A Serious Proposal* by her early adolescence. Largely, this theory has stemmed from a letter that Lady Mary wrote to her daughter Mary Stuart, Lady Bute in 1755, in which she comments upon Samuel Richardson's 'project of an English monastery'.[45] 'It was a favourite scheme of mine when I was fifteen', Lady Mary reflects, 'and had I then been mistress of an independent fortune, would certainly have executed it, and elected myself lady abbess'.[46] Tracing a parallel between this vision of unworldly female retreat, and the ideas outlined in Astell's works, Green argues that this letter 'suggest[s] a teenage acquaintance with Astell's *Series Proposal*; not improbable, since her aunt, Lady Cheyne had a house in Chelsea, the suburb, or then village, where Astell lived'.[47]

While Lady Mary was probably familiar with Astell's well-known plan for female religious retirement from a young age, her 1755 description of wanting to become an 'abbess' at the age of fifteen offers us problematic evidence of her early engagement with *A Serious Proposal*. An imagining of self that she composed at sixty-six, this description is more likely to reflect Lady Mary's sense of self, circumstances, and ambitions at this later age than a penetrating insight into her teenage intellectual life. Moreover, the friendship Lady Mary enjoyed with Astell in her thirties is likely to have reframed her memory of any knowledge of, or appreciation that she had for *A Serious Proposal* as an adolescent. Most importantly of all however, the fifteen-year-old Lady Mary offers us no proof of wishing to run or attend a female monastery in her surviving contemporary correspondence.

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[45] Wortley Montagu, 'To Lady Bute *20 Oct.* [*1755*]', in *The Complete Letters of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu,* III, pp.91-98 (p.97).
[46] Ibid.
[47] Green, p.51.

More convincing evidence of Lady Mary's early engagement with Astell's works can be found in a letter that she wrote to Gilbert Burnet in July 1710, when she was twenty-one years old. Here, she encloses her recently completed translation of the Enchiridion of Epictetus from Latin into English, hoping that Burnet (who, as Martin Greig notes, had gained both a proficient grasp of Latin and several ancient authors 'before the age of ten') would help to clarify 'whither I have understood Epictetus' (p.44).[48] As we will consider presently, throughout her letter to this influential scholar Lady Mary utilises language, imagery, and techniques employed in Astell's *Letters* and *A Serious Proposal*, in order to frame herself as a problematic, learned woman.

In a manner reflective of Astell's first address to Norris, Lady Mary opens her letter by portraying herself as an outsider to a gated scholarly community, appealing to the better nature of one of its members for intellectual enlightenment. 'My Lord', she writes to Burnet, 'Your hours are so well employ'd, I hardly dare you this Triffle to look over', before asking him to 'pardon' the 'impertinencies' of her writing (p.43). Unlike Astell however, Lady Mary initially portrays these impertinencies in terms of likely imperfections of her translation. 'I had not leisure to write it over again', she explains, adding that 'you have it here without any Corrections, with all its blots and Errors… The 4th Chapter [particularly] I am afraid I have mistaken' (p.44). Dedicating the rest of this introduction to conveying her grasp of Epictetus' argument (that '[p]iety and greatnesse of Soul sets you above all misfortunes that can happen to your Selfe'), Lady Mary leaves the issue of her writing to one of Britain's foremost scholars as a learned woman untouched (p.44).

Recognising her deviation from this influential letter-writing model, Lady Mary begins the third paragraph of her letter with the concession that 'I ought to ask pardon for this Digression', as 'it is more proper for me in this place to say something to excuse an Addresse that looks so very presuming' (p.44). 'My sex', she clarifies to Burnet, 'is usually forbid studies of this Nature, and Folly reckon'd so much our

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48 Martin Greig, 'Burnet, Gilbert (1643-1715)', in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (published online 03 October 2013) <https://www.oxforddnb.com/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-4061?rskey=cgzhXF&result=2> [accessed 13 August 2020].

proper Sphere, we are sooner pardon'd any excesses of that, than the least pretentions to reading or good Sense' (p.44). Implementing strategies applied in *A Serious Proposal*, Lady Mary expands that instead '[w]e are taught to place all our Art in adorning our Outward Forms', and 'play the fool in Consort with other Women of Quality', so that 'our Minds are… fill'd with nothing but the Triffling objects our Eyes are daily entertain'd with' (pp.44-45).

Like Makin and Astell before her, Lady Mary identifies 'custom' as the chief engineer of the 'Careless' manner of 'Education given to Women of Quality' (pp.45-46). Its pervasive reach across society, she argues, ensures that gentlewomen are determined by their 'Birth and Leisure' to exist as 'the most uselesse and most worthlesse part of the creation', equipped only to 'play the fool in Consort with' one another (p.45). Notably, this depiction can be juxtaposed with Lady Mary's earlier portrayal of Burnet as one whose use, worth, and service to society can be measured in the wealth of 'well employed' hours to his name. Although failing to mirror Astell's lament of the 'loss of time' that custom inflicted upon women, by establishing this contrast one can see Lady Mary considering the relationship between a person's education, and their ability to employ their time to useful, satisfying, and improving ends.

Lady Mary argues that a further consequence of custom's 'long established and industriously upheld' authority is that the words 'Learned Woman' have come to 'imply, according to the receiv'd sense, a tailing, impertinent, vain, and Conceited Creature' (p.45). Identifying herself as a member of this stigmatised social group, Lady Mary then quotes a passage in Latin from the renaissance philosopher Desiderius Erasmus Roterodamus' *Opera Omnia,* which in line with Leyden's 1703 translation reads as follows: 'A woman who is truly wise [does] not think herself so; on the contrary, when a woman who know nothing thinks herself wise, she is indeed twice a fool' (p.45). To mock those who would fear and censure her classical learning, Lady Mary ends her letter with another quote from this text, writing that '[t]he common opinion is that the Latin language is not suitable for the ladies because it does too little toward the preservation of their modesty, just because it is a rare and unusual thing for a woman to know Latin; however custom is the mistress of all evil things' (p.46).

As we will consider through our examination of Elizabeth Carter and Mary Delany's writings, Lady Mary's portrayal of customarily educated 'Women of Quality' as 'useless' grossly misrepresents the mentally and technically demanding nature of eighteenth-century female elegant accomplishments. However, many aspects of her upbringing were tailored to incorporate contemporary notions of appropriate genteel female conduct and employment; circumstances that can be used to support her depiction of self as someone raised within a conventional educational framework. As her biographer Isobel Grundy observes, '[m]asters were employed to instruct Lady Mary in drawing (until, to her 'great mortification', her over eagerness at it was thought to be harming her eyes)', 'female skills such as embroidery and cooking, and the physical arts of dancing and riding'.[49] Grundy continues that while Lady Mary was also instructed in modern languages such as 'Italian', in contrast to her younger brother William Pierrepont (who, at the age of thirteen, left home with a personal tutor to study 'the classics' at Trinity College, Cambridge) there is no record of her receiving any manner of formal tutelage in classical languages or literature.[50]

At the same time, there were other features of Lady Mary's education that adhered less neatly to popular contemporary notions of appropriate female behaviour. In part, these resulted from the dynamic social life that her father Evelyn Pierrepont, first Duke of Kingston upon Hull enjoyed through his influential position in the Whig Party, including his membership to the infamous 'Kit-Cat Club'.[51] As Pierrepont's eldest daughter, Lady Mary was introduced to the club's company from a young age, recollecting later how she was passed 'from the lap of one poet, or patriot, or statesmen, to the arms of another' before having 'her health drank by every one present'.[52] Grundy notes how as soon as she was able, Lady Mary

[49] Grundy, *Lady Mary Wortley Montagu* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), p.15.
[50] Ibid, pp.15-16.
[51] G. F. R. Barker, and M. E. Clayton, 'Pierrepont, Evelyn, first duke of Kingston upon Hull', in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (published online 23 September 2004) <https://www.oxforddnb.com/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-22227?rskey=5CAAq0&result=3> [accessed 17th August 2020].
[52] Wortley Montagu, as quoted by Grundy in *Lady Mary Wortley Montagu*, p.12.

was instructed in 'skills' that were deemed 'necessary' for a 'political hostess' to demonstrate upon such decadent occasions, such as 'carving joints of meat' for the 'ceremonious serving of guests'.[53]

A refined display of feminine domesticity, this aspect of Lady Mary's education can be mobilised to support her portrayal of 'Women of Quality' being encouraged to consider the presentation of their 'outward forms' above cultivating their intellectual lives. Yet by introducing her to the company of the country's leading Whig politicians, Lady Mary's hosting responsibilities allowed her to develop a keen understanding of Britain's political affairs, blurring lines that were commonly drawn between male and female intellectual spheres in this period. Significantly, her attendance at her father's political gatherings is likely to have played a crucial part in not only emboldening Lady Mary to make her own contributions to political discourse later on in life (for example, through her anonymously published 1737 work *The Nonsense of Common Sense*), but in cementing her relationship with Burnet.

As Robert Halsband notes, Burnet's close proximity to the Pierrepont family centred on two key factors. Firstly, '[a]s a Whig politician he was associated with [Lady Mary's] father', with both men participating in popular social and cultural movements to help support the Party's causes.[54] Secondly, Burnet's 'diocesan seat at Salisbury was close to West Dean', the home in which Lady Mary resided as a child before moving to her father's Thoresby estate.[55] While it is unclear as to exactly when Lady Mary began to approach Burnet as a scholarly authority, in the opening paragraphs of her 1710 letter she reflects warmly upon his past help and guidance. 'You have already forgiven me greater Impertinencies', she reflects, 'and condescended yet farther in giving me Instructions and bestowing some of your Minutes in teaching me' (p.43).

'Many years later', Halsband argues in his analysis of this reflection, Lady Mary would go on to recount 'Burnet's kindness' in helping her to realise her learned ambitions.[56] To support this argument, he quotes

[53] Grundy, ibid, p.15.
[54] Halsband, *The Complete Letters of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu*, I, p.43.
[55] Ibid.
[56] Ibid.

a letter that Lady Mary wrote to Lady Bute in July 1758, in which she writes 'I knew [Burnet] in my very early Youth, and his condescension in directing a Girl in her studies is an Obligation I can never forget'.[57] While Burnet did play a formative, voluntary role in cultivating Lady Mary's confidence and abilities as a scholar, her portrayal of him as a superior figure misrepresents the social dynamics that shaped their relationship. By not only quoting this letter uncritically, but iterating its sentiments describing the bishop as tending to her education out of 'kindness' Halsband reinforces this misrepresentation, depicting Burnet's tutelage as a predominantly (if not solely) condescending act.

As we have seen Armstrong observe in *Desire and Romantic Fiction*, in eighteenth-century Britain a classical education was typically seen as a male form of academic instruction. When viewed in relation to this social custom alone, the help that Burnet offered to Lady Mary can be interpreted as both unusual and kind, with the Bishop risking his reputation to cultivate the scholarly growth of a woman. As we have also seen Armstrong reflect however, the study of classical languages was 'associated with aristocratic tradition', thereby offering both parties an alternative educational model to imitate. Crucially, Lady Mary was appealing to Burnet not just as a 'Girl', but as an aristocrat, meaning that by providing her with scholarly guidance on an occasional, informal basis, he was able to uphold one social custom without officially transgressing the rules of the other.

In addition to confusing customary ideas of appropriate male and female tutelage, Lady Mary's aristocratic rank meant that she had a vastly different experience of reading Epictetus's writings than most female readers in this period. As Gillian Wright notes, it was not only common for seventeenth and eighteenth-century women readers to engage with his teachings, but for male writers to encourage them in this knowledge, a trend that Wright attributes to several key factors. She explains, for instance, how 'the very clear and succinct style of' the *Enchiridion* of Epictetus made the work 'accessible to' those with 'no training in academic philosophy', including 'most' female readers; how 'the similarity of Epictetus's

[57] Ibid.

moral teaching to that of Christianity' allowed writers such as John Dryden to frame him as 'a particularly Christian sort of pagan' in female conduct literature; and how his 'Stoic philosophy' was seen by many as an improving influence on female conduct, whether by offering women 'wisdom' that would expand their moral capabilities, or encouraging them be 'silent, obedient and chastely receptive to male attention'.[58]

Vitally, this female engagement was sustained by contemporary English translations of Epictetus's work. 'The first published translation of Epictetus into English appearance as early as 1567', Wright explains, with subsequent translations and summaries (including Ellis Walker's 1692 publication *Epictieti Enchiridion made English*, which 'achieved astonishing levels of popularity') maintaining popular interest towards the philosopher well into the eighteenth-century.[59] Wright continues that often, these translations had been altered to reflect Christian principles, as illustrated by 'the Welsh clergyman Timothy Thomas['s]' choice to evoke 'the New Testament idea of turning the other cheek to the aggressor' in his translation of the *Enchiridion*.[60] It was therefore common for female readers to engage with versions of Epictetus's teachings that had been adapted to suit early modern British cultural, social, and religious ideals.

Less common in this period, was for female readers to engage directly with classical versions of Epictetus's work. This unusual manner of engagement was made possible for Lady Mary by her access to her father's library at Thoresby, a scholarly environment that as one contemporary visitor noted, housed a 'great number of Greek, Latin, English, and French authors in the best editions'.[61] Although apparently reluctant to disclose the nature of her library studies with Pierrepont (as she is said to have commented to the historian Joseph Spence decades later, 'I used to study five or six hours a day for two years, in my father's library, and so' cultivated a knowledge of the Latin language 'whilst every body else thought I was reading nothing but novels and romances') Lady Mary's use of this space suggests that few practical

[58] Gillian Wright, 'Women Reading Epictetus', *Women's Writing*, 42 (2007), 321-337 (pp.326, 327-328, 321, 331 & 322).
[59] Ibid, pp.325-326.
[60] Ibid, p.327.
[61] As quoted by Halsband, ibid, p.6.

obstacles stood in her way of utilising its resources, including publications that helped her to translate Latin texts into English.[62]

In a letter written to her friend Anne Wortley in August 1709, Lady Mary considers the benefits and drawbacks of attempting to teach herself Latin without the formal guidance of a teacher. Although Lady Mary does not explicitly mention her father's library to her correspondent, the dating of her letter, her portrayal of self as a lone scholar, and her description of the comprehensive learning materials at her disposal all point strongly towards her occupation and use of this environment. For example, in this instance Lady Mary explains that despite being 'so much alone, I have leisure to pass whole days in reading', she would have to disappoint Wortley's prior request to '[s]end me word what books to read'.[63] '[I] am not at all proper for so delicate an employment as chusing you books', she responds, reflecting that '[y]our own fancy will better direct you' (p.5).

Notably, within this letter Lady Mary depicts Wortley as progressing along a customary model of female education. For instance, by employing terms such as 'delicate' and 'fancy' to describe the process of selecting 'proper' books for her friend, she portrays these materials as whimsical rather than intellectually demanding; moves that return us to Astell's account of customary forms of female education leaving women with a 'weak Mind' and 'childish Humour'. Also important for us to consider here, is Lady Mary's choice to render these reading materials merely as 'books'. While it is possible that she may have been referring to any of the publications in her father's library (including his celebrated collection of classical texts), Lady Mary's vague application of the term convincingly echoes the feminine, non-specific 'novels and romances' that we see her juxtapose proudly with her Latin studies in Spence's *Observations*.

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[62] Wortley Montagu, as quoted by Joseph Spence in *Joseph Spence: Observations, Anecdotes, and Character of Books and Men: Collected from Conversation*, ed. by James M. Osborn, 2 vols (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1966), I, p.303.

[63] Wortley Montagu, 'To Anne Wortley *8 Aug. 1709*', in *The Complete Letters of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu,* I, pp.5-7 (p.6), & Anne Wortley, 'From Anne Wortley [*c. 3 Aug. 1709*]', in *The Complete Letters of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu,* I, pp.4-5 (p.5). Further references to this letter are given after quotations in the text.

As her letter continues, Lady Mary renders her own reading routine in a vastly different light to Wortley's. 'My study at present', she writes, is nothing but dictionaries and grammars', expanding that 'I am trying whether it be possible to learn without a master' (p.5). While Lady Mary fails to disclose whether these publications had been written as a guide any particular language (or languages) in this instance, Spence's account of her early education identifies them as Latin texts. He relates that having 'put it into her head' that her governess ('who was a very rigid one') would 'never allow' her to learn Latin, Lady Mary 'got a Dictionary & Grammar, wth all the Privacy in the world: & as she had the use of the Library, she hid them in a private corner there'.[64] Portraying herself as reading publications that would enable her to better understand the rules and mechanics of language, in her letter to Wortley Lady Mary depicts an account of self progressing along a more masculine model of education than her correspondent, as defined by the pursuit of study above leisure, precision above fancy, ambition above delicacy.

At first, Lady Mary imagines the emotional and practical difficulties that she would likely face by following this method of scholarly learning 'without a master', confiding in her friend that 'I am not certain (and dare hardly hope) I shall make any great progress' (p.5). However, she soon indicates her aptitude for working alone, in particular by describing the pleasure that she had so far derived from her scholarship. 'I find the study so diverting', she reflects, that 'I am not only easy, but pleased with the solitude that indulges it' (p.5). Just under a year later, Lady Mary would go on to confirm her compatibility with this independent learning method in her letter to Burnet, referring to her enclosed Latin translation 'as the Work of one Week of my Solitude' (p.44).

By looking to Lady Mary's written portrayals of self translating Latin into English, we can see how her aristocratic privileges could confuse her imagining of self as an uncustomary scholar. At the same time however, these portrayals also emphasise how, in spite of these privileges, Lady Mary was constantly forced to negotiate social conventions that framed her female learning as problematic. Although having

[64] Spence, ibid.

access to the dictionaries and grammars in father's library, she still chose to hide the extent of her learned activities from her household, allowing them to believe that she was reading 'novels and romances' when she was in fact studying classical languages. Similarly, while receiving some informal instruction from Burnet, Lady Mary was also obliged to undertake much of her Latin studies without a master, highlighting how she was unable to access the formal types of education that were available to her brother. Crucially, these early experiences highlight that while learning offered Lady Mary a happy way to pass time in solitude, she viewed solitude as a necessary aspect of her learned activities, understanding that it enabled her to find a space removed from customary attitudes to female learning.

Section 3) A later, more difficult experience of solitude: how Lady Mary navigated conflicting models of well-employed time while living alone in Brescia

In July 1739, at the age of fifty, Lady Mary left England for Venice. 'Her public story was that she was travelling for her health', Grundy notes, although by this time she had numerous other reasons for wishing to escape her native country.[65] Grundy continues that as well as wishing to establish a secret amorous rendezvous with the Venetian Count Francesco Algarotti, Lady Mary's 'closest friends were recently dead, her children under her displeasure, her husband ideologically remote, her reputation mangled by Pope, and her dislike of the English climate real'.[66] While setting off in pursuit of romantic adventure, as time passed the nature of Lady Mary's European travels changed: after parting with Algarotti in early 1741, she proceeded to plot a solitary course of travel across Italy and France that would occupy her until her return to England 1761, seemingly desirous to spend time alone.

As Grundy explains, Lady Mary had parted for the continent on bad terms with her daughter. 'Lady Bute', she expands, 'after the christening and before leaving with her baby for Scotland, had done

[65] Grundy, p.391.
[66] Ibid.

something to convince her mother that she did not love her', adding that 'Lady Mary's strong feelings and tendency to self-righteousness made her very prone to' such disagreements.[67] By looking to the letters that Lady Mary went on to send Lady Bute from abroad however, we can see that after a few years of absence Lady Mary was keen to reconnect with her daughter, and to hear news of her grandchildren's employments on the remote Isle of Bute. In particular, she wrote regularly to her daughter during her ten year residency in Brescia, offering accounts of how she passed her time during this solitary period of her life.

Throughout her Brescia letters, Lady Mary portrays of herself as the designer, manager, and occupier of a contented form of retirement, incorporating portrayals of herself reading and writing into accounts of her regular activities. On the 10th of July 1748 for instance, she wrote a letter to her daughter explaining that 'I generally rise at six, and as soon as I have breakfasted put my self' to work in the garden 'till nine'.[68] Lady Mary continues that after tending to the animals in her 'Dairy' and 'Poultry', as well as recording the latest industries of her 'Bees and silk worms', she would generally 'retire to [her] Books' at '[a]t 11 o'clock', before dining at midday, sleeping until '3', and passing the rest of the day either walking, riding, or sailing (p.404).

This current daily schedule, Lady Mary recognises, likely differed from Lady Bute's, circumstances she deems appropriate to 'our Different times of Life' (p.405). In a manner that suggests either her daughter was currently living away from Bute, or Lady Mary was referring her *relative* access to high society, she portrays her correspondent 'amidst the Fair, the Galant and the Gay', far away from the 'retreat where I enjoy every amusement that Solitude can afford' (p.405). Although confessing to 'sometimes wish for a little conversation', Lady Mary also argues that 'Quiet' is 'all the Hope that can reasonably be indulg[ed] at my Age', reiterating another claim she made to her daughter five months previously: 'I am as much

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[67] Ibid, p.386.

[68] Wortley Montagu, 'To Lady Bute *10 July 1748*', in *The Complete Letters of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu*, II, pp.402-405 (p.404). Further references to this letter are given after quotations in the text.

remov'd from' the world, she then considered, 'as it is possible to be on this side of the Grave, which is from my own Inclination'.[69]

In a letter written to Lady Bute on the 1st of October 1752, Lady Mary depicts an account of self devoting the majority of her time to scholarly pursuits, writing that 'my chei[f] Amusement is writ[ing] the History of my own Time'.[70] 'It has been my Fortune', she explains, 'to have a more exact knowledge both of the Persons and Facts that have made the greatest figure in England in this Age than is common', professing to 'take great pleasure in putting together what I know, with an Impartiality that is altogether unusual' (pp.18-19). Lady Mary argues that this impartiality derives from her present solitude, writing that 'Distance of Time and place has totally blotted from my Mind all Traces either of Resentment or prejudice, and I speak with the same Indifference of the Court of G[reat] B[retain] as I should do of that of Augustus Caesar' (p.19).

By making these moves, Lady Mary paints her retirement in Brescia as a productive and satisfying scholarly environment. She contends that this ongoing period of solitude had not only allowed her the time to go about this ambitious project, but had given her the objectivity to write her 'History' without bias, heightening her abilities and integrity as a scholar. Lady Mary declares that furthermore, her detachment from society meant that rather than writing this history as a vanity project to be circulated amongst her peers, she composed it solely to entertain herself. 'I can assure you I regularly burn every Quire as soon as it is finish'd', she writes, 'and mean nothing more than to divert my solitary hours' (p.19). Concluding her 'History' by contrasting the enlightened solitude in which it was written, with the unenlightened social attitudes documented within it, she writes knowingly to her daughter that 'I know Mankind too well to think they are capable of receiving Truth, much less of applauding it' (p.19).

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[69] Ibid, p.405, & Wortley Montagu, 'To Lady Bute *5 Jan 1748*', in *The Complete Letters of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu,* II, pp.392-394 (p.393).

[70] Wortley Montagu, 'To Lady Bute *1 Oct*. [*1752*]', in *The Complete Letters of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu*, III, pp.18-19 (p.18). Further references to this letter are given after quotations in the text.

In her ‘Italian Memoir’, Lady Mary offers us further portrayals of self as a solitary, contented woman of learning in Brescia. Specifically, these passages relate to her employments after purchasing ‘a beautiful spot’ of land in Gottolengo (a region of Brescia, from which she wrote the above letters to her daughter) ‘in the year 1747’, having heard ‘that there was a large Garden which could be embellished to suit my own taste’.[71] ‘Little by little’, she recollects, ‘I became accustomed to the solitude of Gottolengo; I enjoyed the walks, the air agreed with me, and I let myself be talked into making improvements to the old House’ (p.87). While reporting that much of her ‘Baggage [sent from her last residence in Avignon] arrived in a terrible state’ to this place, Lady Mary records that ‘I diverted myself with my Books, which had all arrived safe and sound’ (pp.87-88).

Notably, the reading materials that Lady Mary had packed to accompany her on her travels amounted to no small collection of books, but a comprehensive library of scholarly resources. As Grundy summarises, the ‘three boxes of books’ that she had packed years ago in England ‘to follow her abroad… comprised several cubic metres’, with their contents documented in a ‘23-page book-list’.[72] This list, she continues, ‘specified about 465 identifiable titles, plus 137 unparticularized ‘pamphlets’ 51 collections of plays, and 34 manuscript volumes’, with ‘[f]urther books’ and ‘Italian writing[s]’ going ‘into other containers’.[73] While it is possible that after eight years of travel, Lady Mary may have lost or parted with some of these items, her account of them ‘all’ reaching her in Gottolengo backs her July 1748 account of having ample resources with which to occupy herself for an hour each day.

The ‘Italian Memoir’ also provides us with accounts of how learning had helped Lady Mary to ingratiate herself with some of Brescia’s residents during this period, in particular Dr Bartolomeo Mora. In this document, she recollects how her host Count Ugolino Palazzi had deemed Mora to be a man ‘of great learning and integrity, and that he flattered himself that I should find his conversation agreeable’ (p.95).

[71] Wortley Montagu, ‘Italian Memoir’, p.87. Further references to Lady Mary’s memoir are given after quotations in the text.
[72] Grundy, *Lady Mary Wortley Montagu,* p.390.
[73] Ibid.

Lady Mary continues that Palazzi had 'recommended him [to me as a secretary] because he supposed I was truly likely to kill myself with my perpetual studying', inviting her reply 'that I never felt better than when I was alone', and 'that I did not study, but diverted myself' (p.95).

Simultaneously however, Lady Mary's 'Italian Memoir' outlines an account in which her solitude in Brescia had been determined, manipulated, and ultimately ruined by Count Palazzi. It relates that while Lady Mary had welcomed Palazzi's suggestion for her to travel with him to Brescia, when she settled in the region she 'susp[ected]' him of stealing from her, and that when she expressed a desire to resume her intended course to Venice, he accused her of 'destroying his honour' (pp.82-86). Importantly, Lady Mary relates that it was a combination of ill health, poor weather, and emotional manipulation from Palazzi that pressured her into buying her Gottolengo residence, explaining that while she was able to pass her first few years there tolerably (with her 'Books' and 'Garden'), from early 1754 she made regular attempts to leave the region, managing only to escape in August 1756 (pp.86-89).

By looking to her 'Italian Memoir', we see Lady Mary encountering a form of solitude that through growing extensive and involuntary, could not be eased by learning alone. Notably however, these difficult experiences did not stop Lady Mary from recommending a learned education for her granddaughters in her letters to Lady Bute, even during the latter stages of her residency in Brescia. On the 28th of January 1753 for instance, she wrote to her daughter that '[y]ou have given me a great deal of Satisfaction by your account of your eldest Daughter [Lady Mary Stuart]' proving herself to be 'a good Arithmetician'.[74] 'I will therefore speak to you', she continues, 'as supposing Lady Mary not only capable but desirous of Learning. In that case, by all means let her be indulg'd in it' (p.21).

As this letter proceeds, we soon discover that Lady Mary's present recommendation differed from the approach that she took to shaping Lady Bute's education. Anticipating her daughter's objection to this inconsistency ('[y]ou will tell me', she writes, 'I did not make it part of your Education'), Lady Mary

[74] Wortley Montagu, 'To Lady Bute *28th Jan.* [*1753*]', p.20. Further references to this letter are given after quotations in the text.

explains that ‘[y]our prospect was very different from hers, as you had no defect either in mind or in person to hinder, and much in your circumstances to attract, the highest offers’ of marriage (p.21). Aware that from a young age, her daughter would frequently mingle with other affluent members of society, Lady Mary educated her in the female elegant accomplishments that she had so passionately criticised to Burnet, equipping Lady Bute with the ability to recommend herself to her refined peers.

By contrast, Lady Mary understood that as a gentlewoman born and raised on the remote Isle of Bute, Lady Mary Stuart’s chances of regularly meeting with other fine members of society were slim. As such, she comprehended that it would be unwise for her granddaughter to receive an education that would leave her ill-equipped to pass time in solitude contentedly. ‘It is the common Error of Builders and Parents’, Lady Mary reflects, ‘to follow some Plan they think beautifull (and perhaps is so) without considering that nothing is beautiful that is misplac[ed]… Thus every Woman endeavors to breed her Daughter a fine Lady, qualifying her for a station in which she will never appear, and at the same time incapacitating her for that retirement to which she is destin'd’ (p.21).

Arguing that ‘learning (if she has a real taste for it) will not only make her contented but happy in’ retirement, Lady Mary proceeds to outline a learned curriculum for her granddaughter (p.21). In particular, she stresses to Lady Bute how ‘[n]o entertainment is so cheap as reading, nor any pleasure so lasting’, adding with reassurance that Lady Mary Stuart ‘will not want new Fashions nor regret the loss of expensive Diversions or variety of company if she can be amus’d with an Author in her closet’ (p.21). ‘History, Geography, and Philosophy will furnish her with materials to pass away cheerfully a longer Life than is allotted to mortals’, Lady Mary argues, recommending that ‘[t]o render this amusement extensive’, she ‘should be permitted to learn the Languages’ (pp.23 & 21).

As her use of the word ‘permitted’ suggests, in this instance Lady Mary refers euphemistically to the classical languages. Sensitive to the controversial nature of suggesting this male manner of education for her granddaughter, Lady Mary qualifies her proposal by reflecting how ‘I have heard it lamented that Boys lose so many years in meer learning of Words. This is no Objection to a Girl, whose time is not so

precious' (p.21). She clarifies that this is because a gentlewoman 'cannot advance her self in any profession, and has therefore more hours to spare' (p.21). At once highlighting the likelihood of these spare hours weighing heavily upon Lady Mary Stuart in retirement, along with the effectiveness of learning 'Languages' as a remedy for this discontent, Lady Mary concludes this point by assuring Lady Bute that 'as you say her memory is good, she will be very agreeably employ'd this way' (p.21).

In addition to offering her granddaughter an agreeable way of passing her time in Bute, it is likely Lady Mary hoped that through studying 'the Languages', Lady Mary Stuart would encounter the classical philosophy she had discovered in her youth. In particular, the stoic teachings of Epictetus may have occurred to Lady Mary as a particularly useful moral framework for her granddaughter to consult, especially while being compelled to live away from society by circumstances beyond her control. As the opening lines of Lady Mary's translation of his *Enchiridion* reads, '[c]ertain things are in our power, there are others that are not. Opinion, appetite, desire, aversion, are in our power, and in one work, whatsoever we act ourselves. Our bodies, wealth, fame, and command, are not in our power, and finally all things which we do not act' [sic].[75]

Significantly, Lady Mary appears to have drawn inspiration from this passage while writing to her daughter a year previously, soon after hearing news of the death of Frederick, Prince of Wales. In particular, she uses its language and structure to direct her thoughts at this difficult time, anticipating that this death would have unfortunate implications for John Stuart, Lord Bute's political standing.[76] 'What is most in our power', Lady Mary considers, 'is the disposition of our own minds. Do not give way to melancholy; seek amusements; be willing to be diverted, and insensibly you will become so'.[77] Viewing Epictetus's philosophy as a useful moral guide, Lady Mary is likely to have wished to share his teachings

[75] Wortley Montagu, 'The Enchiridion of Epictetus', in *The Letters and Works of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu*, ed. Archibald Stuart-Wortley-Mackenzie Wharncliffe, 2 vols (Paris, 1837), I, pp.159- 179 (p.159).
[76] As Halsband notes, the Prince's death 'ended Bute's appointment and power as First Lord of the Bedchamber' (*The Complete Letters of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu*, II, p.480).
[77] Wortley Montagu, 'To Lady Bute [*April 1751*]', in *The Complete Letters of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu*, II, pp.480-481 (p.480).

with her granddaughter, recommending that she learn ‘the languages’ so that she may come to understand them better by translating and transcribing his works personally.

Sensitive to the pitfalls that her granddaughter may suffer while pursuing this scholarly method of education (especially under the tutelage of one who having received a different manner of education, had little to no practical experience of this method) Lady Mary continues in her January 1753 letter that ‘[t]here are two cautions to be given on this subject’ (p.21). ‘First’ she insists to her daughter, it is important for Lady Mary Stuart ‘not to think her self Learned when she can read Latin or even Greek’ (p.21). ‘Languages are more properly to be call[e]d Vehicles of Learning’, she expands, ‘than Learning it selfe’, adding scathingly that this common misunderstanding ‘may be observ’d in many Schoolmasters, who [although] perhaps critics in Grammar are the most ignorant fellows upon Earth’ (p.21).

Through this argument, Lady Mary gives credence to Cohen’s account of the advantages that eighteenth-century women could reap, by receiving and pursuing their education away from the ‘shackle[s]’ of the ‘system of education’ offered to men. She grasped that while at an apparent disadvantage to her formally educated male peers, through learning classical languages independently from conventional institutions and their ignorant ‘critics’, her granddaughter could gain greater intellectual clarity. Likely drawing on her memories of studying dictionaries and grammars in her father’s library, Lady Mary writes confidently that ‘[t]wo hours application every morning will bring this about much sooner than you can imagine’, leaving her granddaughter time to apply herself to other useful subjects such as ‘English poetry’ (p.22).

Through her ‘second caution’, Lady Mary highlights the hostility that learned women could face from society (p.22). Having educated Lady Bute to appreciate the importance of a gentlewoman’s outward appearance, manners, and accomplishments, she draws on the social stigmas suffered by those with physical disabilities to illustrate this danger to her daughter. It ‘is most absolutely necessary’, Lady Mary insists, ‘to conceal whatever Learning she attains, with as much solicitude as she would hide crookedness or lameness. The parade of it can only serve to draw on her the envy, and consequently the most

inveterate Hatred, of all he and she Fools, which will certainly be at least three parts in four of all her Acquaintance' (p.22).

Importantly, the dangers of being recognised as a female scholar had been made increasingly plain to Lady Mary since she wrote her 1710 letter to Burnet. In contrast to her youthful experiences of pursuing scholarship in the privacy of her father's library (along with discussing her experiences as a scholar in her private correspondence with Burnet), as an adult her learning had been exhibited, discussed, and often portrayed disparagingly among her peers. For example, when her once amiable relationship with the poet Alexander Pope turned into one of mutual enmity, Pope was able to mobilise her classical learning as an effective way of identifying and mocking her in verse. As Helen Deutsch argues, this occurs 'most memorably' in Pope's 1745 poem 'An Epistle to a Lady', in which Lady Mary is referred to satirically as the ancient Greek female poet Sappho.[78]

A figure whose character was contested among her ancient and contemporary critics, Sappho offered eighteenth-century scholars a useful subject upon which to project their ideas about female learning. As Deutsch explains for instance, at Thoresby Lady Mary had been able to access 'the poet's story in Madeleine de Scudéry's romances', in which Sappho is framed as a figure 'well educated by a female cousin', 'a wonderful writer in verse and prose', and who lived 'happily' unmarried with her lover Phaon.[79] While this depiction of Sappho as a happy female scholar can help us to understand why the young Lady Mary often felt inspired to imitate her poetic style, Ovid's rendering of the poet as one who, as Deutsch summarises, hurled 'herself to her death upon being abandoned by her younger male lover' is likely to have offered Pope a useful example to emulate in his satirical verse.[80]

Validating Lady Mary's warning to Lady Bute, in his 'Epistle to a Lady' Pope imagines Sappho as having an undesirable physical appearance. Specifically, he accuses her of having poor personal hygiene, a

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[78] Helen Deutsch, '"This once was me": Lady Mary Wortley Montagu's Ecstatic Poetics', *The Eighteenth Century*, 53 (Fall 2012), 331-355 (p.332).
[79] Ibid, p.333.
[80] Ibid.

characteristic that Pope juxtaposes with her glamorous outward attire. For instance, Pope argues that learning and female vanity go together as poorly

> As Sappho's diamonds with her dirty smock,
>
> Or Sappho at her toilet's greasy task,
>
> With Sappho fragrant at an evening mask:
>
> So morning insects, that in muck began
>
> Shine, buzz, and fly-blow in the setting sun. (21-28)[81]

Underneath Sappho's aristocratic trappings, his satirical verse maintains, lies a shameful creature, lampooning her (and by extension, Lady Mary's) high social rank and scholarship.

In addition to inviting public assaults upon her appearance and character, Lady Mary's learning provided her enemies with ready ammunition with which to attack her reputation in private. A striking example of such an attack can be found in a letter written by Horace Walpole to his friend Richard West in 1740, ahead of an anticipated meeting with Lady Mary (along with her friends Lady Henrietta Louisa Pomfret, and Lady Margaret Rolle Walpole, also his sister-in-law) in Venice. As Grundy notes, Walpole's animosity towards Lady Mary had been determined from his understanding her to be 'the cause of his mother [the late Catherine Walpole]'s having first been betrayed and then replaced by Maria Skerrett', his father's late second wife and close friend of Lady Mary's.[82]

All three Ladies, Walpole's comment highlights, had reputations for engaging in scholarship. In a manner reflective of Makin's description of learned women as comets, he refers to Lady Mary as the 'third she-meteor' joining '[t]hose learned luminaries the Ladies Pomfret and Walpole'.[83] 'You have not been

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[81] Alexander Pope, 'An Epistle to a Lady: *Of the* Characters *of* Women', in *Alexander Pope: The Major Works*, ed. by Pat Rogers (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006).
[82] Grundy, ibid, p.417.
[83] Horace Walpole, 'To West, Sunday 31 July, 1740, N. S.', in *Horace Walpole's Correspondence*, ed. by W.S. Lewis, 48 vols (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1937-1983), XIII, pp.225-228 (p.227).

witness', Walpole writes to West, 'to the rhapsody of mystic nonsense which these two fair ones debate incessantly, and consequently cannot figure what must be the issue of this triple alliance'.[84] 'Only figure', he continues mockingly, 'the coalition of prudery, debauchery, sentiment, history, Greek, Latin, French, Italian, and metaphysics; all, except the second, understood by halves, by quarters, or not at all', adding finally that '[y]ou shall have the journals of this notable academy'.[85]

While it is unlikely that this damning report ever reached Walpole's 'third she-meteor' (as Grundy writes, upon their meeting Lady Mary 'erroneously believed [Walpole] to be full of friendliness and respect'), his letter usefully highlights the wealth of tropes that could employed easily to ridicule learned women in this period.[86] Aware of this hostile climate, Lady Mary understood that no matter how solitary her granddaughter's living conditions on the Isle of Bute, her contemporaries would still be quick to detect and scrutinise ways in which her education departed from customary modes of female instruction. She therefore grasped that for Lady Mary Stuart to make a favourable impression upon society, she would also need to be educated in conventional, elegant feminine accomplishments.

'At the same time I recommend Books', Lady Mary writes in the closing paragraphs of her letter to Lady Bute, 'I neither exclude [needle] Work nor drawing', adding that 'I think it as scandalous for a Woman not to know how to use a needle, as for a Man not to know how to use a sword' (p.23). Recognising that these accomplishments need not always be mastered for appearance's sake alone, she recollects how 'I was once extre[me] fond of my pencil, and it was a great mortification to me when my Father turn'd off my Master, having made considerable progress for the short time I learnt' (p.23). Fearing that her daughter 'will think this a very long and insignificant Letter', Lady Mary concludes her thoughts by writing that 'I hope the kindness of the Design will excuse it, being willing to give you every pr[oofe] in my power that I am your most affectionate Mother, M. Wortley' (p.24).

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[84] Ibid, pp.227-228.
[85] Ibid, p.228.
[86] Grundy, 'Montagu, Lady Mary Wortley [née Lady Mary Pierrepont]'.

Two months later, Lady Mary wrote again to Lady Bute, expressing apprehension over how she and her husband may have reacted to her advice. 'I cannot help writ[ing] a sort of Apology for my last letter', she begins, 'foreseeing that you will think it wrong, or at least Lord Bute will be extremely shock'd at the proposal of a learned Education for Daughters'.[87] Far from withdrawing her advice however, Lady Mary uses new methods to convince her daughter of its merits, returning us to ideas outlined in Astell's *Proposal*. 'I look upon my Grand daughters as a sort of Lay Nuns', she writes, adding that while '[d]estiny may have laid up other things for them', 'they have no reason to expect to pass their time otherwise than their Aunts [Lord Bute's four sisters] do at present' (p.25).

As well as echoing Astell's plans for a secular female learned retreat, Lady Mary employs the imagery of organic growth and self-cultivation that we have now seen underpin both *A Serious Proposal*, and Talbot's letters and writings. 'Whoever will cultivate their own mind', she considers, 'will find full employment', before framing mental cultivation as a means of improving one's moral self over time (p.25). 'Every virtue', she reasons, 'does not only require great care in the planting, but as much daily solicitude in cherishing as exotic fruits and flowers; the Vices and passions (which I am afraid are the natural product of the soil) demand perpetual weeding' (p.25). Reflecting how mental cultivation also had the benefit of being time consuming, Lady Mary writes that 'the longest Life is too short for the p[u]rsuit' of 'knowledge', as well as describing 'every branch of' knowledge as 'entertaining' (p.25).

Most importantly however, Lady Mary portrays accounts of herself as a happy, learned, solitary woman of quality to justify her recommended course of education for her granddaughters in this letter. 'I know by experience', she writes with authority to her daughter, that 'it is in the power of study not only to make solitude tolerable but agreable [sic]', adding that 'I have now liv'd almost seven years in a stricter Retirement than yours in the Isle of Bute, and can assure you I have never had halfe [sic] an hour heavy on my Hands for want of something to do' (p.25). While, as her 'Italian Memoir' illustrates, learning

[87] Wortley Montagu, 'To Lady Bute *6 March* [*1753*]', p.25. Further references to this letter are given after quotations in the text.

could not always resolve the emotional difficulties of a lengthy and reluctant solitude, Lady Mary understood that it at least enabled her to keep herself occupied during such periods of time, and was eager to share this understanding with her young female relatives.

Vitally, personal experience had taught Lady Mary that for upsetting customary ideas of appropriate female conduct, as well as popular perceptions of natural female intellectual ability, a learned woman of quality could face lasting, unhappy consequences if her scholarship became known to her peers. Nevertheless, she continued to esteem and pursue learning – if not a guaranteed means of securing happiness – as a reliable way of passing time in contended, improving, and occupying employment. By sharing her experiences of negotiating customary and intellectual models of employment with her family while residing in Brescia, Lady Mary was not only able to offer advice to her granddaughters, but find comfort, and even companionship in her solitude. Through imagining their experiences of living on the remote Isle of Bute, she was able to find a sense of shared emotional experience with her granddaughters, anticipating that like her, they too would one day be obliged to navigate conflicting models of well-employed time.

Concluding thoughts: navigating Lady Mary's conflicting encounters with solitude as a learned 'Woman of Quality'

In this chapter, we have acknowledged how Lady Mary's social status and personal circumstances could complicate her framing of learning as an uncustomary, yet happy way to pass time in solitude. By looking to her access to her father's library for instance, we have seen how she was able to access learning materials that aided her classical scholarship, and that as a well-connected aristocrat, was able to seek help from Britain's leading classical scholars with going about her Latin translations. By consulting her 'Italian Memoir', we have also seen how learning could not always make Lady Mary's experiences of

solitude happy, especially when her solitude was determined by events and circumstances that she was unable to control.

At the same time as recognising these complications however, we have also considered how Lady Mary's imaginings of self as a happy, learned, and solitary woman of quality offers us important insights into the imaginative conflicts that informed her social and intellectual lives. By looking to how she adapted Mary Astell's account of customary attitudes to female learning in her writings, we have seen Lady Mary's acute sensitivity to how as a woman, her classical scholarship could be judged harshly by her peers. We have also seen how in contrast to her brother's university education, Lady Mary was obliged to sculpt her own manner of Latin education through informal, and often hidden means. Importantly, she sought out her father's library as not only an environment of learned solitude, but a place in which she could hide the extent of her learning from others.

Through examining her Brescia letters, we can see how even though Lady Mary faced problems in solitude that learning alone could not solve, she continued to regard scholarship as a reliable way of spending uncertain and solitary periods of time in an occupied manner. She therefore delighted in the news of her granddaughter's aptitude for learning, arguing that while she must also be educated in certain elegant accomplishments to avoid social stigma, Lady Mary Stuart should receive a scholarly education to help her pass time on the remote Isle of Bute. Crucially, Lady Mary looked to her experiences of negotiating conflicting models of well-employed time as an opportunity to create emotional bounds with her granddaughter. By portraying herself as an uncustomary, happy, learned woman of quality in her letters to her daughter, she was not only able to find a source of happiness and comfort during her Brescia solitude, but illustrate her relevance as an insightful and engaging bluestocking writer.

Chapter Three) Of ‘May-bugs and men’: Exploring Intellectual and Social Models of Well-Employed Time in Elizabeth Carter’s Letters and Writings

Let Fancy wander o’er the solemn scene:

And, wing’d by active Contemplation, rise

Amidst the radiant Wonder of the Skies[1]

On the 13th of July 1743, Elizabeth Carter wrote a letter to Catherine Talbot from her family home in Deal, complaining of a recent disruption to her favoured walking routine. ‘I am at present a little disappointed in being debarred the delight I used to take in rambling about by myself’, she explains to her friend, due to ‘a set of rakish fellows from some ship who infest this place’.[2] Conscious that walking alone could now jeopardise both her personal safety and genteel reputation, Carter adds playfully that ‘I dare not walk without a companion of true Amazonian bravery who fears nothing but apparitions and frogs, from which I have promised to secure her’, so long as ‘she will defend me from what I am most afraid of, May-bugs and men’.[3]

Contrasting a volatile version of herself rambling alone and unencumbered across the Deal countryside, with that of her travelling with the protection of a walking companion, here Carter juxtaposes liberated and restrained imaginings of self through movement. In this chapter, I argue that through these imaginings this celebrated bluestocking translated offers us largely unacknowledged, but crucial insights into her intellectual and social lives. While aware that ‘rambling about by [her]self’ could be seen as

[1] Elizabeth Carter, ‘1738’, in *Memoirs of the Life of Mrs. Elizabeth Carter, with a New Edition of her Poems,* ed. by Montagu Pennington (London: F. C. and J. Rivington, 1807), pp.364-366 (p.364).
[2] Carter, ‘Mrs. Carter to Miss Talbot. *Deal*, July 13, 1743’, in *A Series of Letters between Mrs. Elizabeth Carter and Miss Catherine Talbot,* ed. by Montagu Pennington, 4 vols (London: F. C. and J. Rivington, 1809), I, pp.34-36 (p.35).
[3] Ibid.

unsociable conduct, Carter associated excursive, solitary forms of motion with the fulfilment of her scholarly capacities. Mobilising not just pedestrian, but various modes of physical travel as metaphors for her moral progress over time Carter established, compared, and interrogated social and intellectual models of virtuous conduct, sensitive to how her experiences as a learned gentlewoman often confused their distinctions.

In order to help navigate Carter's understanding of her progression along social models of well-employed time, it is useful to consider ideas outlined in Anthony Ashley Cooper, third Earl of Shaftesbury's 1711 work *Characteristics of Men, Manners, Opinions*. Within this influential tract, Shaftesbury argues that although social benevolence is inherent to human nature, in the fallen world this virtue lies open to manipulation and disruption. He understood that because of these problems, a person must take care to preserve, cultivate, and defend their natural disposition towards social benevolence over the course of their lifetime. For posing an idea that went on to be debated, adapted, and in some cases outright rejected by many of his intellectual peers, Shaftesbury's argument is widely-viewed among scholars to have been instrumental in placing sociability at the forefront of eighteenth-century philosophical debate.[4]

Unlike Shaftesbury, Carter regarded social benevolence as a rational, rather than natural human virtue. However, in a manner similar to Shaftesbury she understood that one must strive to maintain this virtue in the face of other corruptive temporal influences, adopting aspects of his philosophy to make sense of the importance and trials of leading a socially active life. In particular, she drew on anecdotal descriptions of herself walking as a particularly fruitful medium in which to render ongoing conflict between her socially engaged, and unsociable inclinations. Juxtaposing portrayals of herself travelling as a solitary rambling

[4] In particular, Lawrence E. Klein's summary of contemporary reactions to Shaftesbury's works (as outlined in Lawrence E. Klein, 'Cooper, Anthony Ashley, third earl of Shaftesbury', in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (published online 26 May 2016), <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/6209> [accessed 14th June 2019]) has provided this study with a useful account of eighteenth-century understandings of social benevolence. This account is examined below, in section 1 of this chapter.

pedestrian, with that of her journeying in close accordance to the wants and needs of others, Carter was able to envision ways in which both inclinations shaped her moral and emotional passage through life.

As well as allowing Carter to reflect upon popular philosophical models of social virtue, representations of pedestrian movement also enabled her to assess – in a more literal sense – how her frequent lone walks at once jarred against and resonated with *civic* codes of appropriate sociable conduct. While in many ways sensitive to how her long-distance rambles could be seen as an affront to good gentlewomanly conduct, Carter also understood that her choice to travel on foot was illustrative of her genteel social rank. Challenging Olivia Murphy, Anne Wallace, and Robin Jarvis' dating of leisured pedestrianism to the romantic era, Carter's letters illustrate how the concept of walking as a choice was also being used to define affluent social identity in the early eighteenth century.[5]

In addition to helping her negotiate differing accounts of social virtue, Carter employed depictions of herself walking to contemplate her advancement along intellectual models of well-employed time. Although recent studies such as those conducted by Marily Oppezzo and Daniel L. Schwartz have used empirical methodology to trace a productive relationship between walking and thinking, Carter did so by turning to cultural example, seeing her solitary rambles as an extension of the ancient peripatetic school.[6] Although aware of ways in which her lone rambles could be seen as disorderly, Carter comprehended that pedestrianism offered her a prestigious, long-established, and effective vehicle of mental progression, viewing her walks as a continuation of the intellectual practices of Aristotle and Plato.

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[5] Olivia Murphy, 'Jane Austen's "Excellent Walker": Pride, Prejudice, and Pedestrianism', *Eighteenth-Century Fiction*, 26 (Fall, 2013), 121-142, Anne Wallace, *Walking, Literature, and English Culture: the Origins and uses of Peripatetic in the Nineteenth Century* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), and Robin Jarvis, *Romantic Writing and Pedestrian Travel* (Basingstoke: Macmillan Press, 1997).

[6] In 'Give Your Ideas Some Legs: The Positive Effect of Walking on Creative Thinking', Oppezzo and Schwartz relate the findings of four experiments that demonstrate how 'walking boosts creative ideation in real time and shortly after'. Within this study, participants were asked to complete tests designed to assess their creative thinking abilities in various conditions, including sitting inside, walking inside on a treadmill, walking outside, and being pushed in a wheelchair outside. Here, Oppezzo and Schwartz summarise how '[w]alking opens up the free flow of ideas, and it is a simple and robust solution to the goals of increasing creativity and increasing physical activity'. Marily Oppezzo, and Daniel L. Schwartz, 'Give Your Ideas Some Legs: The Positive Effect of Walking on Creative Thinking', *Journal of Experimental Psychology: Learning, Memory, and Cognition,* 40 (2014), 1142-1152 (p.1142).

Significantly, Carter viewed her lone rambles as crucial to completing her unprecedented translation of the complete works of Epictetus from Greek into English. Whereas we have seen Lady Mary embrace the solitude of her father's library as a productive space in which to undertake her Latin translation, Carter found the intellectual stimulation she needed to go about her Greek translation by walking around Deal. Away from the customary domestic tasks and concentrated periods of study that characterised her time at home, Carter's solitary rambles across Deal's rural and coastal landscapes afforded her interrupted periods of mental travel. While aware that spending time way from her family could be interpreted as a challenge to social models of well-employed time, Carter also understood that through translating Epictetus' works she was helping to share his philosophy to a wider audience, equipping others with tools to improve their intellectual lives.

In addition to pedestrian travel, other forms of physical movement encouraged Carter to consider conflicting interpretations of her social and intellectual lives. By describing her plain-work as confining for instance, she was able to consider how, at times, her duties to her family and household could feel contrary to her rambling scholarly genius. On other occasions however, we see her turn to this same manner of needlework to evoke prolonged periods of undisturbed mental travel, regarding it as a valuable tool of mental liberation; a point of understanding that challenges popular contemporary interpretations of plain-work as a mere way of either passing female leisure time, or producing practical domestic textiles. Similarly, by rendering versions of herself working garments to wear at fine social occasions, Carter was able to consider that while disrupting her scholarly routine, socialising enabled her to encounter new scholarly ideas and acquaintances. Whether by imagining the passage of her needle or feet, portrayals of movement helped Carter to contemplate how her regular employments at once supported, confused, and reconceived intellectual and social models of well-employed time.

Section 1) Introducing the social model of well-employed time: the philosophical climate that encouraged Carter to form social and unsociable imaginings of self

The ongoing debate as to whether social benevolence is innate to humanity, an inclination that requires cultivation over time, or indeed if it has any foundation in human nature *at all*, meant that the moral value of social interactions was a pervasive topic in long eighteenth-century intellectual discourse. Establishing two key opposing features of this dispute, in *Women and Enlightenment in Eighteenth-Century Britain* Karen O'Brien writes that while Shaftesbury framed society 'as the spontaneous outgrowth of man's natural [affectionate] feelings', the political philosopher Bernard Mandeville viewed it as an 'artificial contrivance', born from 'an estrangement of man from his own nature'.[7] In the preface to his 1714 work *The Fable of the Bees, or Private Vices, Publick Benefits* for instance, Mandeville claims that '[w]hat renders [man] a Social Animal consists not in his desire of Company, Good-nature, Pity, Affability', but in 'his vilest and most hateful Qualities'.[8]

O'Brien argues that for placing the practice of virtue 'in the context of everyday social interaction in civil society' – including familiar and domestic social environments – of the two polemics *Characteristics* offered female intellectuals such as Carter and Talbot the most applicable account of morality to draw upon in their own letters and writings.[9] In addition to providing a relevant account of social morality, Shaftesbury's tract provided bluestocking women with an engaging and relatable one, taking into account how one may find maintaining this virtue 'in the context' of *all* one's 'everyday social interaction[s]' challenging. Crucially, Shaftesbury argues that while 'there may be implanted in the Heart… a real

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[7] Karen O'Brien, *Women and Enlightenment in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), pp.23 & 22.

[8] Bernard Mandeville, *The Fable of the Bees: or, Private Vices, Publick Benefits. With and Essay on Charity and Charity-Schools. And a Search into the Nature of Society,* 3rd. edn. (London: J.Tonson, 1724), p.2.

[9] O'Brien, p.47.

Affection towards the Species or Society', due to the 'violence of rage, lust or any other counter-working passion, this good affection may frequently be controlled and overcome'.[10]

Referring to works written by George Berkeley, Joseph Butler, and William Warburton, Lawrence E. Klein illustrates how Shaftesbury's framing of social benevolence as an innate human trait was met with controversy by many of his academic contemporaries and successors.[11] Klein continues that among the charges levelled against him, Shaftesbury was accused of 'underestimating the power of human selfishness', along with 'failing to provide an adequate criterion of virtue'.[12] As Bob Tennant notes, these principled objections were also often compounded by the 'personal' dislike many of these philosophers harboured towards Shaftesbury.[13] For example, Tennant notes how Isaac Hawkins Browne's 'once-famous poem' *On Design and Beauty*, Hawkins Browne seeks to highlight 'the corrosive effect' he understood 'Shaftesbury's aristocratic and narcissistic thinking' had upon his works.[14]

Significantly, damning critiques of Shaftesbury's works are also present in Talbot and Carter's familiar correspondence, demonstrating their critical engagement with his work. While, in a manner reflective of Klein's analysis, O'Brien argues that their distaste for Shaftesbury's philosophy stems from their critical engagement with his arguments (preferring the notion of individuals using 'reason' to discover moral 'truth' about 'Shaftesbury's idea of the moral sense), within their familiar correspondence we see more heated, generalised, personal attacks upon his legacy. Writing to Carter in November 1744 for example, Talbot claims that Shaftesbury's 'wrong and dangerous' (unspecified) ideas cast him as an 'ill influence',

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[10] Anthony Ashley Cooper, Third Earl of Shaftesbury, 'An Inquiry Concerning Virtue and Merit', in *Shaftesbury: Characteristics of Men, Manners, Opinions, Times*, ed. by Lawrence E. Klein (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), pp.163-230 (p.185).
[11] Klein, ibid.
[12] Ibid.
[13] Bob Tennant, *Conscience, Consciousness, and Ethics and Joseph Butler's Philosophy and Ministry* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2011), p.120.
[14] Ibid. Here, Tennant quotes the following passage from Hawkins Browne's verses in support of his argument ('from the posthumous *Poems upon Various Subjects, Latin and English*, London, J. Nourse, 1769, pp.96, 107'): 'True Poets are themselves a Poem, each/ A pattern of the lovely rules they teach;/ Those fair ideas that their fancy charm./ Inspire their Lives, and every action warm;/ And when they chaunt the praise of high desert,/ *They but transcribe the dictates of their heart*'.

and in November 1754 she describes him as a 'bigotted heathen' whose works perpetuated '[a]rrogance, bitterness, prejudice, and obscurity'.[15] '[F]ew things there are that do move my indignation', she adds with derision, 'and these sort of books are at the head of them'.[16]

In Carter's replies, we encounter a more cautious and pragmatic approach to making sense of the philosopher and his writings. For instance, she responded to Talbot's 1744 letter by writing merely that 'I perfectly forgive you any censure on my Lord Shaftesbury, for one half of his works I never read, and the other half I have forgot'.[17] 'I just remember in general', Carter adds with apparent vague recollection, 'that I was greatly charmed with some things in the Moralist, and that in others he appeared a very sad reasoner'.[18] Through this marked ambivalence, she creates a useful, ambiguous distance between her own and Shaftesbury's philosophical views, granting herself the freedom to develop the more promising aspects of his arguments without aligning herself too closely to this divisive figure.

Because Carter handled his works pragmatically, it would be misleading for this investigation to claim that her reflections upon social benevolence resulted solely from her direct and enthusiastic engagement with Shaftesbury's texts. Instead, it is more constructive for us to consider 'the extent to which', as Klein writes, 'a Shaftesburian moral and aesthetic tenor shaped the age's intellectual and cultural climate', with '[h]is enquires concerning virtue and religion, liberty and order, private autonomy and social cohesion' working as 'a starting point for writers throughout Britain'.[19] Vitally, this critical approach helps us to place Carter's writings into a tradition that is at once reflective and critical of Shaftesbury's writings, highlighting to us the importance of other contemporary intellectuals who – by adapting his arguments in works also accessible to Carter and Talbot – assisted in continuing his scholarly legacy.

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[15] Catherine Talbot, 'Miss Talbot to Mrs. Carter. Cuddesden, *Nov*. 15, 1744', in *A Series of Letters between Mrs. Elizabeth Carter and Miss Catherine Talbot,* I, pp.76-79 (p.79), & Talbot, 'Miss Talbot to Mrs. Carter. Deal [Nov. 26], 1754', in *A Series of Letters between Mrs. Elizabeth Carter and Miss Catherine Talbot,* II, pp.184-188 (p.187).
[16] Ibid.
[17] Carter, 'Mrs Carter to Miss Talbot. Deal, *Dec. 5*, 1744', in *A Series of Letters between Mrs. Elizabeth Carter and Miss Catherine Talbot,* I, pp.78-84 (p.82).
[18] Ibid.
[19] Klein, ibid.

Forming convincing scholarly links between Shaftesbury and Carter's writings, are works composed by Alexander Pope and Catharine Trotter Cockburn. These individuals are particularly useful to this investigation for three reasons: first, as writers of different (Christian) denominations, genders, and degrees of (contemporary and critical) renown, their accounts of social morality illustrate the far-reaching implications of Shaftesbury's arguments. Secondly, for allocating reason a role in the discernment of religious truth, their works offered Carter and other bluestockings a more appropriate account of social morality than the ideas outlined in *Characteristics*. Finally, and in sharp contrast to Shaftesbury, both figures are mentioned favourably in Carter and Talbot's letters. For instance, while Talbot wrote to Carter in August 1751 that Pope's 'eloquent expressions of benevolence and affection' often bore 'too much parade' (a comment likely tailored to both recognise and critique Pope's Catholicism), she describes him elsewhere as an 'amiable' and excellent' man, while Carter was quick to defend his 'strong expressions of benevolence and affection' as 'sincere'.[20]

As his biographer Howard Erskine-Hill argues, while Pope's 1733 poem 'An Essay on Man' is far from 'pure philosophy', this popular 'exploratory' work still considers philosophical matters such as 'the interdependence of love of self with love of others'.[21] This work thereby offers us an influential, contemporary, and imaginative account of social benevolence for us to place in relation to Carter's writings.[22] Laying the theoretical ground-work for this account, in the poem's second epistle Pope considers how our natural inclinations towards self-love and reason work in different, concurrent ways over a person's lifetime. In particular, he argues that while self-love encourages us to '[see] immediate

[20] For Talbot's comment on Pope's 'eloquent expressions', see 'Miss Talbot to Mrs Carter. Cuddesden, *Aug*. 16, 1751', in *A Series of Letters between Mrs. Elizabeth Carter and Miss Catherine Talbot,* II, pp.46-47 (p.46). For Talbot's description of Pope as an 'amiable' and 'excellent' man, see Catherine Talbot, 'Miss Talbot to Mrs. Carter, 1745 [location and precise date missing]', in *A Series of Letters between Mrs. Elizabeth Carter and Miss Catherine Talbot,* I, pp.115-120 (p.119). For Carter's account of Pope as 'sincere', see Carter, 'Mrs. Carter to Miss Talbot. Deal, *Aug*. 20, 1751', in *A Series of Letters between Mrs. Elizabeth Carter and Miss Catherine Talbot,* II, pp.48-50 (p.48).
[21] Howard Erskine-Hill, 'Pope, Alexander (1688-1744)', in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (published online 14 November 2018), <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/6209> [accessed 29th June 2019].
[22] Ibid.

good by present sense', reason in turn encourages us to 'check, deliberate, and advise' by looking to 'the future and the consequence' (II: 70-74).[23]

Expanding critically upon this stanza, Pope's eighteenth-century editor William Warburton contends that because the poet viewed 'both' inclinations to 'conspire to one end, namely, human happiness', he viewed it as 'folly' to 'consider them as two opposite principles', an insight supported in the fourth epistle of this poem.[24] Just '[a]s the small pebble stirs the peaceful lake' through a series of expanding 'circle[s]', in this section Pope contends that we can use our natural capacity for reason to spread self-love to others (V: 364). He continues:

> Extend it, let thy enemies have part:
>
> Grasp the whole worlds of Reason, Life, and Sense,
>
> In one close system of Benevolence:
>
> Happier as kinder, in whate'er degree,
>
> And height of Bliss but height of Charity (IV: 356-360)

Helping us to distinguish Pope's description of self-love from the selfish account of human nature described in *The Fable of the Bees*, Warburton adds that while Pope offers us a transformative account of human morality, Mandeville understood 'that Self-love was the origin of all those virtues which mankind most admire; and therefore foolishly supposed it was the end likewise'.[25]

Although difficult to square neatly with the co-existing sociable and anti-sociable versions of self that we will soon encounter in Carter's essays and letters, in terms both of style and substance Pope's social model of well-employed time can be aligned more closely to her writings than Shaftesbury's. Notably, in

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[23] Alexander Pope, 'An Essay on Man', in *An Essay on Man. By Alexander Pope Esp. Enlarged and Improved by the Author. Together with his MS. Additions and Variations, as in the Last Edition of his Works. With the NOTES of Mr. Warburton*, ed. by William Warburton (Ludgate Street: London, 1753).

[24] William Warburton, *An Essay on Man,* p.39.

[25] Warburton, *An Essay on Man*, p.111.

this poem social benevolence is framed as a moral state that one achieves by learning to negotiate distinct, natural impulses over time. Using the simile of a pebble causing ripples in water to imagine one's happy transition from a selfish to social state, like Carter Pope also turns to representations of movement to imagine a person's moral growth over time. 'An Essay on Man' therefore depicts social affection as a rational moral goal, rather than the natural trait outlined in *Characteristics*.

While not as widely-read as Pope's poetry, Cockburn's female Anglican works offer us a more proximate account of social benevolence to place in relation to Carter's writings. In August 1751 for instance, Carter wrote to Talbot claiming that while she had so far 'read but little' of the late author's works, from what she could so far discern Cockburn 'had a most remarkable clear understanding and an excellent heart'.[26] As her biographer Anne Kelley has noted, in Cockburn's 'later important publications' her 'consistent position was that moral principles are not innate, but discoverable by each individual through the use of the faculty of reason endowed by God', therefore writing from a point of understanding that resonated closely with bluestocking philosophy.[27]

Like Pope, in her 1743 work *Remarks upon Some Writers in the Controversy Concerning the Foundation of Moral Virtue and Moral Obligation*, Cockburn frames social benevolence as a desirable, eventual moral state. However, unlike Pope's poetic and 'exploratory' literary style, she approaches this concept through the medium of a conventional philosophical tract, arguing in prose to her reader that if individuals ceased to support one another, humanity would fail to thrive. 'Mankind is a system of creatures,' she writes, 'that continually need one another's assistance, without which they could not long subsist'.[28] Using language that echoes Shaftesbury's, Cockburn then explains that '[f]or this end they are made capable of acquiring social and benevolent affections (probably have the seeds of them implanted in

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[26] Carter, 'Miss Carter to Miss Talbot. Deal, *Aug*. 20, 1751', (p.49).

[27] Anne Kelley, 'Trotter [*married name* Cockburn], Catharine (1674?-1749)', in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (published online 4 October 2008) <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/6209> [accessed 29th October 2019].

[28] Catharine Trotter Cockburn, 'Remarks upon Some Writers in the Controversy Concerning the Foundation of Moral Virtue', in *The Works of Mrs. Catharine Cockburn,* ed. by Thomas Birch, 2 vols (London: J. and P. Knapton, 1751), I, pp.379-450 (p.413).

their nature), with a moral sense or conscience that approves of virtuous actions, and disapproves the contrary', adding that those 'drawn by irregular passions' may be encouraged to 'deviate from the rule of their duty'.[29]

Notably, within this publication we see Cockburn drawing on metaphors similar to those which we have seen Talbot employ in the first chapter of this thesis, along with both Astell and Lady Mary in the second, in order to imagine and communicate accounts of her own moral progress over time. In contrast to the idea of social benevolence being 'implanted' fully-formed, or created by extending our capacity for self-love to others, Cockburn frames this virtuous state as a rational, diligent, and life-long process of self-cultivation. She emphasises the 'duty' of the individual in realising divinely sown 'seeds' of morality, as well as the troubles we are likely face while going about this work. Recognising that due to the moral transgressions of others, those 'who steadily adher[e] to' this 'duty' are likely to suffer 'great disadvantages', Cockburn reassures her reader that 'our beneficent creator' will 'make suitable retributions in a future state'.[30]

While differing in their approaches, Shaftesbury, Pope, and Cockburn all depict social benevolence as a corruptible moral virtue, establishing a formative moral principle that we can see Carter engaging with, adapting, and expanding upon critically in her own letters and writings. In 1750 for instance, she used her temporary platform in Samuel Johnson's periodical *The Rambler* to form her own account of this issue, aligning herself within this broad Shaftesburian tradition by claiming that 'society is the true sphere of human virtue'.[31] 'In social, active life', she continues, 'difficulties will perpetually be met with; restraint of many kinds will be necessary; and studying to behave right in respect of these is a discipline of the human heart, useful to others and improving to itself'.[32]

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[29] Ibid.
[30] Ibid, pp.413-414.
[31] Carter, 'No. 44. Saturday, 18 August 1750', in (Samuel Johnson's) *The Rambler*, ed. by W.J. Bate and Albrecht B. Strauss, 3 vols (New Haven, London: Yale University Press, 1969), I, pp.237-242 (p.241).
[32] Ibid.

Instead of forming a progressive, linear narrative exploring how our natural inclination to social benevolence can be extended or cultivated over one's life time, on this occasion Carter emphasises the tensions that she understood to exist *constantly* between our social and anti-sociable tendencies. Although one may to learn ways to better restrain the latter, Carter stresses how its presence has and always will continue to inform all human interactions in the temporal word. As the next section of this chapter will now demonstrate, it was this understanding of an ongoing, unresolved moral conflict that encouraged Carter to combine conflicting portrayals of pedestrian movement in her correspondence, in order to form coinciding social and anti-sociable imaginings of self.

Section 2) Putting theory into practise: how Carter used pedestrian movement to explore socially engaged, and anti-sociable imaginings of self in her correspondence

From her nephew Montagu Pennington's claim in 1807 that 'she was a very good walker, and in almost all weather walked a very great deal', to Mascha Hansen's observation in 2017 that she 'considered walking to be an essential part of her regimen', scholars have long recognised the prominence of pedestrian activity in Carter's correspondence.[33] However, the ways in which she then used these frequent descriptions of herself walking to explore ideas about self, time and employment has yet to be explored fully in critical discourse. Whether she set 'forth a walking' at 5am ('you cannot think how it provokes me to lie muzzing in stuff and feathers, while the whole creation invites me abroad'), or went for a 'moonlight walk along the sea shore' ('a favourite entertainment with me, as it helps to indulge the melancholy turn of my thoughts'), walking has no one set nature, purpose, or routine in Carter's letters,

[33] Montagu Pennington, *Memoirs of the Life of Mrs. Elizabeth Carter,* p.73, & Mascha Hansen, '"All the World is Gone to the Assembly": Elizabeth Carter's Headaches, Nerves, and (In)Sociability', *Literature and Medicine*, 35 (2017), 409-430 (p.417).

offering instead a fertile literary space in which to draw together contrasting versions of her moral growth over time.[34]

By looking to a letter written to Talbot in December 1746 for instance, one can see Carter establishing, contrasting, and evaluating socially engaged, and anti-sociable imaginings of self while describing a journey that she had undertaken recently from Deal to Canterbury. In this letter, Carter relates how she became frustrated with the slow and cramped progress of her 'drawling stage coach', and that upon hearing that they were to stop and pick up more travellers, decided to travel to her destination on foot. 'I made my escape and left my name with every passenger I met on the road', she writes, 'for the information of the coachman that I had not deserted him entirely'.[35] '[B]esides', she continues irreverently, the coach driver often had 'the satisfaction of discovering a glimpse of me, dancing before him like a spirit which he was not very likely to overtake' (p.178).

Carter remarks that although her driver took her decision to walk 'tolerably well at first', the further she walked the further she tested his 'patience' (pp.178-179). She continues that having travelled for several miles in her wake, he at last mustered 'his utmost efforts to come up with me', where upon he proceeded to 'storm' about her unbecoming behaviour (p.179). First complaining that her fast pace had done his horses 'more harm than' had they transported 'forty passengers', he added Carter 'need not… make such oughts of his coach, for as good gentlewomen as ever were hatched had rode in it before' her (p.179).[36] 'I was frightened into the conviction that all Jehu's arguments were just', she concludes, 'and so humbly begging pardon of him and his horses' climbed back 'into the coach', and 'proceeded very quietly in it to Canterbury' (p.179).

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[34] For Carter's description of her 5am walk, see Carter, 'Mrs. Carter to Miss Talbot. Deal, *Sept*. 15, 1747', in *A Series of Letters between Mrs. Elizabeth Carter and Miss Catherine Talbot,* I, pp.216-220 (p.217). For her moonlit excursion, see Carter, 'Mrs. Carter to Miss Talbot. Deal, *Nov*. 5, 1741', in *A Series of Letters between Mrs. Elizabeth Carter and Miss Catherine Talbot,* I, pp.8-10 (p.10).

[35] Carter, 'Mrs. Carter to Miss Talbot. Canterbury, *Dec*. 8, 1746', in *A Series of Letters between Mrs. Elizabeth Carter and Miss Catherine Talbot,* I, pp.177-181 (p.178). Further references to this letter are given after quotations in the text.

[36] By referring to himself as 'old scratch', Carter's driver likens himself to the devil.

While the account hinges upon descriptions of physical activity, Carter also uses the progressive, steady, but frustrating passage of the stagecoach as a metaphor for her moral development, as imagined in accordance to a socially benevolent model of well-employed time. Before we unpack how through her driver's hostility, Carter recognises that she had upset a specific *civic* code of ethical conduct, for now it is beneficial to focus on how this narrative establishes social and independent accounts of self. For example, by portraying herself as 'dancing' before the coach like a mischievous will-o'-the-wisp 'spirit', Carter depicts her willing departure from an orderly social body, using pedestrian travel as a vehicle to pursue her own inclinations. Directly alongside this independent account of self, Carter also conveys the pains she took to not only walk in proximity to the coach, but leave her name with people on the road for her driver to follow, thereby establishing an alternative, social version of self for us to consider.

Weaving these differing accounts of her past behaviour into one narrative, Carter depicts the interplay that she understood to occur 'perpetually' between her sense of obligation to live in accordance to the wants and needs of others, and her desire to find time for herself. Although her eventual choice to return to the coach frames society as the 'true sphere of human virtue', Carter's enthusiastic departure from this 'drawling' mode of transport illustrates the 'difficulties' involved in leading a 'social, active life'. Notably, this moral conflict becomes heightened in Carter's correspondence, in moments where she describes walking for long distances with friends and family. Within these examples, conflicting portrayals of travel helped her to acknowledge how seemingly anti-sociable tendencies encouraged her to pull away not just from formal, but familiar social communities.

In a letter dated from May 1744 for instance, Carter recalls a series of walks that she had undertaken recently with 'three or four' friends (or 'poor souls', as she refers to them here with playful irony) around Deal.[37] Recounting the adventures of their latest group outing to Talbot, she writes to her friend that ''tis not to be told the tracts of land we rambled over; but I happen to be much too volatile for my suffering

[37] Carter, 'Mrs. Carter to Miss Talbot. Deal, May 24, four in the morning [year unspecified]', in *A Series of Letters between Mrs. Elizabeth Carter and Miss Catherine Talbot,* I, pp.56-60 (p.58). Further references to this letter are given after quotations in the text.

fellow-travellers, who come panting and grumbling at a considerable distance, and labour along like Christian climbing up the hill of difficulty' (p.58). 'I often divert myself', Carter reflects, 'by proposing in the midst of my walk to call at places a dozen miles off, to hear the universal squall they set up, that I intended to be the death of them', adding that 'I protest I do not know of any harm I have done, except pulling up a few trees by the roots, carrying off the sails of a windmill, and over-setting half a dozen straggling cottages' (p.58).

This time mobilising the passage of her walking group to imagine her moral growth over time, Carter draws upon depictions of her travel within and beyond its parameters to frame communal and isolated versions of self. Central to shaping the isolated version is Carter's account of herself as a 'volatile' walker, a term she employs elsewhere to characterise the more discursive aspects of her 'humour' and 'principles', as well as her struggles to master traditional accomplishments such as 'drawing' and 'music'.[38] Although not intended as a literal description of her behaviour, for evoking notions of rapid, unpredictable, and disruptive motion this term helped Carter to articulate her longing to stray from popular views of socially appropriate behaviour.

Helping to reinforce this 'volatile' imagining of self, are the well-known fictional character references Carter threads into this anti-sociable account of her past behaviour. For instance, by writing that in their attempts to match her pace, her friends underwent trials similar to those suffered by Christian in John Bunyan's 1678 work *The Pilgrim's Progress*, Carter distances herself from this convivial social group.[39] Through the portrayal of herself upturning windmills at the head of this group, she then evokes Miguel de

[38] For Carter's description of her volatile 'principles', see Carter, 'Mrs Carter to Miss Talbot. Deal, *July.* 20, 1744', in *A Series of Letters between Mrs. Elizabeth Carter and Miss Catherine Talbot,* I, pp.64-67 (p.65). For her 'humour', see Carter, 'Mrs Carter to Miss Talbot. Canterbury, *Jan*. 20, 1748', in *A Series of Letters between Mrs. Elizabeth Carter and Miss Catherine Talbot,* I, pp.245-250 (p.245). For her ineffective, 'volatile' approach to mastering drawing and music, see Carter, 'Mrs Carter to Miss Talbot. Canterbury, *Aug.* 1, 1745', in *A Series of Letters between Mrs. Elizabeth Carter and Miss Catherine Talbot,* I, pp.103-106 (p.105).

[39] John Bunyan, *The Pilgrim's Progress,* ed. by Roger Pooley (London: Penguin Classics, 2008). Standing before 'hill of difficulty', Christian reflects that 'The Hill, though high, I covet to ascend,/ The difficulty will not me offend./ For I perceive the way to life lies here;/ Come, pluck up, heart, let's neither faint nor fear;/ Better, tho' difficult, the right way to go,/ Than wrong, though easy, where the end is woe' (p.46).

Cervantes' 1605 novel *Don Quixote*. Despite the loud objections of his squire Sancho Panza, within this work Don Quixote charged boldly at these looming structures, labouring under the misapprehension that they were giants.[40] Through both well-known literary references, Carter forms an account of self at once isolated from, and detrimental to the safety of her friends.

Establishing the rival, social version of self in this letter, Carter also communicates how it was her idea to first 'engage' these companions, framing herself the founder of this walking assembly. Suggesting playfully that they should visit places 'a dozen miles off' from their pre-determined route, Carter also illustrates the close relationships that she shared with her fellow walkers, feeling comfortable enough to tease them without losing their friendship. Lastly, Carter writes that while most decided to abandon this company, her 'youngest sister' pledged 'never to forsake me if I should walk to the North pole', stressing how she continued to enjoy companionship on her subsequent walks around Deal (p.59). As we have seen in her Canterbury letter, Carter therefore ends this narrative with the image of her travelling not as a solitary pedestrian, but as part of a social collective.

While both letters portray the communal mode of travel as the most orderly, by departing from her stagecoach and walking group Carter depicts conflict between her social and anti-sociable inclinations. She understood that whether conducted in a hostile or convivial context, social benevolence was an often confining *choice* that one must make repeatedly, in order to progress along a Shaftesburian model of virtuous growth over time. It was not only for being a solitary mode of travel, however, that Carter framed her lone walks as contrary to leading a 'social, active life'. As this next section of this chapter recognises, she was also sensitive to how rambling alone as an affluent female complicated social versions of well-employed time.

[40] Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra, *Don Quixote*, ed. & trans. by John Rutherford (London: Penguin Classics, 2003). On hearing Don Quixote's intension 'to fight a battle' with 'thirty or more monstrous giants' that he viewed in the distance, Sancho Panza replies '[l]ook you here... those over there aren't giants, they're windmills, and what look to you like arms are sails – when the wind turns them they make the millstones go round' (pp.63-64).

Section 3) Expanding upon the social model of well-employed time: how Carter's walks at once conformed with, and differed from the conduct expected of a 'good gentlewoman'

Chief amongst the accusations levelled at Carter by her disgruntled driver, was that by choosing to walk ahead of his stagecoach she had acted in an improper manner, 'for as good gentlewomen as ever were hatched had rode in' his vehicle before her. Whether written by Carter as a straightforward recollection, comic exaggeration, or purely fanciful rendering of his remarks at the time, this scene offers us valuable insight into her understanding of wide-spread codes of appropriate behaviour. Vitally, Carter's portrayal of self in relation to her driver's anger highlights that while her choice to walk had upset a popular, pervasive set of expectations of how she should act as a 'good gentlewoman', she also grasped that there were other ways to read her pedestrian status. By unpacking these competing interpretations, we can better comprehend how the time Carter devoted to 'rambling about by [her]self' could be seen as both appropriate and inappropriate by contemporary civic standards.

As Amanda Vickery argues her book *The Gentleman's Daughter*, in eighteenth-century Britain 'outer manners were' widely viewed as a 'reflection of inner civility', with one's 'external conduct' operating as an 'expression of an ethical code'.[41] Notably, recent criticism has sought to illustrate ways in which modes of transport were seen as integral to both male and female displays of genteel social rank, establishing examples that can help us to navigate the heated exchange between Carter and her driver. In her article 'Jane Austen's "Excellent Walker": Pride, Prejudice, and Pedestrianism' for instance, Olivia Murphy observes how various eighteenth and nineteenth-century writers employed 'the term "carriage-folk" as shorthand for genteel status'.[42]

[41] Amanda Vickery, *The Gentleman's Daughter: Women's lives in Georgian England* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 1999), p.23.
[42] Murphy, p.127.

Murphy continues that by contrast, pedestrians are often 'associated with poverty' in 'both fictional and non-fictional' contemporary literature, with writers often portraying long-distance walkers as victims of 'rough treatment' and 'physical abuse'.[43] To support her argument, she notes that while 'undertaking a walking tour of England in the 1780s', '[t]he German Carl Philip Moritz' recorded how a 'pedestrian seems in this country to be a sort of beast of passage- stared at, pitied, suspected and shunned by everybody who meets him'.[44] Resonating with many of the tropes that we have seen Carter mobilise forty years previously, Moritz's observation can help us to understand why her choice to walk to Canterbury was so offensive to her driver.

Importantly, Carter stresses that while her driver was initially tolerant of her decision to leave his coach, the greater the distance she travelled on foot, the more she established herself as an undesirable *pedestrian* in his understanding. Because of this subjective shift, this figure then felt emboldened to chastise an individual of a higher social rank than his own, sensitive to how her rejection of his vehicle could reflect badly not only upon her genteel reputation but – in the eyes of those watching their unequal progress to Canterbury – his social standing as a respectable coach driver. Carter therefore uses his stagecoach as a symbol for an orderly social body, understanding that her departure from it had caused them both to deviate from a widely-held civic code of ethical conduct.

Helping us to understand Carter' portrayal of self not just as a problematic gentleperson, but gentle*woman*, is how her choice to walk to Canterbury also upset specific notions of genteel female virtue. As Vickery expands in *The Gentleman's Daughter*, outward displays of gentlewomanly behaviour in this period typically included exhibiting 'an air of dignified ease and graceful control, taking care to treat others according to their status', as well as adhering to the 'Everywoman' rule that 'she was to be modest and chaste'.[45] Through her portrayal of the coach driver's anger, Carter acknowledges that by

[43] Ibid.
[44] Ibid.
[45] Vickery, ibid.

travelling as a lone pedestrian she had challenged each of these feminine ideals, opting for exertion above ease, exhibition above modesty, volatility above conformity.

Through her striking choice of biblical references, Carter further distances herself from these underlying principles of good gentlewomanly behaviour in her letter to Talbot. Referring to her driver as the Old Testament King 'Jehu', she frames herself by association as Queen Jezebel, who for her vanity and blasphemy if portrayed to suffer a public and ignoble death at Jehu's hands. With her face freshly painted, Jezebel is described as being thrown from her bedroom window by Jehu's men with such violence that 'her blood was sprinkled on the wall' below, before being trampled 'under foot' by his chariot and horses (II Kings 9.33). Conceding reluctantly that 'she is a king's daughter', Jehu later orders his soldiers to 'bury' Jezebel's body in accordance to the dignity of her high social rank, only for them to find 'no more of her than the skull, and the feet, and the palms of her hands' (II Kings 9:34-35).

Anticipating that Talbot would grasp the notions of righteous violence associated with Jehu's name readily, in her 1744 letter Carter mobilises his coach and horses as a well-known symbol of retribution for transgressive female behaviour. Significantly, when describing an 'eight mile' walk that she and a 'fellow-traveller' undertook around Deal to Talbot three years later, Carter progresses to make this implied connection between female, affluent pedestrian activity and violence explicit.[46] In a manner reflective of her Canterbury letter, here she relates that while they set off in easy conditions (with the pair not only enjoying 'fine' weather', but being met 'with some hospitable people who refreshed us with tea upon the road'), the longer they travelled on foot, the more vulnerable they became to danger (p.231).

'[A]las', she continues, these 'extremely pleasant' circumstances 'did not continue so all the way, for in a narrow lane we were met in a very furious fashion by some wild horses, who had run away from their owners' (p.231). Carter writes that in her surprise, 'my companion set up such an outrageous scream for

[46] Carter, 'Mrs. Carter to Miss Talbot, Deal, *Oct*. 29, 1747', in *A Series of Letters between Mrs. Elizabeth Carter and Miss Catherine Talbot,* I, pp.227-234 (p.230). Further references to this letter are given after quotations in the text. Judging by the date of this letter, it is likely that Carter's fellow traveller is her youngest sister, the sole remaining companion of the walking group that disbanded three years previously.

me to jump over a five-barred gate to avoid them, as quite confused and stupefied me', before writing of how she herself was 'dragged' out of harm's way 'with such violence that I was quite at a loss to know whether it was she or the horse that had got hold of me' (p.231). '[I] made a woeful figure', she reflects, 'for this vehemence of tugging made a miserable disjointing of all my apparel', concluding that '[m]any a weary stitch must I set before I can bring the tattered state of my wardrobe into tolerable repair' (p.232).

Likening her companion's strength to that of a wild horse, Carter highlights how the 'violence' portrayed in this narrative was at least partly figurative. To borrow Murphy's terminology, it is also notable that the 'rough treatment' that Carter receives within this account results from an accident, rather than deliberate 'physical abuse' from people who bore ill-will against pedestrians. Nevertheless, Carter still uses violent imagery to illustrate how her long-distance walks jeopardised the dignity of her high social status, again turning to a rendering of charging horses to imagine retribution for her actions. Portraying her transformation from a refined lady drinking tea at the start of this walk into a 'woeful figure' with torn clothes at journey's end, Carter depicts the damaging implications that pedestrianism could have for a gentlewoman's reputation, thereby realising the suggestions of violence evoked in her Canterbury letter.

At the same time as imaging herself undergoing a social fall from grace however, Carter also depicts herself being rescued from danger by her younger sister. By rendering this act of intervention, Carter highlights how although her choice to go for a long walk risked the dignity of her rank, by choosing to go about this walk with a loyal companion she managed to uphold at some standards of social propriety. Portraying herself being pulled away from the dangers posed by her rambling path with force, Carter at once acknowledges the normative challenge that her desire to walk posed to custom, while recognising the importance of these customs by presenting herself as being saved from ruin by her sister.

In both instances, Carter recognises how walking had caused her to challenge a popular, societal interpretation of virtuous conduct. Yet the irreverent manner of her writing also indicates how there were more positive ways to interpret Carter's status as a pedestrian gentlewoman in this period, making, we should note, a set of moves that has been dated mostly to late eighteenth, and early nineteenth-century

Romantic culture. For example, in ‘Jane Austen’s Excellent Walker’ Murphy identifies a link between Romanticism and walking by unpacking Mrs Hurst’s mocking praise of Elizabeth Bennet’s walking abilities, in Austen’s 1813 novel *Pride and Prejudice*.[47] Murphy argues that when viewed with the reactions offered to us by the book’s other characters, ‘the question of how to interpret Elizabeth’s walking is shown to be surprising complex’, exposing how ‘different and inevitably opposed types of walking, with corresponding political, cultural, and social implications, proliferated in the Romantic period’.[48]

Notably, Murphy frames her argument in relation to two influential studies, conducted by Anne Wallace and Robin Jarvis respectively. In her field-defining work *Walking, Literature, and English Culture: the Origins and uses of Peripatetic in the Nineteenth Century*, Wallace argues that in the wake of the early nineteenth-century ‘transport revolution’ (during which there was ‘an increasing range of options in conveyance, speed’ and ‘price’ of public travel opinions), ‘walking became a matter of choice’ to wealthier members of society.[49] ‘Since the common person need not travel by walking’, she reasons, ‘so walking travellers need not necessarily be poor’.[50] In *Romantic Writing and Pedestrian Travel*, Jarvis seeks to adjust this idea, arguing that it was in fact ‘in the last ten to fifteen years of the eighteenth century’ with the ‘phenomenon of the pedestrian tour’ that ‘public attitudes were challenged’, ‘new cultural practices’ were born, and the concept of long-distance walking as an ‘aesthetic choice’ was established in Britain.[51] As Murphy notes, ‘[a]lthough they disagree over the dates of its emergence, both Wallace and Jarvis refer to this activity as “Romantic” walking’.[52]

Challenging Murphy, Wallace and Jarvis’ critical insight, Carter’s Canterbury letter demonstrates how the idea of walking as an affluent and leisured social ‘choice’ preceded the Romantic period. For example,

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[47] Murphy, p.122.
[48] Ibid, pp.122 & 124.
[49] Wallace, p.62.
[50] Ibid.
[51] Jarvis, p.19.
[52] Murphy, p.125 & p.139.

through her driver's speech Carter articulates the customary 'public attitudes' that she had confused, by travelling for several miles ahead of his coach on foot. Yet through the laborious nature of his profession, and unrefined features of his language (exemplified through slang words such as 'old scratch' and 'hatched'), Carter also stresses how her driver's social rank was lower than her own, thereby giving him a different perspective of her conduct. Far from functioning as a voice of infallible condemnation, by illustrating these distinctions Carter establishes how this hostile, vulgar other articulates just *one* possible interpretation of her capacity as a pedestrian gentlewoman.

Vitally, by writing to Talbot Carter understood that she was addressing an audience who would not only empathise with her decision to walk, but enjoy her irreverent portrayal of the societal outrage this decision induced. As such, this investigation has found it useful to apply an observation that Wallace makes of affluent members of society during the transport revolution, to Carter and Talbot's early eighteenth-century privileged circumstances: these individuals 'could afford both the time and the money to travel by various means and for purely recreational purposes'.[53] From this advantaged position, the friends shared an insight into how the most desirable form of travel could jar against popular views of the most safe, convenient, and refined. Although unconventional, Carter therefore employed the image of herself walking before her driver to depict herself as his social and intellectual superior, understanding that her choice of travel was both made on rational grounds, and emblematic of her high status.

Whether by indulging her desire to spend time alone, or challenging the manners popularly expected of a gentlewoman, Carter was sensible of the ways in which her solitary walks confused popular, socially framed models of well-employed time. Yet the irony with which she conveyed herself as a 'rambling' pedestrian, coupled with the confined portrayals of motion also threaded into these narratives, creates a concurrent, alternative version of her past conduct for us to consider. By looking to the interplay of independent and confined accounts of herself walking – along with the ways in which her privileged rank

[53] Wallace, p.62.

often complicated their distinctions – we can better comprehend how social interpretations of virtue offered Carter accessible, relevant, but imperfect ways to trace her moral progress over time.

<u>Section 4) Introducing the intellectual model of well-employed time: contextualising the 'peripatetic' relationship between walking and thinking in Carter's letters and writings</u>

On the 26th of July 1763, Carter wrote a letter to her friend Elizabeth Vesey from Spa, in which she describes the 'amusements' keeping her and their fellow bluestocking Elizabeth Montagu occupied during their European tour. 'You will be disappointed that I can see but little of this romantic country of which you are so fond', she explains, because of 'a set of villains lurking about the woods renders it unsafe for me to walk alone'.[54] Because of this danger, Carter describes how she had been obliged to explore Spa's surrounding rural landscape with company. Contrasting her own adventurous temperament to that of her more cautious travelling companion, she recalls how 'Mrs. Montagu and I walked this morning to the top of a hill, but not with perfect ease, for she was seized with a panic in the midst of the wood, which made us walk ourselves out of breath to get within view of the town'.[55]

Contrasting her longing to explore the woods of Spa alone, with her eagerness to accompany her anxious friend back to town, within this letter Carter imagines her desire at once to comply with and deviate from social versions of ethical conduct. In addition to making these now familiar sets of moves, however, there are other ways in which Carter uses figurative, contrasting portrayals of pedestrian movement to form differing accounts of her ethical progress over time in this instance. Justifying her resolve not to venture out on foot with company again, Carter continues to Vesey that 'I should lose all freedom of rambling and

[54] Carter, 'Letter III. Spa, *July* 26, 1763', in *A Series of Letters between Mrs. Elizabeth Carter and Miss Catherine Talbot,* III, pp.220-225 (p.224).
[55] Ibid.

of thinking, with a guard', and in this brief reflection, she exposes to us a model of well-employed time different to those identified previously in this chapter.[56]

Crucially, Carter associated the time she devoted to 'rambling about by [her]self' with the cultivation of her mental abilities. She therefore also drew upon pedestrian travel to depict her moral growth according to intellectual models of well-employed time, helping her to articulate the tensions between not only her social and anti-sociable inclinations, but social and scholarly lives. In these moments, Carter employs disorderly portrayals of motion to depict her uncustomary intellectual ambitions, offering us a new way of reading the imagining of herself as a lone rambler. As such, this section outlines the long-established, widely-understood, and revered cultural precedents that encouraged Carter to draw links between her mind and feet.

Fundamental to establishing this alternative version of well-employed time, are the scholarly practices Carter encountered while studying ancient Greek language and culture. In the letter conveying her short-lived communal walks around Deal for instance, Carter describes the rambles she continued to enjoy with her youngest sister as their 'peripatetic way of living', referring to an intellectual practice that thrived in this classical era.[57] As Catharine Löffler notes in *Walking in the City: Urban Experience and Literary Psychogeography in Eighteenth-Century London*, the 'Peripatetic School' was 'founded circa 335 BC' by 'Aristotle and his philosophical teachings'.[58] She explains that the term 'derived from the Greek *peripatos* ("covered walkway"), the name of the place where the Peripatetics met, as well as *peripatetikos*, which describes the activity of walking' (p.160). Because Aristotle conducted many of his lessons on foot, Löffler argues that 'peripatetic' has long been used not only to describe one of his 'follower[s]', but 'a

[56] Ibid.

[57] Carter, 'Mrs. Carter to Miss Talbot. Deal, *May* 24, four in the morning', p.59.

[58] Catharine Löffler, *Walking in the City: Urban Experience and Literary Psychogeography in Eighteenth-Century London* (Wiesbaden: Springer, 2017) p.160. Further references to this publication are given after quotations in the text.

person who walks about', 'movements to and fro', or 'any act of itinerant wandering or meandering'(p.160).

Applying these abstract definitions to examples in eighteenth-century literature, Löffler then considers how the writer John Thelwall employed this term to bridge the concepts of 'philosophy and walking' together in his 1793 work *The Peripatetic* (p.160). She contends that through both his carefully chosen title, and the name of his leading character 'Theophrastus' (so named after 'Aristotle's successor in the Peripatetic School'), Thelwall 'invites readers on a philosophical ramble', providing 'a pedestrian excursion that is strongly influenced by […] the idea of walking as an art' (p.160). In addition to making these moves, in *The Peripatetic* Thelwall 'walks' from one moral topic to another. For instance, he closes the second section ('The Valetudinarian') with the depiction of himself sallying 'forth on a pedestrian expedition', and opens the third ('Visions of Philosophy') with that of him following the example set by 'ancient sages', and 'pursu[ing his] meditations on foot'.[59]

Confident that Talbot would grasp the ancient, intellectual connotations of the term 'peripatetic', Carter employs it within their correspondence to situate her current walking routine into a well-known scholarly tradition. This is not to say that it was Carter's design to enlighten her sister as they walked together around Deal, or that she valued Aristotelian philosophy as a paragon for her scholarship. Instead, it is important to recognise how (in a manner reflective of her pragmatic handling of Shaftesbury's tracts) her correspondence conveys a mixed view of the philosopher, once again creating an ambiguous distance between her intellectual life, and that of an influential example. Writing to Montagu on the 17th of June 1769 for instance, Carter considers that Aristotle 'is, no doubt, very respectable from an amazing depth and precision of understanding; but it was un-enlivened by a single ray of poetic genius, and utterly destitute of the colouring of imagination'.[60]

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[59] John Thelwall, *The Peripatetic,* ed. by Judith Thompson (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2001), p.78.
[60] Carter 'Letter CXV. Deal, June 17, 1769', *Letters from Mrs. Carter to Mrs Montagu, Between the Years 1755 and 1800. Chiefly Upon Literary and Moral Subjects*, ed. by Montagu Pennington, 3 vols (London: F.C. and J. Rivington, 1817), II, pp.21-26 (p.22).

Because Carter was ambivalent towards the originator of this practice, it is most useful to view the ‘peripatetic’ motifs in her writings as part of an expansive intellectual school, as sustained by other prominent scholars. In his 1580 collection of *Essays* for instance, the French philosopher Michel de Montaigne expands upon the productive relationship that he traced between walking and thinking. Montaigne’s *Essays* are particularly helpful to place in relation to Carter’s writings because, and as Paul J. Smith has noted, Pierre Coste’s edition of this work alone went through ‘five reprints’ in London ‘between 1724 and 1745’, beginning ‘a period of growing knowledge about the life and work of Montaigne’ in Britain.[61] With Talbot describing Montaigne as a ‘lively and original’ figure (if lacking in ‘right and serious principles’) to Carter in 1743, the two friends participated within this contemporary movement, looking upon the philosopher’s writings as a worthy topic of discussion.[62]

In a manner echoing my present analysis of Carter’s letters, John O’Brien argues that ‘the essayist’s attitude to Aristotle’ was ‘ambiguous’.[63] For example, O’Brien handles Montaigne’s comment that ‘as for gnawing my nails over the study of Plato or Aristotle, or stubbornly pursuing some part of knowledge, I have never done it’, as evidence that Montaigne associated Aristotle’s field-defining philosophy with unhelpful ‘intellectual rigidity’ and ‘Scholastic jargon’.[64] While finding his ‘doctrinal status’ problematic, O’Brien considers that ‘Montaigne’s express statements about Aristotle should not be taken entirely at face value’, because ‘[r]ecent research has shown that he was fully conversant with Aristotelian ethics, rhetoric, and dialectic’.[65] Further to these newly traced conceptual links, at least one *methodological* connection can be drawn between the intellectual lives of Aristotle and Montaigne, with both figures valuing walking as a stimulating vehicle for their scholarship.

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[61] Paul J. Smith, ‘Montaigne in the World’, in *The Oxford Handbook of Montaigne,* ed. by Philippe Desan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), pp.287-305 (p.288).
[62] Talbot, ‘Miss Talbot to Mrs. Carter. Cuddesden, *Oct. 5*, 1743’, in *A Series of Letters between Mrs. Elizabeth Carter and Miss Catherine Talbot,* I, pp.37-40 (p.39).
[63] John O’Brien, ‘Montaigne and Antiquity’, in *The Cambridge Companion to Montaigne*, ed. by Ullrich Langer (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), pp.53-73 (p.59).
[64] Ibid.
[65] Ibid.

Describing his own peripatetic routine, in the third of his *Essays* Montaigne outlines the mental benefits he understood one could reap, by incorporating places to walk into one's home. Having written of his desire to create 'a level gallery... a hundred yards long and twelve yards wide' in his own household, he argues that '[e]very place of retirement requires an ambulatory. My thoughts doze off if I squat them down. My wit will not budge if my legs are not moving – which applies to all who study without books'.[66] Montaigne contends that even walking in the confines of his library could help to cultivate his thoughts, reflecting that '[t]here I turn over the leaves of this book or that, a bit at a time without order or design. Sometimes my mind wanders off, at others I walk to and fro, noting down and dictating these whims of mine'.[67] 'I assay', he continues, 'making my dominion over [my library] absolutely pure, withdrawing this one corner from all intercourse, filial, conjugal and civic'.[68]

Through making this series of moves, Montaigne outlines a scholarly practice that in many ways differs from Carter's, highlighting in particular the pivotal role that gender difference played in shaping their respective social and intellectual lives. For instance, although both wrote in domestic environments, in his *Essay* Montaigne describes a study space far removed from the customary female social duties that – as I will demonstrate in the next section of this chapter – Carter faced regularly while working at home in Deal. By recognising these frequent disruptions to her train of thought, we can rationalise why Carter was encouraged to venture out into environments where, as a *gentlewoman*, she portrayed herself as vulnerable to ridicule and violence. Sensitive to how her long-distance solitary walks could be seen as problematic, Carter depicted herself as a 'volatile' and 'rambling' pedestrian, imagery that contrasts strongly with the depiction of Montaigne walking in the safety of his own, private 'dominion'.

Nevertheless, Montaigne's claim that '[m]y wit will not budge if my legs are not moving' still resonates strongly with Carter's repeated linking of 'rambling and thinking' in her familiar correspondence. By

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[66] Montaigne, 'On three kinds of social intercourse', in *Michael de Montaigne: The Complete Essays*, trans. & ed. by M. A. Screech (London: Penguin Classics, 2003), pp.922-934 (p.933).
[67] Ibid.
[68] Ibid.

making this association, she communicates how she esteemed walking as an effective scholarly tool, moulding it to suit the demands and restraints of her female, genteel circumstances. As we have seen Löffler argue, the term 'peripatetic' has long been used to describe not one, but a *range* of pedestrian intellectual practises, whether exercised by walking 'to and fro' as described in Montaigne's *Essay*, or in the 'wandering or meandering' fashion we encounter in Carter's letters. With each writer linking physical movement to mental travel, both portray walking as vital to their progression along a scholarly imagining of well-employed time.

In John Pomfret's 1700 poem 'The Choice', we witness a contemporary English writer addressing the themes raised in Montaigne's *Essay* in verse. While, unlike Montaigne, Pomfret and his writings go unmentioned in Pennington's editions of Carter's letters and writings, like Montaigne this poet was read and discussed widely among Carter's peers. He features, for instance, among the list of only twenty-two writers addressed in Samuel Johnson's *The Lives of the English Poets*, in which Johnson considers that '[p]erhaps no composition in our language has been oftener perused than Pomfret's *Choice*'.[69] Importantly, 'The Choice' offers us an influential example of how the peripatetic model was embraced by English writers at the opening of the eighteenth-century, contributing to the literary landscape that was available for Carter draw upon decades later.

Within this poem, Pomfret outlines a vision of genteel 'private Seat', structured – like the space portrayed in Montaigne's *Essay* – to accommodate the needs and routines of a male intellectual (5).[70] He outlines, for instance, 'a stately Row/ Of Shady Limes, or Sycamores', leading to a place of 'silent Study' in which the works of 'all the Noblest Authors are held':

> HORACE, and VIRGIL, in whose mighty Lines
>
> Immortal Wit, and Solid Learning shines.

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[69] Samuel Johnson, *The Lives of the English Poets: and a Criticism of their Works* (London: R. Dodley, 1795), p.530.
[70] John Pomfret, 'The Choice', *Poems upon Several Occasions. By the Reverend Mr. John Pomfret*, 6th edn (London: D. Brown, J. Walthoe, A. Bettesworth, and E. Taylor, 1724), pp.1-7.

Sharp JUVENAL, and Am'rous OVID too,

Who all the Turns of Love's soft Passion knew. (15-22)

Depicting a tree-lined path leading towards this well-stocked library, Pomfret frames walking as crucial to his ideal everyday scholarly routine. Although not mentioning pedestrian travel explicitly, the emphasis that he places upon the shade offered to him by these trees evokes the 'covered walkway' that, as we have seen Catharine Löffler explain, was a crucial component of Aristotle's peripatetic tradition. Instead of simply integrating this library into his house therefore, Pomfret chose to establish a gap of time and space between them, distancing his domestic and academic lives with the passage of his feet. Indeed, as the poem continues Pomfret provides us with imagining of self moving each morning to this environment, blurring the line between mental and physical exercise to frame motion as vital to his mental growth:

In some of these, as Fancy should Advice,

I'd always take my Morning Exercise:

For sure no Minutes bring us more Content,

Than those in Pleasing, Useful Studies spent. (29-32)

In the context of her familiar correspondence, irreverently framed depictions of disorderly movement helped Carter to examine the unconventional nature of her female intellectual ambitions. However, one can see her engaging with Montaigne and Pomfret's more structured peripatetic model in other literary contexts, as demonstrated by her 1745 poem *To Dr. Walwyn: On his design of cutting down a shady walk*.[71] Hoping to persuade the classically-educated Doctor to save this 'walk' from destruction, this time she illustrates the connection between walking and thinking by turning tactfully to orderly, structured, and protected portrayals of pedestrianism:

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[71] Carter, 'To Dr. Walwyn', *Memoirs of the Life of Mrs. Elizabeth Carter, with a New Edition of her Poems,* ed. by Montagu Pennington, 2nd edn., 2 vols (London: F. C. and J. Rivington, 1808), II, pp.56-57.

Ah! stop thy sacrilegious hand

Nor violate the shade,

Where Nature form'd a silent haunt

For Contemplation's aid.

Canst thou, the son of Science, train'd

Where learned Isis flows,

Forget that nurs'd in shelt'ring groves

The Grecian genius rose?

Beneath the platane's spreading branch,

Immortal Plato taught:

And fair Lyceum form'd the depth

Of Aristotle's thought. (5-14)

As outlined in Johnson's *Dictionary*, in this period the term 'genius' referred not only to a person 'endowed with superior faculties', but '[m]ental power or faculties' in general.[72] Depicting ancient 'genius' as flowing, rising and spreading in walks just like his own, Carter therefore appeals to the Walwyn's sense of scholarly responsibility; to cut down this shaded walk, she argues, is to cut down a framework that has helped to guide and protect the growth of remarkable human intellect for millennia. By naming revered thinkers such as Aristotle and Plato, Carter then flatters Walwyn's scholarly pride, using his walk to place him into an illustrious academic tradition. As a means to not only further his own

[72] Johnson, *A Dictionary of the English Language,* 3rd edn. (Dublin, 1768), p.66.

learned reputation, but fulfil his moral duty to future scholars, she portrays this peripatetic space as crucial to Walwyn's intellectual legacy.[73]

By recognising ways in which Carter viewed walking as a means of cultivating both individual and *collective* forms of scholarly progress, we are offered a new method of reading the 'rambling' imaginings of self identified previously in this chapter. Through her solitary rambles, Carter understood that she was participating in an academic practice rooted in an ancient, structured, and adaptable academic precedent from which others could benefit. With these concepts established, this chapter now turns to examples in Carter's correspondence where she considers the direct, positive impact that walking had upon her own writings, exploring the uneven implications she viewed this to have upon her social life.

Section 5) Putting the peripatetic model of well-employed time into practise: the intellectual benefits of walking in Carter's letters and writings

Although fundamental to her scholarship, Carter's peripatetic working practises have met with little recognition within the existing scholarly field. In her article 'Confined and Exposed: Elizabeth Carter's Classical Translations' for instance, Jennifer Wallace makes sense of Carter's walking and working routines by placing them alongside one another, a move that rightly challenges any assumption one might make of this productive writer leading a sedentary lifestyle. However, by arguing that Carter viewed 'physical exercise' as 'preferable to scholarship', Wallace fails to identify how this bluestocking viewed walking as crucial to her classical translations.[74] Taking the line that she 'spent much of her time…

[73] Despite Carter's persuasive efforts – and as Pennington comments in a footnote attached to this poem – the walk 'was not spared' from the Doctor's designs.

[74] Jennifer Wallace, 'Confined and Exposed: Elizabeth Carter's Classical Translations', *Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature,* 22 (Autumn, 2003), 315-334 (p.315). 'On the importance of exercise rather than scholarship', Wallace writes in a footnote, 'see *Letters from Mrs. Elizabeth Carter to Mrs. Montagu*, 1 June 1764, I 217-18'.

distancing herself from the classical world', 'Confined and Exposed' underplays the peripatetic motifs in Carter's correspondence, leaving a fertile path of inquiry unexplored.[75]

In order to illustrate her argument, Wallace directs us to a letter written by Carter to Montagu on 1st of June 1764, in which we see Carter describing a bout of poor weather besetting Deal.[76] First complaining of how 'we poor mortals on the Kentish coast are petrified with cold winds', Carter then reassures Montagu that 'I have, however, the resolution to ramble in the fields', born 'from a conviction that any kind of weather is more wholesome than too much Greek'.[77] While Wallace appears to have read the phrase 'more wholesome' as straightforward evidence that Carter 'prefer[red]' walking to translating, I argue that her careful wording of '*too* much Greek' highlights how she sought to divide her time between both activities. Emphasising the importance of this regulation, Carter adds that 'I have long discovered, that if I do not content myself with a moderate degree of application, my perverse temperament will render me incapable of any application at all'.[78]

In particular, Carter's declaration of possessing a 'perverse temperament' illuminates several insights into the direct, positive ways in which she understood walking to shape her intellectual life, each of which can be expanded upon by looking to examples elsewhere in her correspondence. Before unpacking both the social and scholarly concerns underpinning this unflattering, ironic self-description, it is beneficial to acknowledge how through it she addresses a literal, persistent hindrance to her scholarship. As Judith Hawley has noted, Carter was 'painfully vulnerable to debilitating headaches' throughout her adult life, a condition outlined to Montagu on several previous occasions.[79] On the 20th of October 1762 for instance, Carter wrote to her friend that 'an aching head' had 'prevented my writing sooner', and a year later of

[75] Ibid.
[76] Ibid, p.330.
[77] Carter, 'Letter LXI. Deal, *June* 1, 1764', in *Letters from Mrs. Elizabeth Carter to Mrs. Montagu*, ed. by Montagu Pennington, 3 vols (London: F. C. and J. Rivington, 1817), I, pp.217-220 (p.218).
[78] Ibid.
[79] Judith Hawley, 'Carter, Elizabeth (1717–1806)', in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (published online 21 May 2009), <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/4782> [accessed 1 March 2017].

how ‘I have not much to say to the advantage of my perverse head, and I have often a little sly fever that renders it still more perverse’.[80]

Attempting to explain the cause of these headaches, Hawley turns to the ‘extreme measures’ that Carter took to ‘persevere with her studies’.[81] These included being woken by a sexton ‘between 4 and 5 am’ each morning, wrapping ‘wet towels about her head’ to ‘keep herself awake at night’, chewing ‘green tea’, and taking ‘snuff’, with the latter habit turning into a lifelong addiction.[82] Although not for these specific reasons, Talbot also suspected that Carter’s intensive scholarship exacerbated her headaches. For instance, she wrote to Carter in November 1749 that while ‘I admire Epictetus more and more every day… [a]ll I entreat is that you will not write and make your head ach [sic] for our sakes’, framing this translation as detrimental to Carter’s health.[83]

Notably, when Carter herself sought to identify the root of her headaches, she often held her inability to walk for as long or as often as she would like to account. For example, on the 10th of December 1753 she wrote a letter to Talbot complaining that because she had ‘been much harassed of late by the returned illness of both my father and sister’, she had neglected to undertake her ‘proper exercise’, resulting in ‘an almost uninterrupted headach, so bad as to make me utterly incapable of application’.[84] Following on from this physical and mental ‘inactivity’, Carter continues that ‘poor Epictetus is therefore at a stand. I am at length grown so weary of confusion and stupidity, that I have summoned up a gallant resolution of walking as if I was bewitched’, adding that having ‘put’ this plan ‘in execution for these last three days’, I ‘find myself the better for it’.[85]

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[80] Carter, ‘Letter XLV. Deal, *October* 20, 1762’, in *Letters from Mrs. Carter,* I, pp.173-175 (p.173), & Carter, ‘Letter LVI. Deal, *October* 21, 1763’, in *Letters from Mrs. Carter,* I, pp.204 -208 (p.205).
[81] Hawley, Ibid.
[82] Ibid.
[83] Talbot, ‘Miss Talbot to Mrs. Carter. Piccadilly, *Nov*. 4, 1749’, in *A Series of Letters between Mrs. Elizabeth Carter and Miss Catherine Talbot,* I, pp.316-319 (p.317).
[84] Carter, ‘Mrs. Carter to Miss Talbot. Deal, *Dec*. 10, 1753’, in *A Series of Letters between Mrs. Elizabeth Carter and Miss Catherine Talbot,* II, pp.147-150 (p.148 & 149).
[85] Ibid.

In addition to working as an effective headache remedy, there are other ways in which Carter portrays walking as supportive of her scholarship in this letter. Once again combining contrasting portrayals of pedestrian movement into an anecdotal recollection of her past behaviour, here she considers how what might be seen as improper conduct helped her intellectual development; by unpacking this tension, we can better trace the irony with which she framed her peripatetic writing practises as 'perverse'. In the first instance, by describing herself to have left home 'as if bewitched', Carter recognises how her actions could be read as a departure from popular expectations of appropriate and virtuous conduct. Not only had she prioritised her own health above that of her family members, but by pursuing this selfish end on foot, Carter had endangered her reputation as a respectable, responsible gentlewoman.

Directly alongside this disruptive depiction of self, Carter associates domestic duty with her inability to think and work productively. She therefore draws upon the portrayal of herself walking away from her household with 'grace', 'persever[ance]' and 'fortitude' to mark her rightful abandonment of this 'stupid' state. In a reversal of Hawley and Talbot's criticism, through this alternative depiction of self, Carter considers the problems of following social models of well-employed time, showing it as a sacrifice that had caused both her head to ache, and 'poor Epictetus' to come to a 'stand'. According to this account, it was not Carter's decision to leave home, but her customary female social duties that had led her to deviate from a desirable path of moral development over time.

While attributing her sense of duty to her family and household to the decline of her scholarship in this instance, it would be misleading to claim that Carter *only* perceived discord between her social and intellectual lives. In particular, by looking to her motivations for beginning and completing this work, we can see how confusing popular ideas of virtuous civic conduct enabled Carter to fulfil her sense of social duty through other means. Significantly, it was Talbot who first commented that a *complete* English translation of Epictetus' works was wanting, having lamented to Carter on the 11th of November 1743 that

‘I am infinitely provoked that there is no translation of the part of his precepts which Arrian has preserved, and which I am vastly curious to see’.[86]

Notably, Carter embarked upon her publication *All the Works of Epictetus* shortly after this remark was made.[87] It is therefore likely that her translation had been driven (at least in part) from Carter’s desire to satisfy her friend’s curiosity. Having inspired this unprecedented intellectual feat, Talbot then went on to help Carter finish it by passing on her translations to Bishop Edward Secker for guidance. On the 9th of March 1750 for instance, Talbot wrote apologetically to her friend that ‘[a]fter a tedious time, dear Miss Carter, I return your Epictetus with my Lord’s remarks. I have had them this fortnight, but really have not had time to copy them till to-day’.[88] By considering the wider context of this work, we are able to identify its sociable origins and development, helping Carter to cement her friendship with Talbot through years of affectionate, collaborative effort.

In addition to cultivating this relationship, by completing Epictetus Carter understood that she was providing other scholars with a useful guide with which to navigate ancient Greek culture, language, and philosophy. As Carter reflects in the introduction to her translation, ‘this immethodical Collection is perhaps one of the most valuable Remains of Antiquity’, with her translation being the first ‘undertaken’ in ‘any modern language, excepting a pretty good *French* one, published about a hundred and fifty Years ago’.[89] Although describing this work as composed by a ‘heathen’, she writes that ‘many of the Sentiments and Expressions of Christianity’ underpin this work, and ‘that they, who consult it with any Degree of Attention, can scarcely fail of receiving Improvement’.[90] In a manner reflective of Dr.

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[86] Talbot, ‘Miss Talbot to Mrs. Carter. Cuddesden, *Nov*. 11, 1743’, in *A Series of Letters between Mrs. Elizabeth Carter and Miss Catherine Talbot,* I, pp.40-43 (p.42).

[87] Carter, *All the Works of Epictetus, Which are now Extant; Consisting of His Discourses, Preserved by Arrian, In Four Books, The Enchiridion, and Fragments. Translated from the Original Greek, By Elizabeth Carter. With an Introduction, and Notes, by the Translator* (Dublin: Hulton Bradley, 1759).

[88] Talbot, ‘Miss Talbot to Mrs. Carter. Piccadilly, *March.* 9, 1750’, *A Series of Letters between Mrs. Elizabeth Carter and Miss Catherine Talbot,* I, pp.328-330 (p.328).

[89] Carter, *All the Works of Epictetus*, p.xxviii.

[90] Ibid.

Walwyn's walk, Carter depicts her Epictetus translation as both paramount to her scholarly legacy, and furthering the intellectual and moral lives of others.

For liberating 'poor Epictetus' from a house-bound 'stand[still]', Carter's 1753 letter frames walking as a way to progress along not just intellectual, but intellectually imagined social models of well-employed time. Linking this physical act to the progression of ideas, she understood that to walk is not only to be part of history, but a means of making one's own mark in it, laying down a constructive example for future generations of thinkers to inherit, adapt and advance. Yet it would be misleading to suggest that Carter *only* turned to pedestrian movement to assess intellectual and social interpretations of her moral growth over time. Looking beyond descriptions of her walks, the final section of this chapter now considers how Carter created rambling and confined version of self in other, everyday contexts.

Section 6) How Carter's social and scholarly imaginings of self translated into new contexts: treading the 'regular track' of 'plain-work'

On 1st of January 1743, Carter wrote a letter to Talbot both wishing her friend 'every possible happiness' in the 'new year', and relating the amusements that had kept her occupied over the festive season. 'I have been greatly engaged in the important affair of working a pair of ruffles and a handkerchief', she explains, projects that had grown alongside her new-found fondness 'of dancing'.[91] 'It seems to be looked upon as a very odd thing that a person who thought of little but books at fifteen', Carter reflects, 'should at five and twenty run mad after balls and assemblies'.[92] Four months later however, she wrote again to the same that having found 'no great joy from the reputation' that her attendance at these events 'has gained me with notable folks, I shall for the future bid farewell to this sort of fame, and quietly proceed in the regular

[91] Elizabeth Carter, 'Mrs. Carter to Miss Talbot. Deal, *Jan*. 1, 1743', in *A Series of Letters between Mrs. Elizabeth Carter and Miss Catherine Talbot,* I, pp.23-25 (p.24).
[92] Ibid. (p.24 & p.25).

track and unambitious exercise of harmless plain-work'. This task, she considers, is 'not so well suited to my excursive genius, which is better pleased in wandering through the perplexities of a scrawling pattern, than in being confined to travel over an unwearied seam a mile long'.[93]

In her influential and informative study 'Gender and the Material Turn', Chloe Wigston Smith argues that one must be careful not to reduce 'historical women to the things they made and wore, or were made to knit, sew, launder and keep', as 'material objects possess broad-ranging capacities to articulate human and intellectual experience'.[94] Highlighting the imaginative potential of 'material objects', Wigston Smith outlines a useful set of strategies for us to navigate the nature, significance, and implications of the textile crafts described by Carter across these letters. Far from acting as straightforward accounts of what she 'made and wore' over four months, in both examples Carter draws upon conflicting portrayals of movement to consider how routine changes to her calendar, could alter the course of both her social and scholarly lives.

Significantly, these letters bracket what F. M. L. Thompson describes as London's 'winter and spring season', during which the 'country's elite' gathered to attend 'plays, operas, concerts, masked balls, soirees, salons, and firework displays'.[95] While London was undoubtedly the cultural hub of this social season, by looking to Carter's New Year's Day letter we can see how its influence stretched beyond the capital. Reversing the examples studied so far in this chapter, within it Carter frames her eager participation in this elite social custom as a disorderly act, a notion that she then juxtaposes with the composed, intellectual imagining of herself reading as a teenager. Indeed, having recently been absorbed in both attending, and making fashionable garments appropriate for gentlewomen to wear at these events,

[93] Carter, 'Mrs. Carter to Miss Talbot. Deal, *April* 16, 1743', in *A Series of Letters between Mrs. Elizabeth Carter and Miss Catherine Talbot,* I, pp.28-30 (p.29).
[94] Chloe Wigston Smith, 'Gender and the Material Turn', in *Women's Writing, 1660-1830: Feminisms and Futures*, ed. by Jennie Batchelor and Gillian Dow (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), pp.159-176 (p.162).
[95] F. M. L. Thompson, 'Town and City', *The Cambridge Social History of Britain, 1750-1950*, ed. by Francis Michal Longstreth Thompson, 3 vols (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), I, pp.1-86 (p.16).

she reflects to Talbot that '[e]xcepting Joseph Andrews and Ariosto, I have not read any thing time immemorial'.[96]

While in this instance using contrasting portrayals of movement to frame her social and intellectual ambitions in opposition to one another, it would be misleading for us to take this conflict at face value. In a manner reflective of how she employed 'rambling' movement to acknowledge that her lone walks *could* be read as unsociable behaviour, here Carter uses the irreverent image of herself 'run[ning] mad' to recognise how attending balls and assemblies *might* be interpreted by others as a waste of her mental capabilities; there are other ways, she makes clear, of interpreting the nature and implications of her recent behaviour. More than mere diversion, Thompson notes that the winter and spring season enabled 'elites' to engage in 'political, social, sexual, and commercial intercourse', arguing that '[i]t was a time for business and for pleasure'.[97] In addition to these specific forms of social interaction, Carter's correspondence illustrates how this season also worked as a catalyst for new scholarly ideas, movements, and friendships, including those paramount to the formation of the bluestocking assemblies.

In a letter written to the astronomer Thomas Wright on the 28th of January 1741 for instance, Carter recounts the privileged social gathering at which she had first met Talbot, an occasion (orchestrated by Wright) that had occurred just two weeks previously. In particular, both the dating of this letter, and the fashionable object that Carter describes to Wright within it, suggests that the friends first met in the notorious winter and spring season. As 'you say she has a quarrel against my fan sticks', Carter writes, 'give me the pleasure, if you can, of knowing she had no objection to the paper'.[98] Eager to see Talbot again soon, here Carter asks of her correspondent whether 'there' is 'no possibility of my conversing with Miss Talbot, except in dumb show through my fan sticks'?[99]

[96] Carter, 'Mrs. Carter to Miss Talbot. Deal, *Jan*. 1, 1743', p.24.
[97] Thompson, Ibid.
[98] Carter, 'Mrs Carter to Mr. Wright. *Jan*. 28, 1741', *A Series of Letters between Mrs. Elizabeth Carter and Miss Catherine Talbot,* I, pp.2-4 (p.3).
[99] Ibid.

Significantly, due to widely-circulated verses recommending Talbot's learning and character to fine society, it is probable that Carter had heard of her famed intellectual abilities prior to this meeting. For instance, a poem entitled 'On Miss Talbot's conversing with a Lawyer at Bath' extolls how 'The arts her mind adorn', bestowing Talbot with the combined virtues 'Of beauty and of sense' (10-16).[100] In another set of verses entitled 'Occasioned by the foregoing' (that as Pennington comments, were 'perhaps written by Mrs Carter' herself), Talbot's intellect is praised further still:

> Vain all attempts to shew her mind,
>
> Description makes the wonder less;
>
> The ever varying beauties there,
>
> Her own soft language must express (4-8).[101]

With a learned reputation proceeding her, Carter's enthusiasm for befriending Talbot is likely to have stemmed, at least in part, from a desire to enhance her scholarly prospects. Drawing upon her 'fan sticks' to catch the attention of this celebrated intellect, Carter valued her winter and spring textiles as objects of both social and intellectual value.

Describing herself as 'bid[ding] farewell to this sort of fame', in her April letter Carter then acknowledges how with the close of this season, there would be significant alterations to both her social and intellectual lives; a change that she indicates with the imagining of herself swapping her glamourous needlework for plain-work. In stark contrast to the elaborate work of middling to upper class women, plain-work was a term given to describe more practical forms of textiles, in particular those crucial to the everyday running of a household. In his 1758 publication *A Plan for a Preservatory and Reformatory, for the Benefit of*

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[100] Anonymous, 'On Miss Talbot's Conversing with a Lawyer at Bath', *A Series of Letters between Mrs. Elizabeth Carter and Miss Catherine Talbot,* I. While recorded in Carter's handwriting, Pennington asserts that these verses were 'written before their acquaintance' in the introduction to their correspondence (*A Series of Letters between Mrs. Elizabeth Carter and Miss Catherine Talbot,* I, p.xi).

[101] Pennington, ibid, p.xii, & Anonymous, 'Occasioned by the Foregoing', *A Series of Letters between Mrs. Elizabeth Carter and Miss Catherine Talbot,* I.

Deserted Girls, and Penitent Prostitutes for instance, John Fielding identifies the 'first Principles of Plain-work' in terms of 'Hemming' and 'Knitting', skills that he identifies as crucial for young girls to master before serving 'in reputable Families as domestic Servants'.[102]

As a gentlewoman, it is likely that Carter would have had household members on hand to hem, sew, and knit everyday garments and textiles for her, removing the necessity for her to devote time to plain-work personally. However, there are also important reasons why – as a gentlewoman – Carter chose to not only incorporate this domestic manner of needle-work into her regular routines, but include imaginings of herself as a plain-worker in her familiar correspondence. For instance, as a conventionally feminine employment plain-work would have presented itself as a useful tool for Carter to draw on, in order to help counterbalance any problematic consequences that may arise from her reputation as a female scholar.

As we considered through our examination of Alexander Pope and Horace Walpole's portrayals of Lady Mary in the previous chapter of this thesis, by pursing scholarship women could leave themselves vulnerable to public and private attacks upon their character. Helping Carter to avoid such scrutiny, Hawley argues, was her choice to board 'for a year in Canterbury at the house of a refugee French minister, M. Le Suer, and learned needlework, which she busied herself with throughout her life'.[103] Carter's efforts were well-rewarded, Hawley continues, because at the same time as being widely recognised an 'outstanding' scholar by her contemporaries, 'her proficiency in domestic skills to a large degree saved her from the general censure directed against learned ladies'.[104]

As well as enabling her to demonstrate proficiency in traditional feminine accomplishments, Carter's understanding of plain-work also allowed her to cultivate her abilities as female head of household. Indeed, although the task of going about domestic needle-work may have been more in-keeping with the

[102] John Fielding, *A Plan for a Preservatory and Reformatory, for the Benefit of Deserted Girls, and Penitent Prostitutes* (London: R. Francklin, 1758), p.12. Both the word 'Preservatory' and surname 'Francklin' have been spelt as presented in the original text 1758.
[103] Hawley, ibid.
[104] Ibid.

duties of lower-ranking household members, the tasks of organising, supervising, and inspecting the quality of plain-work were conventionally seen as a gentlewoman's responsibilities. We see these principles illustrated, for instance, within the guidance that the physician and writer John Gregory outlined to his daughters after the death of his wife Elizabeth Gregory in 1761, forming a tract that would later be published under the title of *A Father's Legacy to his Daughters* in 1774.

As Paul Lawrence notes, *A Father's Legacy* is understood to have incorporated advice given to Gregory by Elizabeth Montagu, who in a letter written to Carter 'approved his pattern of educating the girls "in a philosophical simplicity"'.[105] It is therefore likely that Carter was at least familiar with Gregory's key arguments regarding female employment, making this publication especially useful for us to place alongside the domestic imaginings of self depicted in her letters and writings. Viewing the plain-work through a lens specific to his daughters' genteel social rank, Gregory argues that '[t]he intention of your being taught needle-work, knitting, and such like, is not on account of the intrinsic value of all you can do with your hands, which is trifling, but to enable you to judge more perfectly of that kind of work, and to direct the execution of it in others'.[106]

In addition to rendering plain-work as an effective domestic management tool, Gregory also portrays this employment as a means for his daughters to pass the time for day, while spending long periods of time in their households. 'Another principal end' of this work, he writes, is 'to enable you to fill up, in a tolerably agreeable way, some of the many solitary hours you must necessarily pass at home', continuing that '[i]t is a great article in the happiness of life, to have your pleasures as independent of others as possible.[107] Importantly, Gregory describes these periods of time as 'solitary' not because he thought that his daughters would literally be alone at home, but because he anticipated they would feel isolated while living apart from their affluent peers. By outlining these arguments, he depicts plain-work as an

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[105] Paul Lawrence, 'Gregory [Gregorie], John', in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (published online 24 May 2008), <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/11468> [accessed 17 June 2019].
[106] John Gregory, *A Father's Legacy to his Daughters: By John Greogry M.D.*, 3rd edn. (Dublin: H. Chamberlaine, 1788), p.30.
[107] Ibid.

unimaginative, unexciting, but ultimately reliable way for his daughters to occupy themselves, while deprived from the diversions and gatherings that we have seen characterise the winter and spring season.

Reverting to the metaphorical patterns identified earlier in this chapter, Carter portrays her plain-work as 'regular', 'unambitious' and 'harmless' in her letter to Talbot, imagery that she then juxtaposes with the 'excursive' inclination of her 'genius'. By making these moves, Carter echoes the eighteenth-century conduct literature that framed plain-work as a customary, but mentally unstimulating way for leisured women to occupy themselves while passing extensive periods of time at home alone. However, one must once again be cautious of the apparently clear boundaries that Carter draws between her social and scholarly lives in this instance. Although arguing that her 'genius' would be 'better pleased' in pursuing 'wandering' patterns than plain-work, through the imagining of her thoughts 'travel[ling] over unwearied seam a mile long', Carter acknowledges how her needle and thread still offered her opportunities of indulging in forms of mental play.

Just as Carter and Talbot understood that her fashionable handkerchiefs, ruffles and fan sticks could be used to forge important new intellectual acquaintances, elsewhere in her familiar correspondence Carter demonstrates how her seemingly unremarkable domestic plain-work allowed her to pursue concentrated trains of thought. For example, on the 30th of August 1753 Carter wrote a letter to Talbot describing how she used this employment to create a calm, focused, and private physical and mental space, in the midst of an otherwise loud and 'vociferous party'.[108] Confident that this 'circle' would 'suffer nothing by the loss of my company', Carter recalls how after a time she 'withdrew to a window, where with great tranquillity' she 'exercised the art and mystery of plain-work', enjoying 'the comfortable privilege of being as silent as' she desired.[109]

[108] Carter, 'Mrs. Carter to Miss Talbot. Deal, *Aug.* 30, 1753', in *A Series of Letters between Mrs. Elizabeth Carter and Miss Catherine Talbot,* II, pp.134-137 (p.134).
[109] Ibid.

Challenging the portrayal of plain-work as a mere way for gentlewomen to spend time while living at home, Carter depicts this employment as an underestimated vehicle of mental liberation, enabling her to at once remain in and retreat from the society of her excitable peers. Although on the one hand picking up her needle to demonstrate her aptitude for a well-known feminine accomplishment in company – a tactic that we have seen so far associated with this scholar's attempts to moderate her reputation as a female intellectual – Carter also grasped that she was equipping herself with the wherewithal to retreat into an undisturbed mental state. As a result, in this instance Carter ceases to portray her plain-work as practical, domestic, or mundane, and instead describes it as an 'art and mystery', allowing her to follow social and intellectual models of well-employed time simultaneously.[110] By unpacking the textile crafts portrayed over the course of her January and April letters, we can see how Carter understood that while disruptive of her usual scholarly routines, she looked upon needlework as supportive of her intellectual growth.

Final steps: concluding remarks upon the time Carter devoted to 'rambling about by [her]self'

Juxtaposing the 'excursive' bend of her scholarly 'genius', with her 'confined' efforts to lead a 'social, active life', Carter framed popular social and intellectual models of well-employed time to be at once distinct from, and defined in relation to one another. Yet by drawing upon irony, satire, and irreverent literary references, Carter also depicted flaws and contradictions within this polarising account of morality. Far from viewing the pursuit of one path of virtue to always come at the expense of the other, Carter understood there to be alternative means of imagining her moral progress over time, using her experiences as a learned gentlewoman to unpack these models critically.

Although upsetting certain Shaftesburian and civic notions of upstanding social conduct, Carter apprehended that her 'peripatetic way of living' was not only illustrative of her high rank, but through her resulting written works, enabled her to further the understanding of others. Carter comprehended that

[110] Ibid.

while disruptive of her concentrated scholarly routines, seasonal changes to her social life could enhance her academic development. By highlighting these complications, Carter was able to interrogate prevalent, but imperfect contemporary interpretations of well-employed time: to take her rambling and restrained accounts of self on face value would be to miss the sophisticated negotiations she undertook, in order to imagine a genteel, learned, female life well-lived.

Chapter Four) Revising the 'late bloomer' narrative: the nature, importance, and implications of time spent as a shell craft worker in Mary Delany's letters and writings

For centuries, Mary Delany's botanical paper collages have been widely regarded by scholars as the pinnacle of her creative career. An innovative form of creative imitation that Delany developed at the age of seventy-two, these cuttings continue to offer us well-preserved, plentiful, and captivating evidence of her critically acclaimed talents. In commemoration of Women's History Month 2019 for instance, The British Museum uploaded a blog post entitled 'Late Bloomer: The Exquisite craft of Mary Delany' onto their website, in which her 'paper mosaicks' are celebrated as 'stunning', 'remarkable', and 'surprising' examples of 'female artistry'.[1] Although composed as a short promotional piece to gather interest towards the museum's collections, this post is underpinned by arguments that are supported by a wider scholarly movement, in which this bluestocking artist has been framed, time and again, as a creative 'late bloomer'.

In this chapter, I argue that while these paper cuttings are of considerable cultural and historical value, Delany's accounts of her shell crafts provide us with more penetrative insights into her creative life. Whereas her written portrayals of her collages are few, brief, and confined to the letters and poetry that she composed in her old age, those of her shell craft works span decades of her life time, shedding light on her critically neglected contributions to eighteenth-century British and Irish creative culture. More importantly still, because Delany's accounts of her 'paper mosaicks' hinge upon stories of royal acclamation and well-known devotional tropes, they portray an uncomplicated narrative of creative and moral growth over time. By contrast, Delany's imaginings of self as a shell craft worker granted her greater freedom and scope to consider how her creative pursuits related to conflicting imaginings of female virtue, offering us a comprehensive view into her engagement with differing models of well-employed and wasted time.

[1] Anonymous, 'The British Museum: Objects in Focus: Late Bloomer: The Exquisite craft of Mary Delany', *The British Museum* website (published online 2019), <https://blog.britishmuseum.org/late-bloomer-the-exquisite-craft-of-mary-delany/> [accessed 14th May 2020].

So far, there have been two key approaches to explaining the significance of Delany's shell craft works. Historically, scholars have tended to portray eighteenth-century shell crafts as an enjoyable, but ultimately trivial way for affluent women like the bluestockings to pass their leisure time. According to her posthumous editor and great grand-niece Augusta Waddington Hall, Lady Llanover, for instance, Delany's early interest in this employment can be summarised as a one of mere 'amusement', and juxtaposed with her later 'taste for shells' in their capacity as collectable items.[2] Printed in her widely referenced, six-volume edition of her ancestor's autobiography and letters, Llanover's argument has been encountered regularly by those seeking to make sense of Delany's life and legacy, establishing an influential critical tradition that belittles the importance of her shell crafts.

More recently, material scholars such as Elizabeth Eger, Beth Fowkes Tobin, and Madeleine Pelling have sought to challenge this dismissive narrative by outlining the intellectually and technically demanding, as well as culturally and socially significant aspects of female eighteenth-century shell craft. For example, in her 2009 article 'Paper Trails and Eloquent Objects: Bluestocking Friendship and Material Culture', Eger uses examples of natural history-based bluestocking craft work to illustrate the important role that material culture played in forming the society, 'in ways that reveal friendship as both spontaneous and constructed'.[3] Expanding on Eger's 'exception to ignoring intelligent women's engagement with material culture', in her 2015 study 'Bluestockings and the Cultures of Natural History' Fowkes Tobin uses contemporary manuals to illustrate the expertise, equipment, and patience that one needed in order to gut and clean shells properly in this period.[4]

Pulling together aspects of Eger and Fowkes Tobin's criticism, in her 2018 article 'Collecting the World: Female Friendship and Domestic Craft at Bulstrode Park' Pelling explores how Delany and her friend

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[2] Augusta Waddington Hall, Lady Llanover, *The Autobiography and Correspondence of Mary Granville, Mrs. Delany*, ed. by Augusta Waddington Hall, Lady Lllanover, 6 vols (London: Richard Bentley, New Burlington Street, 1861-2), I, p.484.

[3] Elizabeth Eger, 'Paper Trails and Eloquent Objects: Bluestocking Friendship and Material Culture', *Parergon*, 26 (2009), 109-138 (p.109).

[4] Beth Fowkes Tobin, 'Bluestockings and the Cultures of Natural History', in *Bluestockings Now!: The Evolution of a Social Role*, ed. by Deborah Heller (Surrey; Burlington VT: Ashgate, 2015), pp.55-70 (p.57).

Margaret Cavendish Bentick, Duchess of Portland 'drew on female handicrafts' such as shell work 'to subvert British patriarchal social structure'.[5] Pelling continues that in place of this structure, Delany and the Duchess set forth 'a feminised world view manifested in material cultures' in the Duchess's Bulstrode estate, creating pieces that were 'centred' on 'female friendship and substantiation of emotional bonds'.[6] Throughout these studies, Eger, Fowkes Tobin, and Pelling maintain that by looking to Delany's shell crafts, scholars can better understand her social, creative, and intellectual growth over time.

In response to this debate, this chapter will explore how Delany's written portrayals of her shell crafts resonate with both traditional and recent critical interpretations. For example, these sources highlight Delany's sensitivity to how her creative pursuits could be seen as 'amusements', especially when viewed in relation to other models of well-employed time.[7] In particular, she grasped that when compared to other imaginings of female virtue such as motherhood, or caring for the poor and sick (modes of conduct that both aligned closely to her younger sister, Ann Dewes' lifestyle, providing Delany with a constant source of comparison and reflection for her own employments), the time she devoted to her shell crafts could be seen to lack social purpose. These written accounts also enabled her to reflect on how not just her shell crafts, but *all* customary female accomplishments could be seen as 'insignificant', returning us to the imaginative tensions that shaped Elizabeth Carter's ironic portrayal of 'unambitious' plain work.[8]

At the same time, Delany continued to value her shell crafts as an effective means of moral improvement. By looking to her accounts of self as a shell lustre maker for instance, we see Delany equating the time she devoted to her creative projects as time devoted to self-cultivation. With her initial attempt at this difficult, pioneering manner of craft work falling apart within just five years of its construction, Delany went on to frame her later efforts to make shell lustres as an exercise in perseverance and improvement.

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[5] Madeleine Pelling, 'Collecting the World: Female Friendship and Domestic Craft at Bulstrode Park', *Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 41 (2018), 101-120 (pp.103-104).
[6] Ibid, p.104.
[7] Mary Delany, 'Mrs Delany to Mrs. Dewes. Deville, 6 Oct. 1750', in *The Autobiography and Correspondence of Mary Granville, Mrs. Delany,* II, pp.598-601 (p.601).
[8] Ibid.

Additionally, Delany expressed greater pride and excitement over the invention of her shell lustres than that of her paper cuttings, a trend that as Clarissa Campbell Orr argues can be explained at least in part by 'eighteenth-century' attitudes towards paper and shells as creative materials.[9] Through examining Delany's written depictions of her shell lustres, we can better understand how her understanding of her creative achievements departs from the accounts offered to us by the existing scholarly field.

As well as offering us glimpses into her critically neglected creative accomplishments, Delany's correspondence illustrates ways in which her shell crafts enabled her to enrich her social life. This quality is most effectively illustrated in a series of letters that Delany wrote to Dewes from Killala, while touring as a young widow with friends around Ireland. Here, Delany documents her company's efforts to make a shell grotto (understood by conservation architect James Howley to have been the first of its kind in Ireland), along with how this project helped to strengthen the relationships among the companions. Vitally, the quality of the shell work that Delany carried out in Killala was held to a high standard by her well-educated and connected peers, enabling this bluestocking to find and hone her creative confidence in a social atmosphere that was at once supportive, and discerning of her abilities.

By looking to Delany's correspondence, we can see how she viewed her shell craft work as both an amusing and improving employment. Far from beholding this subjective conflict as cause for anxiety or despair, she regularly embraced it as an occasion for playful self-reflection in her letters, mobilising conflicted accounts of self as a shell craft worker to fortify her relationship with her younger sister. It is therefore the imaginative tensions underpinning Delany's writings, along with the manner in which she drew upon these tensions to entertain her familiar correspondents that holds the critical focus of this chapter. Vitally, through examining Delany's descriptions of the time, effort, and resources that she devoted to her shell crafts, we are able to breathe new life into this bluestocking's creative legacy.

[9] Clarissa Campbell Orr, *Mary Delany: A Life* (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 2019), p.268.

Section 1) A creative 'late bloomer': existing critical accounts of Delany's life and career

'[T]he story starts', according to The British Museum's 'Later Bloomer' blog post, when Delany 'was 72, after she noticed the similarity between a geranium and a piece of red paper that was on her bedside table'.[10] 'The realisation', the post explains, 'prompted Delany to pick up a pair of scissors and imitate the petals in paper', with the artist going about her work with such astonishing accuracy 'that when her friend Margaret Bentick, Duchess of Portland' saw the finished result, 'she mistook it for a real flower'. The piece continues that over the next ten years, Delany would go on to make 'nearly a thousand of these incredible works of art and science', leaving behind a 'legacy of drawings, embroideries, letters, and exactly 985 cut paper flowers' on her death in April 1788.

Although on the surface offering us a history of Delany's 'paper mosaiks', this 'story' is framed as the beginning, middle, and end of this bluestocking's creative career. 'Delany's path to' her botanical cuttings, the piece elaborates, 'was not straightforward', before proceeding to list the two marriages, 'court circles', and 'fashionable pursuits' (such as 'shell-work, fine needlework, plasterwork, drawing and painting') that eventually led her to 'the Duchess's home', in which she 'first used paper to model botanically accurate depictions of flowers'. By offering us this chronology, the post argues that while this figure may have already exhibited creative talent by the age of seventy-two, all that went before can be viewed as a mere, less interesting 'path' leading up to this formative moment.

Written as a brief public interest piece, this blog post is far from a detailed, rigorous study into Delany's life and achievements. Nevertheless, the narrative that it conveys successfully encapsulates leading critical accounts of her creative career. In Delany's *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* entry for instance – a source many academics consult in order to gain concise, reliable insights into an historical figure's key accomplishments and reputation – Barbara Brandon Schnorrenberg identifies Delany's

[10] Anonymous, ibid. All of the quotes contained within this, and the following paragraph are taken from The British Museum's blog post.

collages as her 'major work'.[11] While conceding that 'she left other evidence of her talents' such as designing and embroidering 'panels for clothing, chair covers, bed hangings and coverings', as well as labelling her as a 'creative crafter of shell work', Schnorrenberg's account supports The British Museum's imagining of Delany fulfilling her creative potential later on in life.[12]

In addition to functioning as a point of interest for introductory pieces, Delany's cuttings have offered critics an appealing framework from which to build in-depth explorations into her life and legacy. This trend is best exemplified by the poet Molly Peacock's biographical work *The Paper Garden: Mrs. Delany Begins Her Life's Work at 72,* in which Peacock calls on these collages to structure, introduce, and explain each of her chapters. For instance, she begins her third chapter by analysing Delany's imitation of 'Hound's Tongue', arguing that this cutting is symbolic of her subject's upbringing.[13] 'In placing its fragile stems and royal blue flowers above her rough and resolute leaves', Peacocks writes, 'Mrs. Delany created in the portrait a whiff of the plant's ambiguity – and a little of the Granville family's attitude toward child rearing, too'.[14] Similarly, the titles and cover art for influential studies such as Ruth Hayden's *Mrs Delany, Her Life and Her Flowers*, Clarissa Campbell Orr's *Mrs Delany: A life*, and Mark Laird and Alicia Weisberg-Roberts's *Mrs. Delany and Her Circle* promote the significance of Delany's collages over her other, earlier crafts.[15]

In many regards, this sustained scholarly focus upon Delany's paper cuttings is understandable. Both the quantity and quality (along with the late age at which she began her 'mosaicks') are extraordinary, and whereas most of her other crafts no longer exist, her cuttings offer us tangible examples of her creative

[11] Barbara Brandon Schnorrenberg, 'Delany [nee Granville; other married name Pendarves], Mary (1700-1788), in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (published online 04 October 2008), <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/7442> [accessed 26th February 2020].
[12] Ibid.
[13] Molly Peacock, *The Paper Garden: Mrs. Delany Begins Her Life's Work at 72* (London: Bloomsbury, 2011), p.36.
[14] Ibid, p.38.
[15] Ruth Hayden, *Mrs. Delany, Her Life and Her Flowers* (London: British Museum Press, 1980), Campbell Orr, ibid, & *Mrs Delany and Her Circle*, ed. by Mark Laird and Alicia Weisberg-Roberts (New Haven: Yale Centre for British Art, 2009). The cover art for all three of these works exhibit samples of Delany's paper cuttings, impressing their critical importance upon their readers.

talents. Nor would it be correct for this study to suggest that the clamour surrounding these collages derive purely from moves made in recent scholarly discourse. In a letter written to her grand-niece Mary Port in August 1778 for instance, Delany relates how these works won her the admiration of King George III and Queen Charlotte, while both she and the royal family were residing at Bulstrode. She explains how '[t]he King asked me if I had added to my book of flowers, and desired he might see it', continuing that after seeing these pieces His Highness brought and offered Delany a seat next to the Queen.[16] '[I]t is *not* every body', the Queen is said to have remarked in turn, 'who has a chair brought them by a King', confirming this gesture as a hard-won recognition of Delany's creative abilities.[17]

The botanical subject matter of these cuttings has also provided both contemporary and modern writers with an irresistible metaphor for Delany's cultivation of self through creative expression. While, as The British Museum's blog testifies, the image of a flower coming into bloom can be employed to convey the idea of Delany reaching her creative potential to twenty-first century audiences, this self-cultivation motif possessed particular ethical significance in the eighteenth century. As we have considered through Talbot's writings, the task of sowing, growing, and reaping life from soil beset by thorns offered bluestocking women with a well-known biblical trope, for striving to lead a virtuous life in the fallen world. Because of this religious and literary climate, the cultivation of botanical life (along with any difficulties that one might encounter while going about this task) was used widely in this period as a symbol for moral growth over time.

We can see the influence of this literary climate upon Delany's writings, for instance, by looking to how she called on metaphorical descriptions of gardening as a way to give educational and ethical instruction to her younger female relatives. In 1762 for example, she wrote a letter to her niece Mary Dewes criticising young women of their acquaintance who was described as 'think[ing] a round of hurrying pleasures is happiness; not considering what a loss of time it is to devote all their hours to amusements,

[16] Delany, 'Mrs Delany to Mrs. Port, of Ilam [undated, but relating events that took place on 'Wednesday the 12th of Augt, 1778']', in *The Autobiography and Correspondence of Mary Granville, Mrs. Delany,* V, pp.370-373 (p.372).
[17] Ibid, p.373.

that can leave no solid pleasure behind'.[18] To temper her tone, Delany continues that 'I only condemn the *choice* of spending *every day* in a public place,' before reassuring her niece that 'I don't fear this disposition in you, my dear child, because you have early had great advantages, and the good seed that has been sown will spring up, and you will reap the advantage of it'.[19]

In order for us to examine how this climate directly shaped Delany's written descriptions of her paper mosaicks, it is useful for us to consider Stephen Bending's publication *Green Retreats*, in which Bending explores how these tropes were used in eighteenth-century literary references to gardens and gardening. In addition to highlighting examples of how bluestocking women used imaginative descriptions of their gardens to create accounts of self in the present (as we considered in chapter one), here Bending offers us instances in which the cultivation of flowers was framed as a virtuous employment for leisured women. In particular, he examines letters, essays, and poems that exposes connections 'between women's gardens and a form of domestic spiritually', beginning with those that illustrate 'how fully established those conventions were by the early decades of the century'.[20]

For instance, in his analysis of Stephen Switzer's 1715 publication *Ichnographia Rustica* ('one of the first histories of English gardening'), Bending notes how Switzer celebrates the Dowager Duchess of Beaufort's cultivation of exotic plants in 'her garden at Badminton', with the author outlining 'the domestication both of the plants and of the duchess herself'.[21] 'What a Progress she made in the Exoticks', Switzer writes, 'and how much of her Time she virtuously and busily employed in her Garden, is easily observable from the Thousands of those foreign Plants' that are 'kept in a wonderful deal of Health, Order, and Decency'.[22] In his exploration of the anonymous 1784 publication *Letters to Honoria*

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[18] Delany, 'Mrs. Delany to Miss Dewes [1762]', in *The Autobiography and Correspondence of Mary Granville, Mrs. Delany,* IV, pp.7- 8 (p.8).
[19] Ibid.
[20] Stephen Bending, *Green Retreats: Women, Gardens and Eighteenth-Century Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), p.20.
[21] Ibid. As Bending explains fully, 'Switzer's *Ichnographia Rustica* has an extended publishing history: the first volume appeared as *The Nobleman, Gentleman, and Gardener's Recreation* in 1715; a three-volume edition appeared in 1718 and a revised edition (used here) in 1741-2'.
[22] Stephen Switzer, as quoted by Bending in *Green Retreats*, p.21.

and Marianne, Bending highlights an example of how 'the moral usefulness of the garden appears' later in the century, this time 'in the context of a work written for a clearly middle-class female audience'.[23] 'A bed of tulips', the anonymous author reflects, 'a border of pinks, the jessamine and woodbine, not only regale my senses, but, by a secret finger, seem to point to the power who made them'.[24]

In her poem 'Plants: Copied after Nature in Paper Mosaick begun in the year 1774', Delany draws on techniques used within these works to form a flattering account of self, time, and employment in relation to her paper collages.[25] Although not depicting herself literally as a gardener in this instance, Delany nevertheless frames herself as overseeing the cultivation of botanical life in her capacity as a creative worker, developing these plants with her paper and scissors from stem, to leaf, to blossom. As Llanover explains in her editorial commentary, '[t]he following lines were written in her own hand, and placed in the first volume of her' mosaicks, by way of recognising their extraordinary critical reception.[26]

> Hail to the happy hour, when fancy led
>
> My pensive mind this flow'ry path to tread;
>
> And gave me emulation to presume
>
> With timid art to trace fair Nature's bloom:
>
> To view with awe the great Creative power
>
> That shines confess'd in the minutest flower;
>
> With wonder to pursue the glorious line,

[23] Bending, ibid, p.23.
[24] Anonymous, as quoted by Bending in *Green Retreats*, p.23.
[25] Delany, 'Plants: Copied after Nature in Paper Mosaick, begun in the year 1774', in *The Autobiography and Correspondence of Mary Granville,* V. Although the title of this work suggests Delany first began these prints in 1774, her written accounts of this work, as we will later acknowledge, date from 1772.
[26] Augusta Waddington Hall, Lady Llanover, *The Autobiography and Correspondence of Mary Granville, Mrs. Delany,* V, p.443.

And gratefully adore the Hand Divine! (1-8)

In a manner similar to Switzer's account of the 'virtuously and busily employed' hours that the Duchess of Beaumont spent in her garden, here Delany uses portrayals of herself overseeing organic growth as a metaphor for her own moral improvement. For instance, through her imagining of self advancing along a 'flow'ry path'/ 'glorious line', Delany depicts her botanical paper cuttings as a means of personal religious growth over time, bringing her closer to God through her 'awe' at his works. At the same time however, she is careful to distance her cuttings from notions of pride and blasphemy by framing them as a 'timid' imitation rather than creation, claiming that the act of replicating even 'the minutest flower' enabled her to better 'adore the Hand Divine'. Through making these moves, Delany draws on strategies used in *Letters to Honoria and Marianne*, in which flowers are described as morally improving not just for their beautiful physical appearance, but for 'point[ing]' their viewer 'to the power who made them'.

Unmentioned in, but vital to our understanding of the significance of this verse, is how many of Delany's botanical subjects had been sourced recently from across the globe, as we can see by consulting the exhibition labels made by The British Museum to accompany her mosaics. For instance, the label for her 1776 cutting *Magnolia Grandiflora* (a piece that as the curator notes, was made by Delany at 'Bill Hill' in Berkshire) reads '[o]riginally from the south-eastern part of North America[,] the magnolia was introduced to this country in the 1730s'.[27] Like the specimens growing in the Duchess of Beaufort's garden at Badminton therefore, many of the plants rendered in this volume would have been viewed by Delany's contemporaries as exotic, imitated with paper and scissors by a British gentlewoman. When coupled with the descriptions of moral cultivation outlined in her introductory verse, Delany's volume of botanical prints can be viewed as a conversion of global specimens into expressions of domestic, feminine

[27] 'Museum Number 1897,0505.557: Magnolia Grandiflora (Polyandria Polygynia), formerly in an album (Vol.VI, 57); the grand Magnolia, 1776', *The British Museum* website (online publication date unspecified), <https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/P_1897-0505-557> [accessed 29th April 2021].

virtue; an idea that as will consider in the next section of this chapter, resonates strongly with Pelling's account of the shell crafts that Delany and the Duchess made at Bulstrode.

Significantly, the only source of tension that Delany offers us in this poem lies in the origins of her paper cuttings. Here, she establishes that she began this venture not to improve her moral progress over time, or to make a pioneering creative contribution, but because of a moment of 'fancy'. Delany therefore frames the 'happy hour' in which she began these cuttings as little more than a happy accident, born from self-indulgence and leisure time. However, this humble origin story ultimately supports Delany's later depiction of her paper cuttings as straightforward tools of personal religious, intellectual, and creative enlightenment. It was through conceiving and making these botanical collages, this narrative argues, that Delany was able to progress from a fanciful state to one of both creative industry and religious humility.

In the prose she wrote to accompany this poem, Delany takes a different approach to reinforcing the portrayal of her cuttings as an effective vehicle of moral improvement. At first, she confirms her account of initially viewing these mosaicks as a trivial undertaking, explaining that '[t]he paper Mosaic work was begun in the 74th year of my age (which I at first only meant as an imitation of an hortus siccus) and as an *employment* and *amusement*'.[28] The tone of her writing soon changes however, when Delany goes on to relate how she had turned to this 'amusement' as a way of overcoming a difficult period in her life. This innovative manner of craft work, she continues, was invented 'to supply the loss of those that had formerly been delightful to me; but had lost their power of pleasing; being depriv's of that friend, whose partial approbation was my pride, and had stampt a value on them'.[29]

As Llanover expands in her editorial analysis of this passage, Delany's sense of 'loss' came in the wake of the death of her second husband Dean Patrick Delany, who had encouraged her earlier botanical works.[30] '[A]fter the death of the Dean of Down', she notes, Delany 'experienced' a 'depressing effect'

[28] Delany, *The Autobiography and Correspondence of Mary Granville, Mrs. Delany*, V, p.443.
[29] Delany, ibid.
[30] Augusta Waddington Hall, Lady Llanover, ibid.

that was increased by ‘the absence of his constant sympathy and pleasure in that art’.[31] Notably, the letters that Delany wrote to her sister from Deville highlight the Dean’s formative role in nurturing her creative confidence. ‘I employ every hour as much as possible’, Delany wrote in October 1745, explaining how ‘I have been sorting my mosses and ores, and am going to new arrange my shells, and to cover two large vases for my garden: my painting has lain dormant some time.[32] ‘These are my drams’, she reflects to Dewes, ‘but I believe my spirits would flag even with these amusements, did they not give so much pleasure to D.D.; his approving of my works, and encouraging me to go on, keep up my relish to them, and make them more delightful to me than assemblies, plays, or even an opera’.[33]

Significantly, through acknowledging the unhappy circumstances in which she began her botanical cuttings, Delany returns us to the metaphor of virtue as a plant, thriving among thorns of difficulty and despair. Just as we have seen her use the image of a seed growing into a flower to symbolise self-cultivation in her letters, Delany also employed thorns as a metaphor of the difficulties of living in the fallen world. She wrote to Mary Dewes on the 19th of October 1769 for instance, after expressing her disappointment in being unable to visit her niece as soon as she had hoped, ‘Pray God guide you through the mazes of life, and may you meet with as few thorns and briars as possible’.[34] ‘[S]ome’, Delany considers, ‘must be every one’s lot’, before comforting her niece that a ‘prudent attention to one’s steps may avoid many’.[35]

After the loss of the Dean, another figure soon stepped in to encourage Delany’s efforts in honing this exciting, innovative manner of botanical imitation. As Llanover continues in her editorial commentary, ‘[t]he tone and tenour of Mrs. Delany’s feelings at this period, as expressed in poetry and prose, prove the new-born delight she felt in perfecting her invention when she found that she had still a friend who took

[31] Ibid.
[32] Delany, ‘Mrs. Delany to Mrs. Dewes. Deville, 22 Oct., 1745’, in *The Autobiography and Correspondence of Mary Granville, Mrs. Delany,* II, pp.394-396 (395).
[33] Ibid.
[34] Delany, ‘Mrs. Delany to Miss Dewes. Bulstrode, 19th Oct., 1769’, in *The Autobiography and Correspondence of Mary Granville, Mrs. Delany,* IV, pp.244-246 (244).
[35] Ibid.

as much interest in it as herself'.[36] As Delany would go on to later reflect upon this trying period of her life, 'I shou'd have dropp'd the attempt as vain, had not the Duchess Dowager of Portland look'd on it with favourable eyes'.[37] Together, the poetry and prose that Delany composed to commemorate her 'paper mosaicks' depicts a narrative of friendship, skill, and perseverance triumphing over loss, idleness, and self-doubt.

Bolstered by tales of royal commendation and well-known devotional tropes, Delany's writings represent her botanical collages, overwhelmingly, as uncomplicated vehicles of moral progress over time. It is because these cuttings align so neatly with popular imaginings of virtue however, that Delany's written portrayals of this creative work offered her little opportunity to explore the imaginative tensions underpinning her intellectual, social, and creative lives. Critics must therefore recognise that while her collages are of considerable cultural and historical value, through neglecting Delany's written accounts of her earlier crafts we miss other, and in many ways more lucrative ways of unpacking her creative life and legacy. Vitally, Delany's accounts of her shell craft works provide us with an appealing alternative to this well-trodden scholarly path; not only do these sources better expose the *ongoing* conflicts that shaped her understanding of leisured creative employment, but equip us with the means to challenge her confining reputation as a creative 'late bloomer'.

Section 2) A frivolous or improving employment? Unpacking existing critical approaches to examining the nature, significance, and implications of Delany's shell craft works

On the 30th of June 1734, Delany wrote a letter to Dewes from her newly acquired residence in Lower Brook Street, London, recounting ways in which she and her friends had passed their last few days in the capital.[38] She begins her account by claiming that 'I have nothing marvellous or new to tell', adding that

[36] Augusta Waddington Hall, Lady Llanover, ibid.
[37] Mary Delany, ibid.
[38] At the time of writing, Mary Delany was then Mary Pendarves, and Ann Dewes, Anne Granville.

‘I write this purely by way of a little conversation with you’; a well-known letter-writing trope that Delany moves on to complicate playfully, in particular by describing an exciting ‘new’ activity that would henceforth feature regularly throughout their familiar correspondence.[39] Having related how ‘all the beau military’s [sic] are assembled in my neighbourhood to be reviewed by his Majesty’, and that ‘good Sir John Stanley’ had given her temporary ‘command’ of his Northend estate in his absence, Delany announces suddenly to Dewes that ‘I have got a new madness, I am running wild after shells. This morning I have set my little collection of shells in nice order in my cabinet, and they look so beautiful, that I must by some means enlarge my stock.’[40]

As both sisters were well aware, in this period it was commonplace for gentlewomen such as themselves to spend time and money on seeking, purchasing, and admiring shells. As Karin Leonhard has argued, throughout sixteenth and seventeenth-century Europe shells were recognised as ‘symbols of maritime and colonial power’, ‘national self-image’ and ‘commerce’, displaying a range of aesthetic ‘contrasts’ that inspired collectors to display ‘rare specimen [sic] or *mirabilia*’.[41] By the eighteenth century, this trend had been mobilised as a way for affluent members of society to exhibit their wealth and status to others. As Bettina Dietz notes, shells had become widely regarded as ‘a sought-after and costly status symbol’, ‘circulat[ing] as luxury goods within what was known as the *commerce de la curiosité*, constituted by collectors, dealers, and natural historians as a social, intellectual, and commercial network’.[42]

Notably, Delany’s own participation in this movement had been encouraged by her friendship with Duchess of Portland, a figure described by Fowkes Tobin to have housed ‘the largest and finest shell

[39] Delany, ‘Mrs. Pendarves to Mrs. Ann Granville. L. B. Street, 30 June, 1734’, in *The Autobiography and Correspondence of Mary Granville, Mrs. Delany*, I, pp.484-86 (p.484).
[40] Ibid.
[41] Karin Leonard, ‘Shell Collecting. On 17th-Century [sic] Conchology, Curiosity Cabinets and Still Life Painting’, in *Early Modern Zoology: The Construction of Animals in Science, Literature, and the Visual Arts*, ed. by Karl A.E. Enenkel and Paul J. Smith (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2006), pp.177-216 (p.177-179).
[42] Bettina Dietz, ‘Mobile Objects: The Space of Shells in Eighteenth-Century France’, *The British Journal for the History of Science,* 39 (Sep., 2006), 363-382 (p.365).

collection in Britain, if not all of Europe' at Bulstrode.[43] To support her argument, Fowkes Tobin quotes from Thomas Martyn's contemporary work *The Universal Conchologist* (1784-1789), in which Martyn argues that the 'rarity and perfection' of the Duchess's shell collection 'altogether justifies the very great expense of time and money employed in the formation of it'.[44] While the thousands of shells that together made this collection were distributed after the Duchess's death, Fowkes Tobin's research has helped other scholars to form an account of the origins and significance of these specimens, with Pelling structuring much of her 2018 study around Fowkes Tobin's 'discover[y]' that 'Captain Cook sourced a large number of shells from countries including New Zealand, Hawaii, and the Caribbean islands for the Duchess'.[45]

By looking to Delany's familiar correspondence, we can see that she had visited Bulstrode long before 1734, with her first reference to attending this estate ('I go next Monday to Bulstrode') appearing in a letter written to her sister on the 15th of October 1730.[46] It is therefore probable that Delany was not only well-acquainted with the notion of shell-collecting as a long-established, genteel employment by the time she wrote to Dewes from Lower Brook Street, but had gathered enough connections and knowledge through her friendship with the Duchess to begin a reputable shell collection of her own. While Delany's use of erratic portrayals of motion enabled her to recognise how others may view shell collecting as a problematic use of her time (returning us to the social and anti-sociable imaginings of self now familiar to us from Carter's letters and writings), it was with irony that she suggested to Dewes that her newfound passion for collecting shells was born from madness.[47]

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[43] Fowkes Tobin, 'Virtuoso or Naturalist? Margaret Cavendish Bentinck, Duchess of Portland', in *Women and Curiosity in Early Modern England and France,* ed. by Line Cottegnies, Sandrine Parageau and John J. Thompson (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2016), pp.216-232 (p.222).

[44] Ibid.

[45] Pelling, pp.111-112. Here, Pelling refers to Fowkes Tobin's 2014 work *The Duchess's Shells*, drawing specifically on pp.74, 115-16, 135-138, & 147 of this publication (Fowkes Tobin, *The Duchess's Shells: Natural History Collecting in the Age of Cook's Voyages* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014)).

[46] Delany, 'Mrs. Pendarves to Mrs. Ann Granville. Upper Brook Street, 15th Oct. 1730', in *The Autobiography and Correspondence of Mary Granville, Mrs. Delany*, I, pp.263-266 (p.265).

[47] As Line Cottegnies and Sandrine Parageau have argued, 'it should not be too hastily deduced from example of women collectors in the eighteenth century that there was an evolution towards a legitimization of women's curiosity'. '[W]hat women's cabinets show', they elaborate, 'is merely the extraordinary boom of curiosity as a cultural practice in a European context' (Line Cottegnies and Sandrine Parageau, 'Introduction'*, Women and*

It is not only through the image of herself 'running wild', however, that Delany offers us a figurative account of self, time, and employment in this instance. Although claiming to have discovered 'a new' interest in shells, by looking to her earlier letters we can see that Delany had already written enthusiastically about these items to her sister. As Llanover observes in her editorial commentary to this letter, Delany's 'taste for shells seemed to have existed when at Killala', while touring with friends around Ireland two years previously.[48] Crucially, in her Killala letters Delany frames shells not as the 'beautiful' collectable items that she would go on to describe to her sister from Lower Brook Street, but plentiful and versatile craft work materials, many of which she had gathered personally with friends from nearby shores. By evaluating key critical approaches to Delany's shell crafts, we not only develop a useful set of strategies with which to organise our own reading of her letters, but place ourselves in a stronger position to enhance existing accounts of bluestocking craft work as a whole.

In addition to being greatly over-shadowed by the fame and longevity of her paper cuttings, Delany's shell craft has been overlooked by scholars because of wider, trivialising attitudes towards leisured female craft work. To help navigate the origins, nature, and implications of this critical trend, this investigation has found it useful to unpack the rest of Llanover's 1861 editorial commentary to Delany's 1734 letter, in which she argues that her ancestor's earlier 'taste for shells' existed 'more as an amusement than as the study which it was afterwards'.[49] Because Llanover's commentary is situated directly beneath Delany's writing, it is both pertinent and constructive for us to consider how the editor's brief, and apparently throwaway remark works to reduce critical interest towards the nature and significance of her ancestor's shell crafts.

For instance, it is important that Llanover chose to employ the word 'taste' to mark a poignant, lasting change in Delany's relationship with shells. Before we proceed to unfold the most misrepresentative

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Curiosity in Early Modern England and France, ed. Line Cottegnies, Sandrine Parageau and John J. Thompson (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2016), pp.1-26 (p.20).).

[48] Augusta Waddington Hall, Lady Llanover, ibid*.*

[49] Ibid.

implications of this phrasing, it is first necessary for us to consider that Llanover may have intended to refer solely to the manner in which her subject most enjoyed working with these items (presenting us with a narrative in which at some point between the years of 1732 and 34, Delany's enthusiasm for shell craft became replaced by a desire to gather, order, and display the most rare and aesthetically pleasing of these specimens simply as matter of preference). However, we must also recognise that by the time Llanover published her edition of Delany's letters, the term 'taste' was popularly used to mark a person's abilities to discern the qualities of a subject, as determined by intellectual, religious, and cultural criteria.

Notably, this more expansive definition of 'taste' had been promoted in Britain by long eighteenth-century enlightenment debate. As literary scholar James Noggle has observed, throughout this period many influential 'British theoretical thinkers' (such as 'Shaftesbury, Addison, Hutchson, Hume, Burke, Gerard, Kames, Alison, and others') wrote 'about the standard of taste, about taste's relation to reason', and 'whether it is a faculty of the mind or a product of association'.[50] For instance, whereas in his 1709 dialogue *The Moralists, a Philosophical Rhapsody*, Anthony Ashley Cooper, third Earl of Shaftesbury argues that one should never 'aim at other Enjoyment than of the rational kind', his 1751 tract *An Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals*, David Hume contends that clear 'Boundaries' can be drawn between reason and taste.[51] 'The former', Hume expands, 'conveys the Knowledge of Truth and Fal[se]hood: The latter gives the Sentiment of Beauty and Deformity, Vice and Virtue'.[52]

While it isn't the purpose for this study to unpack how each of these eighteenth-century philosophers handled the concept of 'taste', it is necessary for us to acknowledge that this dynamic intellectual climate played a formative role in shaping subsequent usages of the word. We can see its implications, for

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[50] James Noggle, 'Literature and Taste, 1700-1800', in *Oxford Handbooks Online: Scholarly Research Reviews* (published online Aug 2015), <https://www.oxfordhandbooks.com/view/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199935338.001.0001/oxfordhb-9780199935338-e-108> [accessed 9th March 2020].

[51] Anthony Ashley Cooper, third Earl of Shaftesbury, *The Moralists, a Philosophical Rhapsody: Being a Recital of Certain Conversations upon Natural and Moral Subjects* (London: John Wyat, 1709) p.207, & David Hume, *An Enquiry Discerning the Principles of Morals* (London: A. Millar, 1751), p.211.

[52] Hume, ibid.

instance, in the fictional literature of the period, with writers drawing on the concept of taste as an effective characterisation technique. By looking to Frances Burney's 1776 novel *Evelina; or, The History of a Young Lady's Entrance into the World*, we see an example of this technique being embraced by a writer who not only frequented bluestocking meetings, but as Melissa Pino notes, offers us a 'deft satirization of eighteenth-century aesthetics'.[53]

In the preface to this novel, Burney describes her 'young' heroine as endowed 'with a virtuous mind, a cultivated understanding, and a feeling heart'; attributes that are later juxtaposed with the manners and conduct that Evelina encounters, while making 'her first appearance upon the great and busy stage of life'.[54] By examining this character's recollection of visiting Cox's museum for instance, we are able to trace stark differences between the intellectual lives of Evelina, and that of her eager and 'ridiculous' suitor, Sir Clement Willoughby.[55] As Julie Park observes, in this passage Evelina illustrates 'her correct understanding of aesthetic values by dismissing the artificial effects and pleasures that the museum showcases', including a mechanical 'pine-apple that suddenly opens to reveal a next of singing birds'.[56]

Having been asked by Sir Clement to give her opinion of 'this brilliant *spectacle*', Evelina replies that while 'it is very fine and very ingenious... I seem to miss something'.[57] In his response, Sir Clement proves himself to be well-educated individual, drawing on the idea of 'taste' as not just an indicator of

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[53] Melissa Pino, 'Burney's *Evelina* and Aesthetics in Action', *Modern Philology*, 108 (November 2010), 263-303 (p.265). As Pino argues, '[a]lthough it may not be possible to prove Burney's exact level of familiarity with particular philosophers [listing as examples 'Burke, Locke, and Hume'], this by no means preclude her having read them', noting how 'dozens of intellectual guests' had 'graced the Burney parlor' (Pino, p.267). For Burney's account of Montagu's bluestocking meetings – along with an explanation of how this account had been shaped by her 'peripheral perspective' as 'a middle class' attendee – see Nicole Pohl and Betty A. Schellenberg, 'Introduction: A Bluestocking Historiography', *Huntington Library Quaterly*, 65 (2002), 1-19 (pp.1-2).

[54] Frances Burney, *Evelina; or, A Young Lady's Entrance into the World*, 2 vols (Dublin: Messrs. Price, Corcoran, R.Cross, Fitzsimons, W.Whitestone, et al, 1779), I, p.xii.

[55] Within the novel, Sir Clement first introduces himself to Evelina while in disguise at a ball. His persistent and unwanted attention towards her causes Evelina to describe Sir Clement's conduct as 'strange, provoking, and ridiculous' in letters written to her guardian, Mr Villas (p.56).

[56] Julie Park, 'Pains and Pleasures of the Automaton: Frances Burney's Mechanics of Coming Out', *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 40 (2006), 23-49 (p.35). Here, Park expands that 'Evelina's experience of Cox's Museum corresponds with the features of its show catalogued in 1773', in which 'the mechanical pineapple actually served as the ornament for the figure of a "Gardener's boy upon beautiful green enamelled [sic] ground"'.

[57] Burney, ibid, p.97.

one's preferences, but one's intellectual capacities to flatter his young companion. 'Excellently answered', he exclaims, adding that 'I was certain your taste was too well formed to be pleased at the expense of your understanding'.[58] Instead of articulating his own opinion of the display however, Sir Clement only praises and copies Evelina's, claiming that 'you have exactly defined my own feelings, though in a manner I should never have arrived at'.[59] Through this exchange, Burney establishes that while Sir Clement may have received a refined education, the certainty, clarity, and integrity of Evelina's taste – having grown in conjunction with her 'cultivated understanding' – was far superior to his.

Vitally, within her editorial analysis Llanover uses the word 'taste' not merely to comment on Delany's likes and dislikes, but to highlight what she viewed as an informative turning point in her ancestor's creative, intellectual, and moral lives. She understood that whereas Delany had once merely valued shells as amusing craft materials, upon beginning her own shell collection this enthusiasm came to be superseded by a more improving and sophisticated way of appreciating these specimens. However, by examining the rest of Delany's correspondence we can grasp how through making these clear-cut lineal and conceptual distinctions, Llanover's commentary misrepresents how this bluestocking appreciated, handled, and wrote about shells in two crucial aspects.

In the first instance, by looking to letters that she wrote after 1734 we can see that Delany continued to not only go about making, but to gain satisfaction from her shell crafts long after declaring a 'new madness' for shell collecting. In 1743 for example, Delany wrote a letter documenting not just her own, but the Duchess of Portland's appreciation for shells as craft materials, relating their plans to build a shell grotto together in the grounds of the Duchess's Bulstrode estate. Writing to her sister from Bulstrode on the 9th of December that year, Delany explains that their proposed grotto is to be set 'in the hollow that

[58] Ibid.
[59] Ibid.

you have a sketch of, and I am to design the plan for it'; a role that she is likely to have been given after demonstrating her aptitude for shell-grotto building eleven years previously in Killala.[60]

As Lisa L. Moore observes, many of the shells that Delany and the Duchess used to decorate this grotto came from snails, including those which had been gathered near Bulstrode. 'One imagines', Moore contemplates, 'the two women combing through wet grass and thickets amid earthy smells and organic textures in search of specimens' suitable for their ambition creative project.[61] Although, as John C. Beynon notes, Moore's rendering of the pair finding 'snail shells necessary for one aspect of the grotto' is portrayed to us through a lens of 'her own desires and fantasies', this scene does highlight an important aspect of Delany and the Duchess's enthusiasm these items.[62] While at the same time as proudly collecting and displaying shells that had been gathered from across the globe, they continued to value locally resourced specimens as a means of fulfilling their creative ambitions.

Placing the ideas of 'amusement' and 'study' in opposition to one another, Llanover also masks the specialised nature of eighteenth-century craft work. As Eger notes in her field-shaping study 'Paper Trails and Eloquent Objects', this oversight is all-too-common in historical assessments of this employment. 'Traditionally', Eger observes, scholars 'have tended to overlook or undervalue […] many of the forms in which bluestocking women chose to express their artistic, literary and scientific ambitions', dismissing them as 'feminine accomplishment and frivolity'; an idea that she counters by arguing that 'ink, paper, shells, plants, and feathers provided far more than a means of passing the time of day', allowing leisured women to convey 'their intellectual ambitions through the more conventional media of female "accomplishment"'.[63]

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[60] Delany, 'Mrs. Delany to Mrs. Dewes, at Calwich, near Ashbourne, Derbyshire. Bulstrode, 9 Dec. 1743', in *The Autobiography and Correspondence of Mary Granville, Mrs Delany,* II, pp.236-238 (p.238).
[61] Lisa L. Moore, *Sister Arts: The Erotics of Lesbian Landscapes* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011), p.73.
[62] John C. Beynon, 'Landscapes of Lesbian Desire', *The Eighteenth Century*, 56 (2015), 125-129 (p.129).
[63] Eger, pp.112-113.

In this study, Eger demonstrates how bluestocking craft work played a fundamental role in securing the foundations of this intellectual society. Turning to examples such as the Duchess of Portland's 'friendship box' (an object that Eger describes as '[o]ne of the most intriguing insights into […] female friendship in the mid-eighteenth century'), Elizabeth Montagu's 'feather screens', and Delany's 'cutpaper flowers', she insists that by the time of its formation, members of the bluestocking circle were 'highly conscious of the role material culture played in bridging the distance between individuals'.[64] While focusing predominantly upon Delany's paper cuttings, Eger also recognises how Delany's 'shell work' played a formative role in 'forg[ing] some of the most important friendships of her life', 'including that with the Duchess of Portland'.[65]

In 'Bluestockings and the Cultures of Natural History', Fowkes Tobin celebrates and builds upon Eger's argument, contending that bluestocking craft work required both a mastery of 'technique' and 'an intimate, embodied knowledge of the natural world'.[66] Employing Hannah Robertson's 1764 manual *The Young Ladies School of Arts* to illustrate the 'lengthy', and often 'dangerous' processes that eighteenth-century shell work entailed, she explains that '[o]nce cleaned and polished, shells could be used to make, as Delany [and Montagu] did, frames for pictures and mirrors'.[67] While on one hand recognising that Delany's 'letters do not adequately convey the technical expertise required to prepare shells for decorative purposes', Fowkes Tobin maintains that the shell crafts described within this bluestocking's letters demanded 'a combined knowledge of nature, mastery of technique, and the aesthetics of display'.[68]

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[64] Ibid, p.112.
[65] Ibid, p.118.
[66] Fowkes Tobin, ibid.
[67] Ibid, p.63. Paraphrasing Robertson's work, here Fowkes Tobin writes that '[c]leaning shells began with boiling the mollusks to kill the animal inside, removing them with a stout pin, and then using a combination of aquafortis (nitric acid), emery file, and boars' hair brushes to remove the shell's epidermis. The goal was to remove the shells' dull or crusty coat, and then to polish them with brushes until they shone like gems'. She then provides an indent from Robertson's work upon how to prepare sea nail shells, materials that 'were particularly challenging to clean because the acid used to remove the outer part of the shell could corrode the shell's luminous interior'. 'Cleaning shells properly', Fowkes Tobin iterates to through the techniques outlined in this work, 'required skill'.
[68] Ibid, p.64.

As we will soon consider, Delany's involvement with the initial, grittier phases of shell work is often ambiguous in her correspondence. It is possible that as a gentlewoman, she would have chosen to defer elements (if not the entirety) of these processes to natural history experts or trained household members, thereby granting herself the freedom to concentrate upon the composition and presentation of her crafts. Yet even in these theoretical and final stages, it would have been necessary for Delany to know the material properties of her shells, along with how they could be adapted to meet her specific design requirements. Crucially, the sense of pride and ownership that this bluestocking artist attributes to her crafts indicates strongly that if not always gutting, cleaning, and drying these objects personally, she at least chose to direct and oversee these preparatory phases.

At the same time as pulling together aspects of Eger and Fowkes Tobin's publications, in 'Collecting the World' Pelling provides us with further, different challenges to Llanover's dismissive account of Delany's shell crafts. For instance, within this study Pelling blurs lines that Llanover draws between shell crafts and collections, arguing that 'the eighteenth-century practice of collecting as a form of craft in its own right – one that brought together a collage of objects, textures and narratives, assembled to display meaning'.[69] Chiefly however, Pelling most convincingly revises Llanover's account by exposing how Delany and the Duchess's crafts translated 'global materials' into expressions of 'Bluestocking values and female friendship', framing Bulstrode 'as an independent epicentre of learning'.[70]

Prominent among the examples that Pelling draws on to illustrate her argument, is the snail shell grotto that Delany and the Duchess embarked upon in 1743. In contrast to Moore's focus on the locally sourced specimens that went towards this creative project, Pelling highlights the 'aesthetically and geographically foreign, decorative and tactile tokens of global travel' given to her by explores such as Cook, arguing that the Duchess 'sought to celebrate these new and exciting materials' by displaying them not just in cabinets, but in the Bulstrode grounds.[71] 'Each hollow, delicate shell', she argues, 'reflected space, time,

[69] Pelling, p.103.
[70] Ibid, pp.101 & 104.
[71] Ibid, pp.112-113.

people and travel on a truly global scale and yet, in the hands of the women at Bulstrode', became 'an element of an ongoing and gendered dialogue between the landscape and the women shaping it'.[72]

Highlighting both the demanding and pioneering nature of female eighteenth-century craft work, Eger, Fowkes Tobin and Pelling offer us an appealing alternatives to the trivialising critical models that have so far dominated accounts of not only Delany's shell crafts, but that of bluestocking craft work in general. However, through striving to outline the knowledge, skills, and patience that these crafts required, their studies leave little room to also unpack the conflict that at times underpins Delany's written depictions of this employment. As the next section of this chapter illustrates, there were time when she was also encouraged to employ terminology used by Llanover, and depict her shell crafts as mere 'amusements' – not just upon first going about this manner of occupation, but throughout the course of her life as a shell craft worker. By unpacking these moments, we better equip ourselves to navigate the disparate critical interpretations offered to us through Llanover, Eger, Fowkes Tobin, and Pelling's writings.

Section 3) A tale of two store-rooms: unpacking conflicted portrayals of the nature of time devoted to craft work in Delany's familiar correspondence

On the 6th of October 1750, Delany wrote a letter to Dewes from her home in Deville, Ireland, relaying how she and Dean Delany had employed themselves since her last. She relates, for instance, that her enraptured re-reading of Samuel Richardson's novel *Clarissa* ('I find many beauties escaped me in my first reading'), 'and making up my shell-lustre, has taken up every home hour that has not been interrupted by company.'[73] 'I will not lay by either', Delany resolves, 'till I have finished them', reflecting how just '[l]ast Monday I staid at home and gave *full indulgence* to my industry' (p.599). Notably, this middling period of her life has been labelled by Fowkes Tobin as 'the height of her

[72] Ibid, p.113.
[73] Delany, 'Mrs Delany to Mrs. Dewes. Deville, 6 Oct. 1750', p.598-599. Further references to this letter are given after quotations in the text.

shellworking days', with Delany offering us engaging, detailed descriptions of her shell crafts throughout this section of her familiar correspondence.[74] By looking to her Deville letters, we can see Delany turn to accounts of her shell craft work as a means of unpacking a broader set of concerns, offering us glimpses into her understanding of female leisured employment.

Digressing only to give Dewes eagerly anticipated news of their mutual friends in Ireland, Delany continues to describe her plans 'to make a very comfortable closet', in which 'to have a dresser, and all manner of working tools, to keep all my stores for *painting, carving, gilding*, &c' (p.600). Delany begins this description by conveying the considerable amounts of time, effort, and resources needed to complete this project, strategies that frame the construction of her craft tool closet as an important and challenging feat: 'a great work it will be', she writes boldly, 'but when done very comfortable' (p.600). The self-assured tone of Delany's writing soon changes however, when in the midst of relaying her designs to install 'shelves' into this closet (to 'put whatever china I think too good for common use'), she exclaims suddenly to Dewes of how 'trifling and insignificant is my store-room, to what yours is' (pp.600-601)!

Handling her imaginings of these rooms as metaphors of self, time, and employment, Delany proceeds to consider how their differences could be used to mark and trace disparities between her and her sister's everyday routines. For instance, she writes that as the realisation of a mind 'ever turned to help, relieve, and bless [her] neighbours and acquaintance', Dewes' store-room 'serves either to supply' her 'hospitable table, or gives cordial and healing medicines to the poor and the sick' (p.601). While 'flatter[ing]' herself to 'have a contrary disposition', Delany reflects the plans for her craft store-room could be read, by contrast, as the product of a mind '*too much filled* with amusements of no real estimation' (p.601). She concludes this account of her craft store-room by reflecting that 'when people commend any of my performances, I feel a consciousness that my time might have been better employed' (p.601).

[74] Fowkes Tobin, ibid, p.61.

By highlighting moments in which Delany expresses doubt over the time she devoted to her crafts, this study by no means seeks to suggest that the traditional interpretation of bluestocking craft work is valid. Nor does it propose that for complicating recent, important efforts to revise this interpretation, these instances should be shunned as unhelpful, uncharacteristic, or irrelevant oddities in Delany's letters. Rather, that it is important for us recognise how this bluestocking craft worker and letter-writer often used written descriptions of her crafts as an imaginative lens, through which to consider how others may view her life and employments as wanting. Freed from the conventions that framed the time she devoted to her paper cuttings as time progressing towards moral enlightenment, here Delany was at greater liberty to place her recent activities in relation to differing imaginings of improving behaviour.

In the first instance, Delany draws upon her imaginings of her and her sister's store-rooms to depict their respective trajectories along differing models of well-employed time. Expressing her resolve to complete her shell lustre from the outset of this letter, Delany portrays her eager pursuit of a creative model, a choice that she initially conveys to her sister in affirming terms. Whereas her old closet was 'to be given up to' her already finished 'prints', 'drawings', and 'collection[s]', Delany explains that this new 'closet' was to be an environment in which she could both use and cultivate her creative abilities (p.600). In particular, by listing the array of 'painting, carving', and 'gilding' tools that she planned to house within this space, Delany highlights the accomplished nature of her craft work, identifying herself by extension as an accomplished craft worker.

Portraying Dewes as the architect, owner, and occupant of a space built around the needs of others, Delany depicts her correspondent's steady progress along an alternative, nurturing model of virtue. Because of Delany's tendency to burn her sister's letters (as she wrote to Dewes on the 3rd of April 1744 for instance, 'I believe I have burnt this week an hundred of your letters', as 'I thought it prudent to destroy letters that mentioned particular affairs of particular people, or family business'), we are prevented from exploring the grounds that Dewes may have given her older sister for this hospitable

account of self from her side of their correspondence.[75] However, we do know that upon marrying John Dewes in 1740, she received the book *Cookery and Medicinal Recipes of the Granville Family* from her mother Mary Granville, complete with the inscription 'Mrs Ann Granvill[e's] Book which I hope sh[e] will make a better use of th[a]n her mother'.[76] According to Delany's 1750 letter, Dewes had gone on to fulfil their mother's wishes, using her medicinal supplies to provide support for those less able and fortunate than herself.

We also know from Delany's side of their correspondence that by 1750, Dewes had given birth to Bernard, John, and Mary Dewes.[77] Through writing instructive letters with regards to the welfare of her nephews and niece, Delany created her own nurturing role in the Dewes family; as Ingrid Tague has noted for instance, Delany often wrote to her sister urging for Mary Dewes to receive 'informal lessons in politeness'.[78] Tague continues that in particular, Delany was eager for her niece to stay in her 'house in London, where she could both learn from a good dancing master and be introduced to the right people'.[79] However, by comparing her activities in Deville to her imagining of a life devoted to caring for others, Delany characterises the time she spent on her crafts as an absence of communal responsibility. By doing so, Delany portrays her failure to advance along her sister's sociable model of well-employed time.

This is not to say that Delany attributed no social value to her crafts. As we will soon consider by examining earlier moments in her correspondence, Delany had long turned to shell craft work as a both a

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[75] Delany, 'Mrs. Delany to Mrs. Dewes. Clarges Street, April 3, 1744', in *The Autobiography and Correspondence of Mary Granville, Mrs. Delany,* II, pp.288-291 (p.291).

[76] *Cookery and Medicinal Recipes of the Granville Family*, Washington, D.C., Folger Shakespeare Library, V.a.430 (84). Manuscript accessed online <https://luna.folger.edu/luna/servlet/view/search;JSESSIONID=e7c7adec-1508-45f5-91ca-2479a3201766?q=hamnet_holdings_id%3D%22281364%22%20LIMIT%3AFOLGER%7E3%7E3&search=SUBMIT&QuickSearchA=QuickSearchA&sort=call_number%2Cmpsortorder1&pgs=250&res=1&cic=FOLGER%7E3%7E3> [accessed 29th May 2020].

[77] Bernard, John, and Mary Dewes, born in 1743, 1744, and 1745 respectively. In 1745 for instance, Delany wrote to Dewes congratulating her on how the youngest of these three children 'takes so well to her food' (Delany, 'Mrs. Delany to Mrs. Dewes. Delville, 8 March, 1745-6' *The Autobiography and Correspondence of Mary Granville, Mrs. Delany,* II, pp.427-428 (p.427)).

[78] Ingrid H. Tague, *Women of Quality: Accepting and Contesting Ideals of Femininity in England, 1690-1760* (Suffolk; Rochester: The Boydell Press, 2002), p.167.

[79] Ibid.

reliable and enjoyable way of creating, strengthening, and celebrating her familiar relationships. Instead, a more helpful approach is for us to recognise that there were aspects of Dewes' lifestyle that encouraged Delany to consider, at times, how her life in Delville could be seen to lack social purpose. Crucially, she compares her store-room to her sister's not to distinguish a moral life from an immoral one, nor to express a wish for her lifestyle to be more like Dewes', but to acknowledge the disparity between popular framings of virtuous female conduct.

As well as addressing these specific nurturing and creative behavioural models, Delany uses this letter to explore a further tension inherent to her understanding of female leisure time. Significantly, domestic work was widely recognised as the most suitable form of employment for gentlewomen to undertake in this period. As Marilyn Francus summarises of this social, cultural, and intellectual climate, '[e]ighteenth-century British society insisted upon domesticity as the most appropriate venue for the fulfilment of a woman's duties to God, society, and herself'.[80] Motherhood, Francus continues, was seen as a principle way for a woman to answer her call to domesticity. 'Conduct manuals, educational tracts, and political tracts', she explains, 'prescribed the image of the domestic women, particularly as a wife and mother: caring for her children, supervising the servants', as well as being 'sensitive to the needs of others'.[81]

By looking to Delany's account of Dewes' store-room, along with her status as a wife and mother, we can see how multiple features of her sister's lifestyle complemented this vision. As the title *Cookery and Medicinal Recipes of the Granville Family* illustrates, the ability to provide medicinal aid was as seen as crucial to domestic management in this period. Given to Dewes by her mother on her wedding day, this book also conveys how these duties traditionally fell to (even, as the wry inscription in this work highlights, if they were not always faithfully practised by) the female head of the family, who was then responsible for passing them on to future generations. Although, much like Delany's involvement in the early stages of her shell work, we cannot know the extent of Dewes' participation in this manner of work,

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[80] Marilyn Francus, *Monstrous Motherhood: Eighteenth-Century Culture and the Ideology of Domesticity* (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 2012), p.1.
[81] Ibid.

her possession of a medicinal store-room and manual complements this widely held view of feminine virtue.

While not as fundamental to popular notions of domesticity as motherhood, craft work also offered women a customary form of domestic employment in this period. As Robertson's manual highlights to us, although technically and mentally demanding, this work could be conducted at home, for the decoration of the home, enabling gentlewomen like Delany to enhance their household environment according to personal or cultural ideas of good taste. Outlining both the multifaceted and challenging nature of eighteenth-century craft work, Robertson's manual has also encouraged us to consider how craft work could be produced by collective effort. This employment could therefore be used by the female head of household to teach, direct, and manage her household members, enabling her to delegate the least appealing aspects of craft work through exerting domestic authority.

A domestic space equipped with decorative tools, Delany's craft store-room resonated with this other familiar account of feminine domesticity. In particular, through closing her account of this environment by reducing her craft works to mere 'trifl[es]' and 'amusements' Delany highlights her sensitivity to this resonance, contemplating that when seen as fruits of domestic employment, her crafts 'might' be seen as an 'insignificant' way of employing her time. However, Delany remained sceptical of this limiting way of imagining the nature, use, and potential of her craft work. Although she ends her letter with this unflattering account of this employment, at its opening she stresses how she valued the construction of her shell lustre as a means of giving structure, purpose, and a tangible outcome to the time she passed in Deville. As we will soon see through examining her other letters, not only did she often distinguish her crafts from 'domestic affairs', but undertook many of these creative projects in outside and communal spaces.

In order to recognise and navigate these conflicting interpretations of domestic feminine employment, over the course of this letter Delany frames her craft store-room to be at once 'great' and 'trifling', 'commended' and 'insignificant', the product of both 'industry' and 'indulgence'. Notably, through this

series of juxtapositions, Delany returns us to the arguments studied in the previous chapter of this thesis, through her fellow bluestocking's imaginings of well-employed and wasted time. As we have considered, although Carter valued plain-work as a means of cultivating her social and intellectual lives, she understood that when compared to her unusual scholarly feats, the time she devoted to her conventional duties could be read as unambitious and regular.

Shaping both Carter and Delany's accounts of self, time, and employment, shared concern is reflective of a wider contemporary debate, in which intellectuals discussed how the pursuit of customary and uncustomary employments could influence a woman's reputation and prospects. As Johnson is said to have remarked of Carter's talents, '[a] man is in general better pleased when he has a good dinner upon his table than when his wife talks Greek. My old friend, Mrs Carter, could make a pudding, as well as translate Epictetus from the Greek, and work a handkerchief as well as compose a poem'.[82] Most commonly utilised by scholars to deliberate whether Johnson sought to praise or mock his female fellow translator, this comment also illustrates how not just Carter, but all bluestocking women were encouraged to place their actions in relation to differing modes of conduct.[83]

Giving equal weight to Carter's baking and translations, needlework and poetry, Johnson does not necessarily frame one mode of work as worthier than the other. Yet by contrasting scholarship with the conduct most commonly expected by a husband of a wife, he at least depicts Carter's writings as the most *remarkable* of her occupations. Johnson thereby points to Carter's scholarship, for better or for worse, as the most distinguishing feature of her life and legacy, marking her out from other gentlewomen of his acquaintance. In her 1750 letter to Dewes, Delany approaches this notion from the alternative angle. She

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[82] Johnson, as quoted by James Boswell in *The Life of Samuel Johnson, LL.D.: Including a Journal of a Tour to the Hebrides*, ed. John Wilson Croker, 5 vols, (London: John Murray, 1831), V, p.229.

[83] For example, whereas Claudia Thomas offers us several unflattering ways of reading this comment ('might Johnson […] be subtly denigrating her most significant achievement, the translation of Epictetus, by equating it with "housewifery"'?), Kathleen Nulton Kemmerer argues it 'is a sincere compliment intended to show that her accomplishments disproved the old cliché, expressed in John Dunton's *The Female War* (1697): "Pray what need of Metaphysics to make a Pudding?"'. Claudia Thomas 'Samuel Johnson and Elizabeth Carter: Pudding, Epictetus, and the Accomplished Women', *South Central Review*, 9 (1992), 18-30, & Kathleen Nulton Kemmerer, "*A Neutral Being Between the Sexes": Samuel Johnson's Sexual Politics* (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 1998), p.135.

understood that as a conventional feminine accomplishment her craft works could be framed as *un*remarkable, using words such as ‘insignificant’ to gesture towards more unusual and ambitious possibilities of occupation.

Portraying her failure to follow a social behavioural model, and offering us a ‘trifling’ imagining of self, Delany provides us with a problematic account of the time she devoted to her crafts. Far from being ashamed of this unflattering depictions, she embraces them as means of cultivating her relationship with her younger sister. In the first instance, she understood that as well-read and well-connected women, both she and Dewes would at times consider how their actions could be seen as wanting, when placed next to other popular behavioural models. Delany understood that just as her daily routine could be framed by an absence of Dewes’ social duties, Dewes could be accused of failing to match her older sister’s progress along creative models of well-employed time.

Secondly, by framing her own store-room as ‘insignificant’ Delany acknowledges how all conventional domestic employments – be it shell craft work, child rearing, or providing medicinal supplies to the less fortunate – could be seen as trivial. Although framing Dewes’ activities as worthier than her own in this instance, Delany understood that as a leisured gentlewoman, her sister would also have considered how she could have used her time, connections, and resources to carve out a more ground-breaking path of employment. Crucially, comparing her and Dewes’ store-room enabled Delany to recognise this shared set of predicaments, using this letter to acknowledge their uncertain positions between contemporary imaginings of improving genteel female conduct.

<u>Section 4) Of lustres and grottos: shell craft as a vehicle of creative and sociable improvement in Delany’s correspondence</u>

Although conscious of how they could be interpreted as ‘amusements of no real estimation’, Delany continued to attribute intellectual, creative, and sociable qualities to her shell crafts. Only weeks after

juxtaposing her and her sisters' store-rooms for instance, Delany wrote a series of letters depicting the construction of her shell lustre as a demanding vehicle of self cultivation. This was not her first attempt at this venture; for years Delany had valued her shell lustres as a reliable means of enhancing her creative and social lives. In particular, by looking to Delany's earliest written accounts of self as a shell lustre maker, we place ourselves in a stronger position to revise the narrative of her 'paper Moasicks' being her life's work.

Delany documents her first attempt at lustre making on the 7th of September 1745, writing to Dewes from Deville that 'I have this week been very busy at work to finish *my branch* for my portico in my garden'.[84] In her commentary, Llanover explains that by this 'branch' Delany was referring to a suspension device from which 'a chandelier made of shells' could be hung, identifying this contraption as the foundations of Delany's first shell lustre. In a move that at once highlights the demanding nature of this work, and foreshadows its reappearance over the coming weeks of their correspondence, Delany adds that while having been in production for a week this branch was 'not yet' finished, reflecting that '[d]omestic affairs must interpose for some time and company'.[85]

Depicting these 'affairs' as a hindrance to her shell lustre, on this occasion Delany highlights her scepticism towards the framing of craft work as a mere domestic employment. The conflict portrayed between her domestic and creative lives is particularly important for us to consider as, by reading this letter in its entirety, we can see how Delany's 'domestic affairs' consisted of furnishing her Deville household. For instance, she writes that having recently hung a portrait of Dewes in her bedchamber ('it smiles upon me and gives me a sort of melancholy gladness, for it really *is like you*'), she considered her 'house' to be 'now furnished very completely'.[86] While both employments provided Delany with ways of improving the appearance of her household, by framing the construction of her lustre as the more

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[84] Mary Delany, 'Mrs. Delany to Mrs. Dewes, at Welsbourne. Delville, 7 Sept. 1745', in *The Autobiography and Correspondence of Mary Granville, Mrs. Delany,* II, pp.385-386 (p.386).
[85] Ibid.
[86] Ibid. Delany wrote her first letter from Deville to her sister on 28th June 1744, shortly after first moving in. She had therefore living in this residence for little over a year at time of writing.

remarkable pursuit, she distinguishes shell craft as the more ambitious application of her time and faculties.

On the 3rd of October, Delany wrote another letter to Dewes announcing the proud completion of her shell lustre. Having confirmed her and her husband's safety in Ireland ('I thought my dearest sister might have some alarm for her friends on this side of the water during our wars and rumours of wars'), she relays that her creative project was 'finished ten days ago', adding that 'everybody liked it'.[87] 'Twas a *new whim*', Delany reflects, continuing that this invention 'shows the shells to great advantage'.[88] Significantly, this description resonates with the oft-quoted statement that she would go on to make decades later, in a statement that, as Campbell Orr notes, 'has riveted admirers of Mrs Delany's artistry ever since' her 'collage collections became more widely known': 'I have invented a new way', she would go on to write to her niece Mary Dewes from Bulstrode on the 3rd of October 1772, 'of imitating flowers'.[89]

On both occasions, Delany frames her crafts as 'new' creative ventures. Her written accounts therefore communicate how she valued both as means of making personal, innovative contributions to the existing creative field. Furthermore, by labelling her original shell lustre as a 'whim', and her first paper cuttings (along with her other recent employments such as 'finishing the work'd stools' and making three 'chimney boards') as 'meer bagatelles', on both occasions Delany demonstrates her sensitivity to how these pioneering feats could still be framed as petty distractions.[90] While in the wake of the remarkable critical reception to her second creative innovation, Delany would go on to render her cuttings as uncomplicated tools of moral progress, by placing these letters side by side we can see how at the time of their respective conceptions, she beheld both crafts as understated vehicles of creative innovation.

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[87] Mary Delany, 'Mrs. Delany to Mrs. Dewes. Delville, 3 Oct., 1745', in *The Autobiography and Correspondence of Mary Granville, Mrs. Delany,* II, pp.390-392 (p.391).
[88] Ibid.
[89] Campbell Orr, p.268, & Mary Delany, 'Mrs. Delany to Mrs. Port, of Ilam. Bulstrode, 4th Oct., 1772', in *The Autobiography and Correspondence of Mary Granville, Mrs. Delany,* ed. Augusta Waddington Hall, Lady Llanover, IV, pp.467-472 (p.469).
[90] Delany, ibid.

Although alike in these respects, there remains a significant difference between Delany's 1745 and 1772 renderings of craft work. Significantly, in her 1745 letter Delany portrays her first lustre as a widely commended achievement, a reaction that she then validates by explaining how it 'shows the shells to a great advantage'. On the one hand, one might explain this difference by arguing that Delany would have felt more comfortable to relay positive feedback to her work to her sister as a forty-five year-old, than to her niece as a seventy-two year-old. As Francus also notes of this period, 'modest(y)' was also vital to the 'prescribed image of the domestic woman', making humility the most virtuous example that Delany could set for her younger female relative.[91] Moreover – and as we have considered through the praise that both the Duchess of Portland and royal family heaped upon her cuttings – other contemporary sources illustrate how Delany's paper cuttings soon won the commendation of her peers.

However, it is also important for us to consider the possibility that Delany felt greater pride and excitement in announcing the completion of her first shell lustre, than of pronouncing the conception of her botanical collages. In her attempt to answer how Delany's later 'throw-away announcement of an artistic innovation [should] be interpreted' for instance, Campbell Orr argues that this 'is not a report that a hitherto unknown painter has extended her vocation by using a new medium – coloured paper. She refers to imitation – copying; there is no allusion to invention, that is, composition'.[92] She adds that '[t]he exclusion of the two media of pastel and oils meant that, in eighteenth-century terms, it is also not "high" art at all but decorative "frippery", something that might give pleasure, certainly, or even instruction, but was not really lasting, or belonging to any hierarchy of fine art'.[93]

Notably, the language and imagery that Delany drew on in her poem 'Plants' supports this critical insight. Although her description of her cuttings as a 'timid' means of 'trac[ing]' nature enabled Delany to portray them as works of religious awe, this phrasing also is indicative of her understanding of collage as a relatively low creative form, elevated through its noble subject matter. By contrast, Delany understood

[91] Francus, ibid.
[92] Campbell Orr, ibid.
[93] Ibid.

that by making lustres she was enhancing the natural appearance of shells through transforming them into a decorative household piece, depicting the construction, composition, and display of this lustre all as her own invention. While contemporary and recent criticism focuses upon her paper cuttings, at the time of their construction Delany attributed greater importance to her shell lustre.

At the same time as helping us to revise the existing critical field, this 1745 letter illustrates why Delany's shell lustres have received little contemporary and scholarly attention. After describing the triumphant completion of this work, she admits to Dewes that a recent spell of 'damp weather' had 'made the cement give', making it necessary for her to remove it from the Duchess' portico move it and 'into the house'.[94] Although Delany's actions saved this work in the short term, her lustre (along with, apparently, subsequent attempts at this form of craft work) fell apart five years later. As she wrote to Dewes on the 22nd of May 1750 after a lengthy visit to England, '[t]he greatest damage I sustained in my absence is my shell lustres falling to pieces, and most of my crayon pictures mildewed'.[95] '[A]s they are the works of an author of no very great value', she added, 'it gives me no very great concern'.[96]

Despite this initial acceptance of her lustres' demise, over the following months Delany went on to express her resolve to revive this creative innovation. On the 28th of September for instance, she wrote to Dewes of how 'the Hamiltons have promised to breakfast with me to-morrow, and assist me in sorting shells, for now I am all *whip and spur* to get my lustre revived'.[97] So far, she continues, 'I have stripped it [the old lustre] of every shell and scraped it to the bone. I have now more choice of shells than when I made it, and hope the second edition will be more correct than the first'.[98] On the 13th of October – just seven days after comparing her store-room to her sister's – Delany wrote again to her sister of how 'I

[94] Delany, 'Mrs. Delany to Mrs. Dewes. Delville, 3 Oct., 1745', (p.391).
[95] Delany, 'Mrs. Delany to Mrs. Dewes. Delville, 22 May, 1750', in *The Autobiography and Correspondence of Mary Granville, Mrs. Delany,* II, pp.545-547 (p.546).
[96] Ibid.
[97] Delany, 'Mrs. Delany to Mrs. Dewes. Delville, 28 Sept. 1750', in *The Autobiography and Correspondence of Mary Granville,* II, pp.594-598 (p.595).
[98] Ibid.

have all this week worked most industriously at my [shell] lustre', stipulating that just 'two mornings more will finish the work'.[99]

Exactly a week later, Delany penned a further letter to Dewes conveying how she had not only 'worked like a dragon this week at my lustre', but 'completed' it in the time frame set in her last ('Thursday [the 15th]').[100] 'I am now glad the old one was destroyed', she writes, adding that '[t]his I think prettier, D.D. [Dean Delany] calls it the *Phoenix*: it was a vast work, every shell dried and sorted, and nobody assisted me, but Mrs Hamilton one morning made some of the flowers'.[101] Although later recognising 'Mrs. Hamilton['s] very diligent' efforts in 'making the ornament which is to hide the pulley' for this contraption, this present letter marks Delany's final, direct involvement in this new lustre's creation.[102]

While taking pleasure from her husband's likening of her work to a reborn 'Phoenix', Delany also describes this most recent construction as 'prettier' than the last. By drawing this qualitative distinction between her old and new lustres, Delany implies that she had not only renewed, but improved upon the techniques and knowledge that she had begun to develop through the original. Although failing to specify exactly *how* 'every shell' had been 'dried and sorted' in this instance (an omission that may indicate she received help in the early stages of shell work), as well as recognising Mrs Hamilton's assistance, in her capacity as the designer and director of this project Delany takes personal pride over its completion. Vitally, by documenting the development of this 'more correct' shell lustre, Delany was able to illustrate to her sister how her creative abilities had flourished over time.

In addition to nurturing her creative skills and determination, shell craft work enabled Delany to enrich her social life. In a series of letters dating from the 28th of June 1732 for instance, Delany illustrates how

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[99] Delany, 'Mrs Delany to Mrs. Dewes. Deville, 13 Oct. 1750', in *The Autobiography and Correspondence of Mary Granville, Mrs. Delany,* II, pp.601- 604 (p.602).
[100] Delany, 'Mrs Delany to Mrs. Dewes. Deville, 20 Oct. 1750', in *The Autobiography and Correspondence of Mary Granville, Mrs. Delany,* II, pp.604- 606 (p.604).
[101] Ibid.
[102] Delany, 'Mrs Delany to Mrs. Dewes. Deville, 27 Oct. 1750', in *The Autobiography and Correspondence of Mary Granville, Mrs. Delany,* II, pp.606- 610 (p.608).

shell grotto work heightened the creative and intellectual camaraderie that her company enjoyed while residing in Killala. Having acknowledged the death of 'poor Mrs. Wilson', along with the inadequacies of her current writing conditions ('our window looks into the churchyard, and during the burial service there is such a confusion of howls, that 'tis enough to distract one'), in this first letter Delany explains how she and her friends had created affectionate aliases for one another, based on their shared knowledge of ancient Greek mythology. [103] 'I forget myself', she writes, 'and I am talking like a mortal, though you must know I am nothing less than Madam Venus, Mrs Clayton is Juno, Phill [Anne Donnellan] Minerva, Miss Forth, *the three graces*' (p.361). She continues that 'Mr Wesley […] is Paris', 'Mr. Lloyd is Hermes', and 'Mr. Crofton is the Genius of the grotto that we are erecting' (p.361).

As conservation architect James Howley has noted in *The Follies and Garden Buildings of Ireland*, this communal project is today celebrated as '[t]he oldest natural-style grotto for which references survive in Ireland', with Delany's 'extensive correspondence' offering us 'a most detailed description, not only of its form but also the method of its construction'.[104] For this insight, we are indebted to Delany's efforts to write regularly about this grotto to Dewes, using depictions of its construction to demonstrate affection for her sister during this lengthy period of their separation. As she wrote to her sister in the letter first mentioning this grotto, 'could you be here with a wish, our godships would soon have their band enlarged, and we would ravage Olympus to find a title suitable to you' (p.361).

The grotto, Delany explains, is situated 'about half-a-mile from' the village of Killala, tucked away on the summit of a 'very pretty green hill' (p.361). She expands that '[w]e go every morn[ing] at seven o'clock to that place to adorn it with shells', using specimens taken from the Bishop of Killala's 'large collection

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[103] Delany, 'Mrs. Pendarves to her sister Mrs. Ann Granville. Killala, 28 June 1732', in *The Autobiography and Correspondence of Mary Granville, Mrs. Delany,* I, pp.360- 363 (p.360-361). Further references to this letter are given after quotations in the text.

[104] James Howley, *The Follies and Garden Buildings of Ireland* (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 1993), pp.27-28. The construction of this grotto, Howley here notes, was a particularly innovative project for Delany and her friends to have undertaken during this period. It 'was something of a rarity', he explains, 'not only for its type but also its location, as there were relatively few follies and garden buildings constructed in Connaught, where the land was less fertile than most other parts of the country'.

of very fine ones' (p.361). Notably, this description not only offers us Delany's first account of working on the Killala grotto, but one of the earliest portrayals of her interacting with a shell collection in Llanover's edition of her correspondence. By unpacking the differences between Delany's portrayals of shell craft work and shell collecting in this instance, we place ourselves in a stronger position to understand how circumstance moulded her appreciation for these objects.

Although illustrating her ability to discern an apparently 'very fine' collection of shells, Delany's brief description departs from the animated language that she used two years later while living in London, to depict her newfound 'madness' for gathering these objects. In particular – and while it is likely that the Bishop would have volunteered his *least* valuable and treasured shells towards this experimental enterprise – on this occasion she offers us no descriptions of their appearance, no interest in how they might be (or may have been) presented in a cabinet, nor does handling them encourage her to start a collection of her own. Instead, Delany continues that 'Phill and I are the engineers' of their group project, adding playfully that 'the men fetch and carry for us what we want, and think themselves highly honoured' (p.361). She therefore pulls the focus of this narrative sharply away from shell collecting, and back towards the atmosphere of creativity and sociability that this grotto encouraged.

In letters written to Dewes over the following months, Delany documents the grotto's great impact upon the company's life in Killala. On the 6th of September for instance, she invited her sister to imagine herself going about the various, interlinking types of shell work that this project demanded. 'Our daily amusements I have so often repeated', she wrote, 'but are they not pretty? Do you not wish yourself extended on the beach gathering shells, listening to Phill while she sings at her work, or joining in the conversation, always attended with cheerfulness'?[105] Or 'perhaps', she ponders, 'you had rather rise by seven and walk to the grotto with your bag of shells, and a humble servant by your side, helping you up the hill and saying pretty things to you as you walk'?[106] Finally, Delany suggests that her sister might

[105] Delany, 'Mrs. Pendarves to her sister Mrs. Ann Granville. Kilalla, 6th Sept., 1732', in *The Autobiography and Correspondence of Mary Granville, Mrs. Delany,* I, pp.380- 384 (p.382).
[106] Ibid.

prefer 'to be at work in the grotto shewing the elegancy of your fancy, praising your companions' works, and desiring approbation for what you have finished'.[107]

Crucially, each convivial scenario returns us to how Delany understood shell work to be at once frivolous and improving in nature. For instance, by offering Dewes an imagining of self 'extended' on a beach while listening to Donnellan singing, 'or joining in' with 'conversation', she depicts shell collecting as a mere means of facilitating cheerful social interaction, as opposed to a worthwhile pursuit in its own right. An outdoor leisure activity, this initial phase of shell work also sits neatly amongst other 'amusement[s]' that Delany professed to enjoy in another of her Killala letters, such as 'running after butterflies and gathering weed nosegays' while exploring nearby shores with friends.[108] Simultaneously, this scenario also demonstrates that by the later stages of the grotto's construction – with the Bishop's collection presumably either exhausted or discarded – Delany and her company had become competent in sourcing and selecting specimens that were suitable for their project.

Although exhibiting no specialised knowledge about the types, aesthetic qualities, or value of the shells they gathered in this letter, in her capacity as a craft worker Delany would have handled these items with careful discernment. What she here portrays as convivial 'conversation' between friends is likely to have involved considered discussions about the shells' material properties, how they could be prepared with the resources available to the company, along with their final placing in the grotto. Through gathering shells by hand, Delany and her friends were able to enhance their knowledge of the specimens they worked with, along with their collective understanding of the local landscape.

Describing the process of transporting shells to the grotto, Delany creates a further account of both leisured and cultivating employment. Supporting her leisured imagining of self, here Delany offers Dewes an imagining of self accompanied by a 'humble servant' not only helping her to climb the steep ascent to the site, but saying 'pretty things' to her as they walked, using this scenario to paint a picture of ease and

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[107] Ibid.
[108] Delany, 'Mrs Pendarves to Mrs Ann Granville. Killala, 7th August, 1732', I, pp.366-371 (p.368).

flattery. Additionally, through the presence of this companion Delany was able to reassure Dewes of the protection that she received upon her regular journeys to the grotto. Together, these aspects of Delany's writing align with the accounts of upstanding gentlewomanly behaviour that we considered in the previous chapter of this thesis, uniting to form a picture of unstrenuous, orderly, and safe employment.

Further reinforcing this cordial imagining is the likelihood that Delany may have not been referring to a literal 'servant' in this instance, but one of the aforementioned 'highly honoured' men of her company. The significance of this likelihood heightens when we consider that Delany wrote this letter as a thirty-two year-old widow, having been freed from her unhappy first marriage to Alexander Pendarves upon his death seven years previously. Whereas Pendarves' jealousy had prevented her from gathering shells with male friends in the past, she was now able to do so without fear of reproof.[109] Whether extended as an act of deference, chivalry, flirtation, or friendship, the 'pretty things' spoken by this companion conveys the relative social freedoms that Delany enjoyed in Killala.

Simultaneously, Delany's portrayal of travelling to the grotto also highlights the more demanding aspects of this project's construction. It communicates how she regularly chose to make an early, uphill journey to carry her 'bag of shells' to the site personally, determined to ensure that her preferred specimens reached the site unharmed. This journey also gave Delany a reliable source of exercise during this period; as she wrote to Dewes (with no small degree of complacency) back in June, 'this affair yields us great diversion, and I believe will make us very strong and healthy, if rising early, exercise and mirth have any

[109] In a series of letters written to the Duchess of Portland dated from 1740, Delany outlines the unhappy aspects of her first marriage to Alexander Pendarves. In the sixth of these letters for instance, she relays how spending time in the company of another man (referred to here as 'Bassanio') greatly upset Mr Pendarves, causing him to cry "Oh! Aspasia [Delany's alias in these letters], take care of Bassanio; he is a cunning treacherous man, and has been the ruin of one woman already, who was wife to his bosom friend', before bursting into tears. Although shocked at the suggestion that she might be romantically interested in this figure ('I am miserable, indeed, if you can be jealous of this ugly man; what am I for the future to expect?'), her husband's distress caused Delany's to turn down Bassanio's future invitations to activities such 'as riding on the sands in search of shells (which I took great delight in); or going to the Gull Rocks, or fishing' [extracts taken from Delany, 'Letter VI: Autobiography', in *The Autobiography and Correspondence of Mary Granville, Mrs. Delany,* I, pp.33-41 (p.39)].

virtue'.[110] This scenario demonstrates that as a large-scale project with a limited time frame, early mornings, group cooperation, and physical exertion were crucial to the Killala grotto's completion.

Lastly, the third scenario offers valuable insight into the imaginative conflicts that helped to shape Delany's confidence, motivations and capabilities as a craft worker. For example, here she describes Dewes as employing shells to illustrate 'the elegancy of [her] fancy' in the grotto. Evoking a scene of tasteful (whether judged by her own, or wider cultural standards of 'elegancy'), unarduous employment, this wording represents shell work as an activity suitable for women of high social status. By then depicting her sister as offering praise to fellow shell workers, Delany portrays a supportive social atmosphere, thereby framing the time she spent working in the grotto as vital to cultivating her creative confidence. Through making these moves, Delany depicts this project as being conducted under leisured, easy, and privileged circumstances.

At the same time, Delany only goes so far as to frame Dewes 'desiring approbation for what (she) has finished', rather than securing praise automatically in return. She therefore establishes that while carried out amongst friends, the quality of her shell craftsmanship was held to high standards by the rest of her company. Moreover, it is significant that although allowing her to indulge the 'elegancy of their fancy', Delany still refers to this employment as 'work'. She therefore portrays this grotto as requiring her discipline, application, and perseverance, in order to be finished to a satisfactory standard. Through this latter set of moves, Delany portrays this venture as one that developed her creative abilities by stretching and testing them, driven by a desire to win the hard-earned affirmation of her companions.

By looking to Delany's Deville and Killala letters, we can see that while sometimes portraying her shell crafts as symbols of a frivolous and leisured life, she continued to treasure this employment as an effective vehicle of self cultivation. Descriptions of her crafts, however, only give us partial insight into how she used imaginings of herself interacting with these items as a way to reflect upon her social,

[110] Delany, 'Mrs. Pendarves to her sister Mrs. Ann Granville. Killala, 28 June 1732', p.316.

creative, and intellectual lives. Through examining her accounts of the time that she devoted to collecting, we can see how interacting with shells in a different context encouraged her to contemplate a different set of questions about self, time, and employment.

A life in 'bloom': concluding thoughts upon Delany's accounts of self as a shell craft worker in her familiar correspondence

In this chapter, we have explored only two of the many forms of shell craft featured in Delany's letters. The shell flowers that she made to decorate Dean Delany's chapel in 1757, the shell 'frame' that she and her friend Lady Andover made as a gift for the Duchess of Portland in 1750, and the shell 'mosaic' that she made to decorate a 'nitch' in 1751 all stand as further examples of both her remarkable proficiency in, and enthusiasm for, this creative outlet.[111] However, as ventures documented over sustained periods of her correspondence, Delany's lustres and grottos most effectively illustrate the time, skills, and knowledge that she poured into her shell crafts. Far from standing as lesser achievements along a 'path' to her paper cuttings, these innovative and challenging feats highlight how this bluestocking came into her creative stride long before the age of seventy-two.

Delany's written accounts of her lustres and grottos also offered her the chance to explore the conflicts the shaped her intellectual, social, and creative lives. Whereas the poem and prose that Delany wrote to

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[111] - Reference to shell frame: Delany, 'Mrs Delany to Mrs Dewes. No date [grouped with letters dating from late 1757]', *The Autobiography and Correspondence of Mary Granville, Mrs. Delany,* III, pp.469-470 (p.469). 'Lady Andover and I have entered on a piece of work to surprise the Duchess of Portland on her return, which is flourishing. It is a frame of a picture, with shell-work, in the manner of the frame to your china case; and we are as eager in sorting our shell, placing them in their proper degrees, making lines, platoons, ramparts, as the King of Prussia in the midst of his army, and as fond of our own compositions'.
- Reference to shell flower: Delany, 'Mrs. Delany to Mrs. Dewes. Delville, 28 Dec., 1750', *The Autobiography and Correspondence of Mary Granville, Mrs. Delany,* II, pp.632-635 (p.633). 'D.D. employs me every hour in the day for his chapel. I make the flowers and other ornaments by candle-light, and by daylight, when I don't paint, put together the festoons that are for the ceiling'.
- Reference to shell mosaic: Delany, 'Mrs Delany to Mr. Bernard Granville, Park Street. Delville, 11 June, 1751', *The Autobiography and Correspondence of Mary Granville, Mrs. Delany,* III, pp.39-40 (p.36). 'I am filling a nitch with a mosaic of shells and the compliment paid it two days ago was, that "it was very like Irish stitch"'.

commemorate her paper cuttings depict a neat chronology of an ‘amusement’ blossoming into improving employment, those of her shell crafts portray craft work to be at once trivial and cultivating. Grasping that no matter how helpful, cultivating, or pioneering in nature, all customary female accomplishments could be dismissed as trifling, Delany employed these tensions to strengthen her relationship with her sister. Vitally, by looking to Delany’s shell crafts we can dismantle her limiting reputation as a late bloomer and embrace the numerous achievements, along with the imaginative conflicts that moulded her creative life.

Chapter Five) Animating 'Fidget': Time Devoted Towards Friendship in the Early Familiar Correspondence of Elizabeth Montagu

At the heart of the bluestocking movement's legacy are the letters of Elizabeth Montagu, a figure lauded for her capacities as a patron, critic, landowner, and literary host. These abilities were first developed by Montagu in the context of her carefully cultivated early friendships, and it is through these relationships that this final chapter explores the ideals, complications, and resolutions that characterise depictions of well-employed time in bluestocking writings. Focusing solely on letters that were composed and received by Montagu between the years of 1732 and 1744 (a lesser-studied period of her familiar correspondence that encompasses her adolescence, young adulthood, and sadly short-lived period of motherhood), this investigation unpacks Montagu's early engagement with conflicting models of well-employed time, demonstrating how she navigated these models to the benefit of her social and intellectual lives.

Although the religious literature Montagu read and quoted in her youth extolled the virtues of communicating 'truth' in the temporal world, through her adolescent alias 'Fidget' one can see Montagu adjusting this idea to cultivate her first, formative friendships. In particular, this satirical imagining of self played a vital role in defining and cementing her relationship with Margaret Cavendish, the Duchess of Portland, as well as the Duchess' circle of friends who frequented the Bulstrode estate. Crucially, by devoting time towards portraying herself in the 'character of a Fidget' in her early correspondence, Montagu mastered a version of friendship that playfully drew together ideas of self-truth, humour, and imaginative pleasure, enabling her to nurture the abilities and relationships upon which her future as the 'Queen of the Blues' depended.[1]

Montagu's early reading included the works of the moral philosopher William Wollaston, a figure who asserted that although difficult to access with certainty, by doing 'what we can' to speak and act in

[1] Elizabeth Montagu, 'Elizabeth [Robinson] Montagu to Anne Donnellan, 1741, November [no precise date given]', MO 827, *Elizabeth Montagu Robinson Papers*, The Huntington Library, San Marino, California.

accordance with 'truth', humanity exists in harmony with God's will.[2] Wollaston argued that by speaking and behaving truthfully, we place ourselves in the best position possible to experience 'happiness' in the natural world, setting up the moral convention that Montagu drew on to articulate accounts of virtue, friendship, and well-employed time (pp.22-23). '[A]ccording to the improvement of our allotted hours', she reflected to her friend Anne Donnellan in July 1741, 'what I would chiefly desire of time to teach me… would be to deserve & to esteem better of my friends every day, for in being & having a true friend is the greatest happiness that we can enjoy'.[3]

Although Wollaston's arguments provided a useful starting point for Montagu's ideas about methods self-cultivation over time to develop, through 'Fidget' we see her complicating this straight-forward philosophical model. An irreverent imagining of self rooted in observations about Montagu's youthful behaviours and mannerisms, 'Fidget' relates convincingly to the interlinking modes of 'sensory', 'imaginative', and 'intellectual' pleasure that Bishop George Berkeley defined in his philosophical writings.[4] Importantly, while writing as 'Fidget' Montagu portrays herself as energetic and prating, yet deferential, carefully structuring both the form and content of her letters to highlight how she was at once like and unlike this character. It was therefore not by attempting to communicate truth, but playing with the idea of self-truth through character construction that the young Montagu progressed along social and intellectual models of well-employed time, securing friendships through displays of wit and intelligence.

Although Montagu portrayed herself as 'Fidget' in letters written to a variety of correspondents, she most commonly called on this character to strengthen, and create an irreverent commentary upon, her friendship with the Duchess of Portland. In particular, she looked on 'Fidget' as a means of navigating differences of their age and social status, as we see demonstrated in a letter written by Montagu to the

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[2] William Wollaston, *The Religion of Nature Delineated,* 8th edn. (London: J. Beecroft et al, 1759), pp.22-23. Further references to this edition are given after quotations in the text.
[3] Montagu, 'Elizabeth [Robinson] Montagu to Anne Donnellan, 1741, July 18th, MO 822, Elizabeth Montagu Robinson Papers*,* The Huntington Library, San Marino, California.
[4] George Berkeley, 'Essays in the Guardian: Thoughts on Public Schools and Universities', in *The Works of George Berkeley*, *D. D. Formerly Bishop of Cloyne*, ed. by Alexander Campbell Fraser, 3 vols (Oxford: Oxford Clarendon Press, 1871), III, pp.165-168 (p.167).

Duchess in the mid-1730s. Here, Montagu writes that 'I read one of your epistles over today & to my great joy found out towards the end of it, "pray Fidget write soon"'.[5] Montagu continues that 'away I hurried & got pen, ink, and paper', only to then apparently remember in the guise of this young, excitable, and devoted character, that she had in fact already dutifully 'answer'd' this letter 'six weeks ago'.[6]

While in chapter three, we saw Montagu's friend Elizabeth Carter turn to rambling and solitary movement as an effective vehicle of creative thought, in this letter one can see Montagu using 'Fidget' to evoke a comic depiction of impulsive and scatter-brained motion; moves that as well will consider, resonate strongly with contemporary notions of women's lively yet limited intellectual capacity. In turn, this enabled Montagu to highlight her own considerable intellectual agility, presenting herself as an entertaining and valuable friend to the Duchess. Significantly, as the creator and subject of satire, Montagu's carefully choreographed portrayal of self through 'Fidget' – as simultaneously prattling and profound, naive and insightful, energetic and idle – both demonstrated and demanded forms of mental agility that she knew to be prized by her correspondent. Although far from the only young woman to use these tropes within eighteenth-century epistolary discourse, the manner in which Montagu wove them into a distinct and enduring character-type offers us a remarkable and little-explored case study to investigate.

Many bluestocking letters that this thesis has so far explored, are now only available to us in heavily edited volumes. As we considered in chapters one and four in particular, the introductions, summaries, and presentations of these editions can greatly inform our reading of these letters, along with our impressions of the character and legacy of their authors. Yet the unprecedented collection of manuscripts at the Huntington Library in San Marino, California, has allowed this investigation to unpack the topic of time and friendship Montagu's correspondence in a different, and more constructive light. By accessing these letters in their original form, one can see that it was not only what Montagu wrote, but *how* she wrote upon the page, that enabled her to animate herself as 'Fidget' within these epistles, helping

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[5] Montagu, 'Elizabeth [Robinson] Montagu to Margaret Cavendish [Harley] Bentick, Duchess of Portland, 1734/35, February 19th', MO 252, *Elizabeth Montagu Robinson Papers,* The Huntington Library, San Marino, California.
[6] Ibid.

Montagu to overcome the challenges that she faced in her conflicted epistolary position as the Duchess's intimate friend and yet social inferior. Therefore, whereas the second chapter of this thesis explored some the epistolary privileges that *Lady* Mary enjoyed as a titled letter-writer, by examining how Montagu graphically composed her early letters, one can see how it was possible to effectively address a member of the aristocracy in the context of a familiar correspondence. With access to these manuscripts, it has been possible to better unpack the numerous techniques that the young Elizabeth Montagu called upon, in order to progress steadily along social and intellectual models of well-employed time.

Section 1) Finding a space for Fidget in critical literature

Although it is common for scholars to recognise that Montagu was referred to as 'Fidget' as an adolescent, in critical literature this name is most frequently handled as a short, uncomplicated prelude to her future achievements as a writer, patron, and businesswoman. For instance, Elizabeth Eger in *Bluestockings: Women of Reason from Enlightenment to Romanticism* notes that '[k]nown as "fidget" in her youth, she had unstinting energy for entertaining, whether as a matter of intellectual delight or social duty', before exploring how Montagu used 'the superabundance of her wealth', 'time' and 'attention towards different sorts of patronage' decades later.[7]

In similarly fleeting terms, Betty Rizzo in *Companions Without Vows: Relationships Amongst Eighteenth-Century British Women* comments that 'Elizabeth, for her sprightliness, was called Fidget', within her assessment of how Montagu's wealth and influence in the 1760s and 70s, shaped her relationship with Dorothea Gregory.[8] In *Literary Coteries and the Making of Modern Print Culture: 1740-1790*, Betty Schellenberg briefly remarks that 'the circulation of stories of "Fidget's" bon mots' led to Montagu's

[7] Elizabeth Eger, *Bluestockings: Women of Reason from Enlightenment to Romanticism* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010) p.67. Spellings of Fidget in quotations are in-keeping with their presentation in the given text.
[8] Betty Rizzo, *Companions Without Vows: Relationships Amongst Eighteenth-Century British Women* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2008), p.118.

‘early reputation in coterie circles’, while tracing the ‘coalescence and emergence… of a literary coterie centred on Elizabeth Montagu’.[9] Perhaps most revealingly, within Montagu’s *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* entry, written to help both specialists and non-specialists better understand the pivotal moments and themes of Montagu’s career, ‘Fidget’ is only mentioned through the observation that Montagu’s youthful ‘vivacity won the nickname’ from her friends.[10] Due to the understandable, but restricting focus on Montagu’s later employments, Eger, Rizzo, Schellenberg, and the *ODNB* ultimately present ‘Fidget’ in an anecdotal and incidental light, establishing only that this name functioned as a witty and lively encapsulation of Montagu’s adolescent character.

A lengthier, and more enlightening critical acknowledgment of Montagu as ‘Fidget’ can be found within Sylvia Harcstark Myers’ influential 1990 publication *The Bluestocking Circle: Women, Friendship, and the Life of the Mind in Eighteenth-Century England*. Here, Myers not only recognises that Montagu was called Fidget ‘because of the quickness of her movement’, but contextualises this name with the Duchess of Portland’s residence of Bulstrode, ‘a setting for congenial family and friends with social and intellectual interests’ that ‘made a lasting impact on its young visitor’.[11] Myers quotes a letter written by the Duke of Portland to his brother Lord George, recounting how a satirical remark from ‘Fidgett… occasioned a great laugh’ from himself and his guests, illustrating how this character helped Montagu to make the welcome impression of ‘the sparkle of youth and charm of naiveté’ to this esteemed society.[12]

By establishing that her subject was able to entertain the Bulstrode circle through the imagining of herself as ‘Fidget’, Myers exposes techniques that Montagu employed to enter a society that encouraged the cultivation of her social, creative, and imaginative abilities. As Madeleine Pelling argues in her 2018

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[9] Betty Schellenberg, *Literary Coteries and the Making of Modern Print Culture: 1740-1790* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), p.71.
[10] Barbara Brandon Schnorrenberg, ‘Montagu [*neé* Robinson], Elizabeth (1718-1800)’, in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (published online 21 May 2009) <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/19014> [accessed 3rd September 2018].
[11] Sylvia Harcstark Myers, *The Bluestocking Circle: Women, Friendship, and the Life of the Mind in Eighteenth-Century England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), p.26.
[12] Ibid.

article ‘Collecting the World’, those invited to Bulstrode ‘were selected for their intellectual and emotional value to the community’, meaning that scholars should not underestimate the crucial role that Montagu’s early performance of self as ‘Fidget’ at the estate played in developing her sense of potential and value.[13] Vitally, by animating herself as ‘Fidget’ at Bulstrode Montagu came to behold her vivacity, wit, and learning as valuable tools, through which she could advance along social and intellectual models of well-employed time.

Although contextualising ‘Fidget’ within the imaginative and intellectual climate at Bulstrode, the scope of Myers’ investigation means that the nature and implications of Montagu’s adolescent nickname are far from exhausted in this study. For instance, although Myers rightly notes how the ‘sparkle of youth’ endeared Montagu to the Duke and Duchess of Portland, her analysis of how Montagu crafted and performed this satirical imagining of self, is collapsed into the claim that she was called Fidget ‘because of the quickness of her movement’.[14] Because ‘Fidget’ is portrayed as an uncomplicated expression of who Montagu was as an adolescent, rather than acknowledged to be an ironic imagining of self, the ways in which Montagu had skilfully tailored this character to please her discerning Bulstrode audience are left unpursued in this monograph.

Beyond helping scholars to better understand her friendship with the Duchess, Montagu’s little-studied teenage alias can also shed valuable light on the relationship between sobriquets, femininity, and social-advancement within eighteenth-century Britain. In contrast to social-advancement models in which women relied on male family members or husbands to enrich their social and material prospects, here we see a version built on female friendship, with Montagu establishing herself in a prosperous social network through intelligent displays of affection towards other women. This is not to say that Montagu looked on her relationship with the Duchess purely as a means of achieving selfish ends, animating herself as ‘Fidget’ only to advance her social and material lives. Rather, that by unpacking how both Montagu and

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[13] Madeleine Pelling, ‘Collecting the World: Female Friendship and Domestic Craft at Bulstrode Park’, *Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 41 (2018), 101-120 (p.110).
[14] Myers, ibid.

the Duchess wrote about 'Fidget', we see two women wilfully participating in a form of friendship that – to borrow Pelling's version of the cultural significance of Delany and the Duchess's Bulstrode crafts – 'subvert[ed] British patriarchal social structure', offering us new ways of thinking about methods of social betterment that were available for women to pursue in this period.[15]

Crucially, although the imagining of Montagu as 'Fidget' has been acknowledged within critical literature, overwhelmingly these investigations leave a fruitful avenue of inquiry into her life and achievements unexplored. This study contends that it was not as a straightforward account of who Montagu was, but how and why she employed her time towards creating, embellishing, and animating this alias, that makes 'Fidget' a subject of considerable critical value. By examining the significance of this character in Montagu's early correspondence, it becomes clear that 'Fidget' was no mere anecdotal stepping stone in her journey towards her future status as the Queen of the Blues, but the foundation upon which her remarkable intellectual, social, and material legacy was built.

<u>Section 2) On the importance of 'truth' in William Wollaston's *The Religion of Nature Delineated*</u>

On the 23rd of November 1740, Montagu wrote a letter to Donnellan at first positing, and then thoughtfully unpicking the idea that lasting, happy friendships are founded upon the giving and receiving of truth. 'I am just reading Wollaston', she explained to her correspondent, 'and therefore perhaps the fonder of truth as he builds morality and happiness upon it'.[16] While Montagu was no mere mouthpiece for Wollaston's ideas (continuing to Donnellan that she had not progressed far into his 'book', and that 'I think I was before a lover of truth'), it is important to acknowledge how his writing helped Montagu to organise her present thoughts upon the nature and significance of 'truth' within friendship.[17]

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[15] Pelling, p.103.
[16] Montagu, 'Elizabeth [Robinson] Montagu to Anne Donnellan, 1740, Nov 23rd', MO 810, *Elizabeth Montagu Robinson Papers,* The Huntington Library, San Marino, California.
[17] Ibid.

Unnamed in this epistle, the book that Montagu here refers to is identifiable as *The Religion of Nature Delineated*, a work first published eighteen years previously. Although, as Joel Feinberg notes, the tract is perhaps best known amongst eighteenth-century scholars for being handled as a subject of 'disrespect in the writings of Hume, Price, [and] Bentham' (a trend that Feinberg attributes to the often 'confused' way in which Wollaston set forth his arguments), the work was in fact popularly read amongst Wollaston's more immediate contemporaries.[18] As his biographer B. W. Young establishes, *The Religion of Nature Delineated* was initially 'a major success: some 10,000 copies were sold within a very few years, and it went through many editions'.[19]

By addressing this well-known publication, Montagu was deliberately structuring the content of her epistle around a popular frame of reference. This served both to give Montagu's own thoughts about the connections between friendship, truth, self, and happiness a concrete starting point from which to expand, and engage Donnellan in her formative attempts to make sense of the value and purpose of these relationships. As suggested by the figurative claim that 'I am just reading Wollaston', Montagu sought to create the impression that by opening this letter, Donnellan was catching her off-guard, in the process of *still* forming her first impressions upon his work. By doing so, Montagu positioned her friend as a trusted and guiding influence over her unfolding reflections upon Wollaston's writing; a gesture that, as Tania Smith has noted, is also evident within their epistolary discussions regarding Conyers Middleton's *The Life of Cicero* only a year later.[20]

Smith argues that '[w]hile they were at different phases of reading, conversing about, and reflecting upon their developing understanding of Cicero', one can see the ways in which 'Anne Donnellan mentored Elizabeth through correspondence by modelling the ethos of a critical thinker and researcher', helping Montagu to develop her 'strong sense of virtuous, civic rhetorical intentions to awaken and inspire

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[18] Joel Feinberg, 'Wollaston and his Critics', *Journal of the History of Ideas,* 38 (1977), 345-352 (p.345).
[19] B.W. Young, 'Wollaston, William (1659-1724)', in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (published online 22 September 2005) <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/29841> [accessed 3rd September 2018].
[20] Conyers Middleton was Montagu's Grandmother's second husband, a relationship that encouraged Montagu to engage with this particular work.

others'.[21] As a well-read member of the Bulstrode circle who was eighteen years her senior, Donnellan was not only an approachable source of knowledge and experience for Montagu to consult upon metaphysical issues, but an influential figure with whom to establish a close relationship. Turning to Donnellan as a mentor functioned as an effective way for Montagu to fulfil these combined aims, setting a precedent from which she would continue to draw throughout her early adulthood.

Wollaston introduces *The Religion of Nature Delineated* by asking his reader the following questions: 'Is there really any such thing as natural religion', and 'If there is, what is it' (p.1)? The answer, he argues, lies in the 'truth', a concept that he defines as the 'conformity of those words or signs, by which things are expressed, to the things themselves' (p.6). Notably, this is an interpretation of the truth that reconceives the definition posited within John Locke's *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* decades previously, in which Locke argues that the truth is not a process of 'things' expressing their inherent qualities, but of 'ideas agreeing to things'.[22] While Wollaston acknowledges that truth requires the exercise of 'reason' to be gleaned, and uses his book to explore how '[a] true proposition may be denied' through 'deeds' and 'words', he differs from Locke in asserting that the truth is more than a mental construction (pp.89 & 6). This perfect sphere of knowledge is written, he argues, into the fabric of the temporal world, possessing moral properties that embody the laws of natural religion. '[T]o own things to be as they are', Wollaston asserts, 'is to own what He [God] causes, or at least permits… To do this therefore must be agreeable to His Will' (p.17).

It is because of this religious significance that Wollaston also employs this tract to consider the ways in which humanity's task of deciphering and communicating truth is no mean feat. Importantly, Wollaston makes it clear that he wrote upon this subject not as an infallible authority upon the essence of truth, but as an individual who nonetheless perceived its spiritual importance, and was seeking to better understand it by considering how it operated in daily life. 'It must be confessed there is a difficulty as to the means',

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[21] Tania Smith, 'Elizabeth Montagu's Study of Cicero's Life: The Formation of an Eighteenth-Century Woman's Rhetorical Identity', *Rhetorica*, 26 (Spring 2008), 165- 187 (p.176 & p.173).
[22] Locke, John, *An Essay concerning Human Understanding*, 27th edn. (London: T. Tegg and Son, 1836), p.442.

he reflects, because of 'our ignorance of the true nature of things', and 'of their operations and effects in such an irregular distempered world' (p.23). 'Still', Wollaston stipulates, 'we may judge as well as we can, and do what we can' to uphold the truth, because 'the neglect to do this will be an omission within the reach of the proposition' (p.23). It was these conflicting yet combined notions: that 'we' must 'do what we can' with our time to discover and uphold the 'truth' because it is 'agreeable' to the 'will' of God, but that the truth is 'difficult' to understand in the temporal world, that Montagu sought to make sense of within the context of friendship to Donnellan.

Montagu begins her assessment of Wollaston's work by considering the importance of giving a true impression of self to one's friends; a notion that she introduces by claiming to her correspondent that 'you will find me sincere and consistent in my friendship'.[23] In particular, Montagu's choice of the word 'sincere' is important to recognise. As Elizabeth Dodd has observed in her examination of the poet and theologian Thomas Traherne's writings, throughout the seventeenth century the definition of 'sincerity' had expanded from the 'medieval' concept of religious 'purity', to also incorporate the developing 'modern' notion of 'unfeigned unity of inner affection and outward action'.[24] This is a growth in meaning that aligns Montagu's 1740 understanding of this term to Wollaston's definition of the 'truth' as a virtuous, and uncomplicated outward expression of natural, inherent qualities. To affirm this sentiment, Montagu continues that '[t]ruth and nature are always charming', reflecting how 'borrow'd characters, forged sentiments, pretended affections, & constrained behaviour, are strongly disagreeable… in a conversation we had together, we condemn'd imitating characters, & indeed with great reason it never succeeds'.[25]

Montagu then makes a subtle, but significant concession to this principle. Acknowledging, like Wollaston, that 'it is difficult to get at truth', she goes on to use this epistle to gesture towards a way of

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[23] Montagu, The Huntington Library, MO 810.
[24] Elizabeth S. Dodd, *Boundless Innocence in Thomas Traherne's Poetic Theology: 'Were all Men Wise and Innocent…'* (London: Routledge, 2015), pp.138-139.
[25] Montagu, Ibid.

pragmatically dealing with this difficulty in a social context, reflecting 'but thus it must ever happen to those who do not *build* on truth' [my italics].[26] Significantly, while Wollaston also argued that 'we may judge as well as we can' to tell the truth, recognising the importance of subjective agency in the discovery and communication of this moral knowledge, the examples of truth-telling that he cites centres on acts of truth confirmation or denial. For instance, he hypothesises that '[i]t is certain I should not deny the Phoenissae of Euripides to be an excellent drama by not reading it', or 'should I, having leisure, health and proper opportunities, read nothing… I should then deny my mind to be what it is' (pp.23-24).

Instead, Montagu contends that it is necessary for one to 'build' upon one's imperfect perception of the 'truth', shifting her train of thought away from the significance of confirming or denying true propositions, to the imagination that one exercises when attempting to construct and communicate an account of self to others. Although this is not the only interpretation of self that Montagu considers in her early correspondence (for instance, one encounters its aspirational portrayals in her descriptions of the Duchess as a 'better self'), this example is fundamental to Montagu's formative understanding of friendship, because of the deliberate ambiguity with which she articulated this description of agreeable and 'disagreeable' attempts of self-construction.[27] By exploring these ambiguities, one can recognise some of the mechanisms that Montagu employed to animate herself as 'Fidget', helping us partly to reconcile her use of this satirical character to her present condemnation of borrowing and imitating 'characters' to Donnellan. As we will later consider, for possessing various meanings in eighteenth-century culture the term 'character' is crucial for us to unpack, in order to better understand the role that Montagu's self-professed 'character of a Fidget' played in cementing her relationship with the Duchess.

It should not be concluded that by using Wollaston's tract upon truth and happiness as a framework to organise her ideas about the meaning, and purpose of friendship, Montagu was identifying his work to Donnellan as a guide that she planned to live her life in accordance to. Nor should it be surmised that by

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[26] Ibid.

[27] Montagu, 'Elizabeth [Robinson] Montagu to Margaret Cavendish [Harley] Bentick, Duchess of Portland, 1743/44, January 5th', MO 365, *Elizabeth Montagu Robinson Papers,* The Huntington Library, San Marino, California.

going on to complicate these ideas by writing about herself as ‘Fidget’, one sees Montagu naively or unscrupulously contradicting the moral ideals that she espoused to others. Instead, it is constructive to consider how within this epistle, one can observe Montagu thoughtfully assessing the merits and weaknesses of a popular contemporary moral tract, in the view of a friend whose opinion and judgement she highly regarded. The deliberately interpretative nature with which Montagu handled Wollaston’s ideas illustrates how she approached the polemics of his work with speculative caution, leaving space for ‘Fidget’, as a vehicle of friendship, to be considered in proximity to her own reading of the principles outlined within *The Religion of Nature Delineated*.

Section 3) The use of ambiguity in Montagu’s letter to Donnellan

Before examining the specific devices that Montagu used to animate herself as ‘Fidget’ in her early correspondence, it is important to establish how the ambiguity with which Montagu wrote about ‘the truth’ and its expression to Donnellan, opens up three particularly useful avenues of possibility for one to consider while going about this analysis. Firstly, by not detailing the ways in which ‘constrained behaviour’ and ‘imitating characters’ differs from building upon ‘the truth’ in this letter, Montagu creates vital space for a person to decide what constitutes morally acceptable (if creatively conceived of) communications of self, and what operates to knowingly give a false impression of ourselves for immoral purposes. For example, in a letter written to her cousin William Freind in December 1740, we can see Montagu accounting for the ways in which various social situations may call for one to alter one’s ‘behaviour’ only a month later. Here, Montagu considers that ‘I have always accustomed myself to appear to you without those disguises which we wear as ornaments with our acquaintance & as Armour with our Enemies[,] but amongst friends truth may appear with no other cloathing then bien séance’, illustrating a model of social interaction in which one may reasonably adorn, defend, or refine one’s self according to

context.[28] Within this account of self and self-expression, changing behaviour to suit a spectrum of social situations is framed as no 'strongly disagreeable' moral act, but recognised as a practical and reasonable necessity.

Because Montagu perceived that compiling an infallible guide of true and untrue expressions of self to Donnellan would have been a problematic undertaking, she instead placed her emphasis upon the decisions that a person makes when going about this task. Importantly, although Montagu claims that she and her correspondent once 'condemned imitating characters', the circumstances, individuals, and events that led to their shared censure, are left tantalisingly undisclosed in this epistle. Montagu therefore obscures the valuable context that could help one to distinguish her understanding of immoral 'character' imitation and performance, from the pragmatic and understandable acts of self-fashioning that she described to Friend from our view. This obscurity highlights how there were situations in which Montagu and Donnellan perceived imaginative character construction to be a morally and socially acceptable act.

Secondly, the ambiguity of Montagu's writing makes important allowances for the possibility that a self, and by extension self 'truth', may be shaped for the better when placed into the hands of an experienced teacher. This is important to acknowledge, because the idea that a 'self' is open to cultivation over the course of a lifetime, was a culturally pervasive motif that Montagu keenly drew upon to animate herself as 'Fidget' to the Duchess. In particular, Montagu, Donnellan, and the Duchess are likely to have encountered this concept within the female educational writings of the period, such as the letters of Marie de Rabutin-Chantal. Madame de Sévigné; Melanie Bigold, for instance, has observed how Madame de Sévigné's 'anecdotal brilliance' and 'writing-to-the-moment approach' can be detected within the correspondence of many influential long eighteenth-century female letter-writers, such as Catharine Cockburn, Elizabeth Singer Rowe, and Elizabeth Carter.[29] Notably, this influence is also present within

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[28] Montagu, 'Elizabeth [Robinson] Montagu to William Freind, 1740, December 29th', MO 1101, *Elizabeth Montagu Robinson Papers,* The Huntington Library, San Marino, California.

[29] Melanie Bigold, *Women of Letters, Manuscript Circulation, and Print Afterlives in the Eighteenth Century: Elizabeth Rowe, Catharine Cockburn and Elizabeth Carter* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), p.26.

Montagu's early letters, not only through her competent use of 'writing-to-the-moment' tropes such as 'I am just reading Wollaston', but the themes and opinions that Montagu addresses within her letters.

For example, on the 12th of January 1676, Madame de Sévigné wrote to her daughter Françoise-Marguerite, Madam de Grignan, expressing her delight in directing the instruction of a young girl who was residing with her. 'She has a keen little brain', de Sévigné relates, 'quite receptive, that we enjoy enlightening. She is absolutely ignorant, and we are making a pastime of informing her about everything; a few words about this great universe, empires, countries, kings, religions, wars, the heavenly bodies, the map'.[30] In addition to portraying this activity as an enjoyable employment for a woman in her privileged position, de Sévigné renders the education of this girl as a rewarding and improving task. Importantly, in an era of European, Christian and male-led global exploration and colonisation, the task of 'enlightening' an 'absolutely ignorant' a young mind indicates a *feminine* opportunity for discovery and cultivation, through which de Sévigné grasped that she could improve the understanding and morality of others.

In a letter written to Donnellan on the 20th of November 1742, Montagu iterates key principles of de Sévigné's writing, in particular by highlighting the importance of establishing a programme of moral guidance for children to follow. Here, she argues to her friend that 'the care of infusing into a mind young tender & apt for imperfection the best principles one can is an engaging employment'.[31] Within this instance, shaping a young mind is far from painted as the act of character forgery or imitation that Montagu warned against two years previously, but is celebrated as a moral duty that gives her gendered, leisured time considerable value and purpose.

Through Montagu's metaphorical positioning of Donnellan as a guiding influence over her reading, we have already encountered an understated example of Montagu drawing upon the motif of a young, female

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[30] Marie de Rabutin-Chantal, Madame de Sévigné, 'To Madame de Grignan [Les Rochers, Sunday 12 January 1676]' in *Madame De Sévigné: Selected Letters*, ed. & trans. by Leonard Tancock (London: Penguin Classics, 2003), pp.175-181 (p.178).

[31] Montagu, 'Elizabeth [Robinson] Montagu to Ann Donnellan, 1742, November 20th', MO 834, *Elizabeth Montagu Robinson Papers,* The Huntington Library, San Marino, California.

‘mind’ seeking the help of a benevolent and experienced female mentor. In her letters to the Duchess, however, this trope took on an amplified form, through which Montagu explicitly framed her correspondent as her primary, personal cultivator. Montagu wrote to the Duchess in 1744, for example, asking her to ‘teach me to persuade where I might command, to convince where I might compel… you took me into your protection at twelve years old, don’t leave me now’, portraying their relationship as a manifestation of the Duchess’ benevolence, patience and guidance.[32] By reinforcing this social dynamic, Montagu set the circumstances for the devoted, naive, and childish imagining of herself as ‘Fidget’ to thrive, establishing this alias as an imaginative commentary upon their close friendship. This interpretation of self, in which a person’s morality and understanding can be fashioned according to the influence and improvement of others, can be considered in relation to Montagu’s vaguely framed conception of the ways in which self-truth can be built upon to Donnellan.

Finally, the ambiguity with which Montagu wrote about truth and character, has important implications for her reading of the other concepts that Wollaston addressed in *The Religion of Nature Delineated*. This is particularly the case for Montagu’s interpretation of the term ‘happiness’, as stressed by her claim that ‘I am just reading Wollaston & therefore perhaps the fonder of truth as he builds morality & happiness upon it’. Importantly, in Wollaston’s tract, ‘truth’ and ‘happiness’ are presented as notions that are ‘so nearly allied… that they cannot well be parted’, wedded together through Wollaston’s argument that ‘it is by the practice of truth that we aim at that happiness, which is true’ (p.107 & 52). ‘The genuine happiness of every being’, he elaborates, ‘must be something that is not incompatible with or destructive of its nature’, while that which may appear to be happiness, but is ultimately found to be ‘incompatible’ with a person’s inherent ‘nature’, can be classified as ‘pleasure’; a sensation that ‘not only may vanish into nothing, but may even degenerate into pain’ as time passes (pp.66 & 60).

[32] Montagu, ‘Elizabeth [Robinson] Montagu to Margaret Cavendish [Harley] Bentick, Duchess of Portland, 1744, [precise date unknown]’, MO 386, *Elizabeth Montagu Robinson Papers,* The Huntington Library, San Marino, California.

By creating ambiguity around the role that 'truth' played in communications of self within friendship, Montagu was also loosening the connection between 'being and having' a friend, and the attainment of 'happiness' in her writing.[33] This is crucial to acknowledge, because as an irreverent, exaggerated, and metaphorical imagining of self that Montagu used to sustain her friendships, 'Fidget' was far from a straight-forward expression of her inherent 'nature', departing from the account of truth and happiness that Wollaston outlined. Instead, it was how Montagu played upon the *incompatibilities* that existed between this distractible, prattling and active imagining of herself, and the composed, and sophisticated manner with which she committed this character to paper, that helped to establish this alias as a sought-after source of entertainment amongst the Bulstrode circle.

Significantly, this character is similar to the differing, but interlinking types of pleasure that George Berkeley identified within his essay 'Thoughts on Public Schools and Universities'. This is not to say that 'Fidget' was conceived by Montagu and the Duchess with Berkeley's arguments in mind; rather, that his work sets up a range of possibilities about 'pleasure' that we can see both friends pursue by writing about this character in their early letters. Within this essay, the 'lowest' pleasures that Berkeley identifies 'are sensual delights, which are succeeded by the more enlarged views and gay portraitures of a lively imagination; and those give way to the sublime pleasures of reason, which discover the causes and designs, the frame, connection, and symmetry of things, and fill the mind with the contemplation of intellectual beauty, order, and truth'.[34]

While Berkeley argues that 'reason' can lead to the contemplation of 'truth' (a move that pulls the conclusion of his writing back towards the idea that 'Fidget' complicates), his hierarchical account of sensory, imaginative, and intellectual pleasures all play essential roles in both how, and why 'Fidget' maintained an important presence within Montagu's early correspondence. For example, I have argued

[33] This was no one-off in Montagu's early correspondence. As articulated in the introduction of this chapter, she only went so far as to argue that friendship is the '*greatest* happiness that we can enjoy', portraying these relationships as a generous, but incomplete measure of this virtuous state.
[34] Berkeley, p.167.

that it was with a careful adherence to a set of recognisable 'Fidget' character tropes that Montagu portrayed herself as excitedly *hurrying* to find 'pen, ink, and paper', in order to reply to the Duchess' letter in 1734. This movement is representative of the 'low' sensory pleasures that, through their depiction in Montagu's metaphorical, humorous, and nuanced writing, are lifted to 'imaginative' pleasures in the minds of her readers and writers. This sophisticated imaginative display, coupled with the subtleties with which Montagu portrayed herself as being simultaneously like, and unlike 'Fidget', reveals this character's qualities as a pleasure of 'reason', requiring the mental agility of both Montagu and her readership to understand and enjoy. It is therefore with an eye to the themes of character, self-fashioning and pleasure, that this chapter will now trace the nature of the time that Montagu devoted towards friendship, through the imagining of herself as 'Fidget'.

Section 4) The account of friendship that 'Fidget' builds on: time devoted to pleasure through imaginings of character

For its multifaceted meanings, usages, and interpretations in eighteenth-century literature, the term 'character' has provided various fruitful avenues of critical enquiry into the period's culture. Deidre Lynch in *The Economy of Character: Novels, Market Culture, and the Business of Inner Meaning*, for instance, argues that within the context of 'new global trade routes, the inauguration of innovative retail prices' and 'new credit arrangements', 'people used characters' within the period's fictional literature 'to renegotiate social relations in their changed, commercialized world'.[35] In *Imperial Character: Home and Periphery in Eighteenth-Century Literature*, Tara Ghoshal Wallace examines the various contemporary authors sought to encapsulate the character of Empire, to highlight 'how consistently English and Scottish writers of the period articulate the potential dangers of imperial ambition'.[36] Within *Eighteenth-Century*

[35] Deidre Lynch, *The Economy of Character: Novels, Market Culture, and the Business of Inner Meaning* (Chicago; London: The University of Chicago Press, 1998), p.4.
[36] Tara Ghoshal Wallace, *Imperial Character: Home and Periphery in Eighteenth-Century Literature*, (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 2010), p.18.

Characters: A Guide to the Literature of the Age, Elaine M. McGirr argues that by exploring the shifts in specific fictional character types such as the 'Rake', 'Fop' and 'Coquette' across the century, one can better understand the changing tastes and ideologies of contemporary 'audiences'.[37] Throughout these diverse investigations, the notion of 'character' is handled as a zeitgeist, providing valuable critical insights into the popular concerns of the age.

In order to locate this word in relation to the portrayal of herself as 'Fidget', this investigation works outwards from a definition posited by Samuel Johnson in his *Dictionary*, in which the term 'character' is framed as the 'representation of any man as to his personal qualities'.[38] This description is particularly poignant to apply to Montagu's writing, because it does not disclose to what extent a character is an uncomplicated expression of a person's inherent 'qualities', and to what extent someone is cast into the representative mould of an already existing character type. Here, a 'character' can refer to personal traits that are projected by, or attributed to a particular person or group of people, be they real or fictional, embodying 'qualities' that are inherent, performed, or a blend of both.

It is the uncertainty of whether a character is an embodiment of what a person is, or what a person appears to be, that Montagu purposefully drew upon when she wrote in the 'character of a Fidget' within her early correspondence. On the one hand, as an imagining of Montagu that was sustained by the Duchess' observations of Montagu's apparently active, talkative, and deferential behaviour, this character was, at least to some degree, representative of her personal qualities. Indeed, crucial to the success of 'Fidget' was the fact that this alias had not been conjured by Montagu out of thin air, but had grown from its roots as a shared, vivid, and enduring memory of their friendship's genesis. Yet it is because of the emotive and subjective nature of this collective memory, that it is also important to recognise that 'Fidget' was never designed to be a literal representation of who Montagu was, or to function as a medium of truth-telling between the two friends. Instead, Montagu and the Duchess employed this character to explore a range of

[37] Elaine M. McGirr, *Eighteenth-Century Characters: A Guide to the Literature of the Age* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007) p.4.
[38] Samuel Johnson, *A Dictionary of the English Language,* 3rd edn. (Dublin, 1768), p.37.

possibilities about self-imagining to reinforce the foundations of their relationship, as one can trace through Fidget's deployment and development over the course of their correspondence.

To understand the substantial role that 'Fidget' played in maintaining and defining their epistolary friendship, this investigation has found it helpful to consider Richard Steele's observation about the appeal of fictional character writing, in his contemporary publication *The Spectator*. Importantly, the ways in which character and character types were used in this journal had been esteemed by Montagu from an early age; for instance, in a letter written to the Duchess from Bath in December 1739, one can see Montagu's drawing upon *The Spectator*'s ironic portrayal of a female letter-writer's rambling, and incoherent character to entertain her correspondent. Here, Montagu wrote in her own 'P.S.' that '[y]ou know the *Spectator* says a woman never speaks her mind but in the postscript', adding with ironic self-deprecation that 'if so this letter will be very sincere, as I am setting forward to send you a sheet of postscript, if I can fill it'.[39] It is therefore necessary to acknowledge the considerable hand that this publication had in forming Montagu's understanding of the potential of character writing, within her own epistolary discourse.

Significantly, in *The Spectator's* five hundred and fifty-fifth article (a piece composed to conclude the publication's long and popular run), Steele sought to separate himself as a writer from the character that, until now, both he and his co-writer Joseph Addison had used to address their audience: the fictitious Mr Spectator. To bid a public farewell to this narrative guise, here Steele announces that 'it is high time for the *Spectator* himself to go off the stage', continuing in his new, metaphorical position as this character's unmasked writer and director, that 'I am under much greater Anxiety than I have known for the Work of

[39] Montagu, 'To the Same [Margaret Cavendish Bentick, Duchess of Portland] Bath, Dec 27, 1740', in *The Letters of Mrs. Elizabeth Montagu, with some of the Letters of her Correspondents*, ed. Matthew Montagu, 3rd edn., 2 vols (London: T. Cadell, 1810), I, pp.72-75 (p.74).

any Day since I undertook this Province'.[40] This is because, he states, 'it is much more difficult to converse with the World in a real than a personated Character'.[41]

The explanation that Steele gives for this difficulty comes down to a matter of authorial tone, elaborating that an opinion given on his own behalf may be met with a more critical reception than those voiced by a fictitious entity. What 'might pass for humour in the Spectator', he contends, might 'look like arrogance in a writer who sets his name to his work'.[42] However, I suggest that there was a more significant reason for Steele's trepidation in this narrative shift. Importantly, by writing as not just Mr Spectator, but various iconic 'personated' figures in this publication, Addison and Steele had hitherto communicated with their readership through characters that were both satisfying for their audience to follow as the publication progressed, and for them to create, develop and embellish as accomplished authors. By bidding farewell to *The Spectator*, they were bringing the characters that had united them and their audience together in an appreciation for imaginative, and intellectual pleasures for the last two years, to an end.

The ways in which the character development of 'Sir Roger de Coverley' gave collaborative pleasure to this publication's writers and readers, for instance, has been examined by Albert Furtwangler in 'Mr Spectator, Sir Roger, and Good Humour'. Furtwangler contends that although Sir Roger first appeared within *The Spectator* as a familiar device of 'satire upon the Tories', over time this character evolved into 'an eccentric figure who calls forth good-natured, affectionate laughter rather than the superior scorn of the satirist'.[43] As evidence, he cites a monologue written by Steele in paper No. 113, in which Sir Roger recalls how he fell silent for half an hour when asked for 'his opinion on love and honour' by the very woman who he wished to court.[44] Furtwangler posits that 'Steele outdoes himself' as a character writer by

[40] Richard Steele, 'No. 555, Saturday, December 6, 1712', in *The Spectator*, ed. by Donald F. Bond, 5 vols (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), IV, pp.491-497 (p.491).
[41] Ibid.
[42] Ibid.
[43] Albert Furtwangler, 'Mr Spectator, Sir Roger, and Good Humour', *University of Toronto Quarterly,* 46 (1976), 31-50 (p.31).
[44] Ibid, p.41.

portraying how Sir Roger's 'pride and disappointment feed upon each other', in the process giving this figure a 'believable human voice – largely for the sheer delight of creating another amiable being'.[45]

Through the cultivation of characters such as Sir Roger, Addison and Steele had established a relationship of intimacy, understanding and (to borrow Furtwangler's phrasing) 'good humour' with their readers. I argue that this experience of collective, imaginative and intellectual 'delight' through the writing and reading of 'personated' characters, can be seen in the crucial role that 'Fidget' played in sustaining Montagu's friendship with the Duchess. While, as I will illustrate, it would be wrong to equate Steele's depiction of Mr Spectator entering and exiting a 'stage', to the remarkable subtleties with which Montagu portrayed herself as 'Fidget', her epistolary use of character reflects the dynamic of an actor performing before a captivated audience. By depicting herself as 'Fidget', Montagu was fleshing out a character type that she could inhibit and satirise, forming a pool of common knowledge, in-jokes, and references for both herself and her readers to enjoy.

Section 5) Writing in character: the importance of handwriting and graphic composition in Montagu's early letters

To further understand the role and purpose of 'Fidget' as a character in Montagu's correspondence, it is important to recognise how this alias engaged with another of Johnson's definitions of this term. He outlines that character may also refer to a 'mark or stamp; a representation', with the elaboration that when looked at as a mark upon a page, this term can mean both 'a letter used in writing or printing', and '[t]he hand or manner of writing'.[46] By establishing that 'character' may be used to describe both a written symbol, and the *manner* in which something is written, this term can be loosened from its initial moorings as a representative 'mark' of an idea or concept, to encompass a subjective, creative, and

[45] Ibid, pp.41-21.
[46] Johnson, Ibid.

imaginative process of representing. This is important to establish, because it is not simply what Montagu communicated, but the manner of her communication that characterised her as 'Fidget' in her letters; a method of character construction that was employed by other members of the bluestocking society.

For instance, as Deborah Heller has noted, the 'character' of Elizabeth Vesey's written 'hand' greatly encouraged Vesey's fellow blues to refer to her as 'The Sylph'. 'The Bluestockings' fascination with the magical indeterminacy of the Sylph', Heller contends, 'crystallizes around the issue of illegibility and decipherment of handwriting', arguing that Vesey's 'hieroglyphics' were read as a 'cover over a mysterious depth that cannot be fully interpreted or cannot be interpreted at all'.[47] While also acknowledging ways in which the content Vesey's letters marked her as a 'Sylph' amongst her Bluestocking correspondents, Heller stresses that it was Vesey's handwriting that provided the material foundations upon which this imagining of character was able to thrive. It is therefore not only by analysing the content, but by examining the graphic form of the manuscripts that were exchanged between Montagu and the Duchess, that one can see how Montagu used the character of 'Fidget' to strengthen their relationship.

The epistolary friendship that existed between Montagu and the Duchess often complicates scholarly attempts to encapsulate the motivations, practices, and characteristics of eighteenth-century letter-writing. Although, as Barbara Brandon Schnorrenberg has noted, Montagu came from a 'wealthy and well connected' family, within their correspondence she was required to navigate the difference of her and her aristocratic friend's formal social ranks, through a medium that traditionally marked any division of status between the writer and their recipient.[48] Their relationship sits awkwardly, for example, in relation to Clare Brant's somewhat polarising account of formal and familiar models of correspondence of this

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[47] Deborah Heller, 'Subjectivity Unbound: Elizabeth Vesey as the Sylph in Bluestocking Correspondence', *Huntington Library Quarterly*, 65 (2002), 215-234 (p.223& 224).
[48] Schnorrenberg, ibid.

period. ‘Familiar correspondents’, Brant argues, ‘were people you let in when you were not “at home” to others, as opposed to more formal visits which were the equivalent of letter duty’.[49]

This investigation argues that it was, in fact, necessary for Montagu to draw upon both formal and informal letter-writing modes in order to sculpt socially appropriate and convivial epistles to the Duchess, helping her to create a vehicle through which the deferential, but irreverent character of ‘Fidget’ was able to thrive. Most obviously, in her capacity as the Duchess’ social inferior, there were long-established rules of epistolary etiquette that one can see Montagu adhering to within their correspondence, many of which have been outlined in Anni Sairio and Minna Nevala’s article ‘Social Dimensions of Layout in Eighteenth-Century Letters and Letter-writing Manuals’. Contending that ‘the entire style in which a person wrote letters was to correlate to his/ her social position’, Sairio and Nevala quote from William Fulwood’s 1568 work *The Enimie of Idlenesse* (identified here as ‘the first English letter writing manual’), in which it is advised that ‘the wit, the estate, dignity or quality of the recipient’ must be made plain by the letter writer.[50] Sairio and Nevala argue that Fulwood’s concern with social rank persisted into the eighteenth century through manuals such as Antoine de Courtin’s *The Rules of Civility*, in which Courtin advises that ‘when writing to one’s social superior’, one should leave deferential gaps of space between the address, body, and signature of the paper.[51] Together, these influential manuals stressed that in lieu of face-to-face interaction, in which a person’s manners, appearance and behaviour can be tailored to acknowledge a variety of social differences between interlocutors, any existing social hierarchy between correspondents should be made evident from the combined content and appearance a letter, in order to respectfully maintain social order.

To demonstrate how these guidelines were implemented, Sairio and Nevala analyse a letter that the Duchess composed to Montagu in February 1742, noting that as a social superior writing to an inferior,

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[49] Clare Brant, *Eighteenth-Century Letters and British Culture* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), p.15.

[50] Anni Sairio and Minna Nevala, ‘Social Dimensions of Layout in Eighteenth-Century Letters and Letter-writing Manuals’, *Studies in Variation, Contacts, and Change in English,* 14 (published online 2013), <http://www.helsinki.fi/varieng/series/volumes/14/sairio_nevala/> [accessed 4th September 2018]

[51] Ibid.

the author inverts Courtin's rule by filling her writing paper 'from top to bottom and side to side', with 'the informal salutation "My Dear Fidget"' fitting 'seamlessly into the text'.[52] The Duchess 'makes use of the paper to convey her thoughts', they observe, 'instead of signalling respect by leaving space unused'.[53] One can see the Duchess employing this casual method of letter-writing to even greater lengths in an epistle written to Montagu while preparing for a wedding in November 1739, opening with an expression of gratitude to her 'Dearest Fidget' for writing so 'many charming Letters' [figure 1].

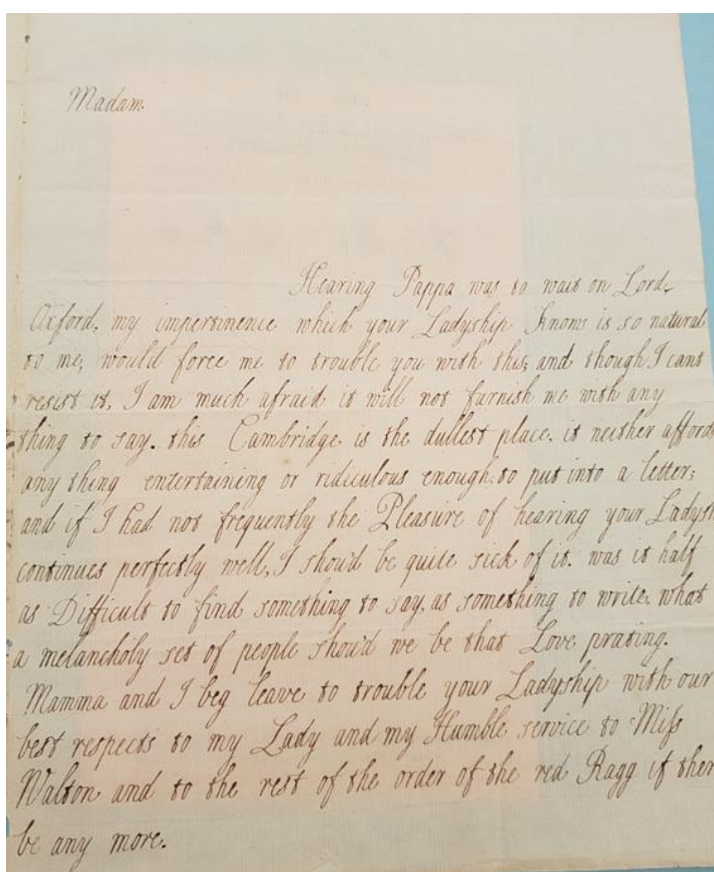
Here, not only does the Duchess's uneven hand fill the surface of the page, but she flips her writing upside-down to fill the space that had initially been left by the date to conclude her letter. As the Duchess establishes through her reiteration that she was in a 'hurry' when writing this letter, it would be misleading to suggest that this image is a typical representation of all of the epistles that she wrote to Montagu over the course of their correspondence. What is necessary to acknowledge, however, is that while the Duchess writes that 'I promised I would not exceed this side & upon that was allowed pen ink & paper', the cramped and confused composition of this epistle does illustrate the privileged epistolary position that she enjoyed as Montagu's social superior. The Duchess was under no obligation to communicate with Montagu through the deployment of deferential epistolary trappings, meaning that she could write in this casual manner without fear of compromising their relationship.

[52] Ibid.
[53] Ibid.

Figure 1: 'Margaret Cavendish [Harley] Bentick, Duchess of Portland to Elizabeth Montagu Robinson, 1739 November 8th', MO 178, *Elizabeth Robinson Montagu Papers*, The Huntington Library, San Marino, California.

This is not to suggest that the Duchess' informal and hurried writing style equates to an unabashed lack of care for her 'Dearest Fidget'. On the contrary, the busy circumstances under which the Duchess claims to have written this letter give the welcome impression that she wrote to her young friend from a spontaneous outburst of affection; that so great was her desire to involve Montagu within 'the midst of' her present 'hurry, joy & delight' that she wrote to her, despite lacking the time and resources to easily do so. I recognise the uneven letter-writing dynamic that existed between Montagu and the Duchess not to suggest that this relationship was marred by social inequality or rivalry, but to establish the remarkable nuances of their epistolary friendship. Importantly, this letter reflects how the Duchess used letter-writing tools that were not available for her friend to use in return.

This friendship dynamic is further stressed when one compares the appearance of the Duchess' letters, to those that Montagu wrote in response, as helpfully illustrated in an epistle addressed to the Duchess in April 1732 [figure 2]. Notably, the difference of their writing styles, while generally maintained throughout their early correspondence, is especially pronounced within the earliest stages of their relationship, when Montagu was still finding her place within the Duchess' intimate circle of friends. In this informative period of friendship, Montagu took particular care to adhere to the formal models of letter-writing that Sairio and Nevala identify.



Madam

Hearing Pappa was to wait on Lord Oxford, my impertinence which your Ladyship knows is so natural to me, would force me to trouble you with this; and though I cant resist it, I am much afraid it will not furnish me with any thing to say. this Cambridge is the dullest place, it neither affords any thing entertaining or ridiculous enough to put into a letter; and if I had not frequently the Pleasure of hearing your Ladyship continues perfectly well, I shou'd be quite sick of it. was it half as Difficult to find something to say as something to write, what a melancholy set of people shou'd we be that Love prating. Mamma and I beg leave to trouble your Ladyship with our best respects to my Lady and my Humble service to Miss Walton and to the rest of the order of the red Ragg if there be any more.

Figure 2: 'Elizabeth [Robinson] Montagu to Margaret Cavendish [Harley] Bentick, Duchess of Portland, 1732, April 5th', MO 236, *Elizabeth Robinson Montagu Papers*, The Huntington Library, San Marino, California.

Here, Montagu addresses her recipient by the formal greeting of 'Madam', allowing a respectful amount of space above, below, and next to this greeting. In the body of the text she twice refers to the Duchess by

her title, first as ‘Your Ladyship’ and then ‘My Lady’, writing to highlight instead of mask the difference of their social positions. Her handwriting is neat, demonstrating the care that she spent upon composing a clear, comprehensible, and aesthetically pleasing epistle. Although this letter is no longer than the epistle she was to receive from the Duchess in 1739, it is likely that her tidy and generously spaced writing would have taken a longer period of time for Montagu commit to the page, requiring her to keep her careful handwriting and ink application consistent across the surface of the paper. Instead of making do with scribbled corrections made above a scored-out word or phrase like the Duchess, any mistakes that Montagu may have made while composing this letter have been hidden from her reader’s knowledge, by making a fresh start upon a new sheet of paper. Finally, this letter is closed on a separate sheet of paper with a generously spaced cascade of acknowledgements from Montagu to the Duchess: ‘Madam/ your Ladyship’s/ most Obedient/ Humble Servant’, before finally signing her name, ‘Eliz: Robinson’.[54]

The time that the fourteen-year-old Montagu employed upon writing this letter was carefully invested into making a proper, welcome, and lasting impression upon her older and aristocratic friend. The striking visual differences between this letter, and that written by the Duchess, highlights how their familiar correspondence was far from immune from conventional epistolary modes of writing. Complicating Sairio and Nevala’s claim that ‘the entire style in which a person wrote letters was to correlate to his/ her social position’, however, was the subtle irony with which Montagu handled other formal letter-writing tropes within her epistles to the Duchess; a skill that defined how she characterised herself as ‘Fidget’, and that she was honing even within this early, deferentially structured epistle. Importantly, Montagu was not writing exclusively as a friend in the familiar mode of letter writing that Brant recognises, or as the social inferior that Sairio and Nevala classify, but as somebody who encompassed both of these capacities simultaneously. This was no easy epistolary position to master, as emphasised in a letter that Freind wrote

[54] Montagu, ‘Elizabeth [Robinson] Montagu to Margaret Cavendish [Harley] Bentick, Duchess of Portland, 1733, April 5th’, MO 236, *Elizabeth Montagu Robinson Papers,* The Huntington Library, San Marino, California.

to Montagu in February 1743/44, after receiving a letter from 'the Friend whom you love Best… the Duchess'.[55]

Although Freind had already met the Duchess in person, establishing in this epistle that 'she has plainly much good nature and good sense enlivened with a very becoming cheerfulness', Freind voices uncertainty about how he should reply to a message that the Duchess had sent him, bearing advice upon how to manage his child's teething.[56] '[W]hat ought I to do?' he asks his cousin, adding that if 'you think I ought to write to her, be so good to present the enclosed to her… I never wrote to a Duchess since I was seven years old, & that is so long ago that I have forgot the proper manner of addressing them… Pray be my friend in this, and judge what is best and properest to do (for I know not)'.[57]

Here, Freind claims that he was uncertain in how to respond to Portland because he had not written 'to a Duchess since I was seven years old', an excuse that at first suggests that he had simply fallen out of practice with the letter-writing rules of conduct that Sairio and Nevela trace. However, it is important to recognise how the affability that had grown between himself and the Duchess would have further clouded the matter of how he should reply to her letter in the 'best and properest' manner. Rather than writing to Freind as a formality, the Duchess had contacted him with kind advice in his capacity as her close friend's kin, confusing the degree of familiarity with which Freind should reply to her, if indeed he was expected to reply at all. When, for instance, the influential 1762 work *The Art of Letter Writing* prescribed to its reader that 'we must rise nobly to our superiors', and 'descend to more familiar ways of speaking to intimate friends' in correspondence, how one should write to an epistolary audience who embodied both of these roles is left unspecified.[58]

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[55] William Freind, 'William Freind to Elizabeth [Robinson] Montagu, 1734/35, Feb 25th', MO 989, *Elizabeth Montagu Robinson Papers,* The Huntington Library, San Marino, California.
[56] Ibid.
[57] Ibid.
[58] As quoted by Anni Sairio and Minna Nevala, Ibid.

The issue of how one should walk the fine line between writing in either an over-familiar or formal manner, let alone walking this line in the context of writing to one's social superiors, was far from a clear-cut matter in eighteenth-century conduct literature. Notably, Susan Whyman has considered that even within well-established letter-writing models such as Desiderius Erasmus' *De Conscribendis Epistolis,* there are tensions between the author's desire to prescribe a mode of writing that is stylistically correct, and one that is easy and spontaneous. For instance, she quotes Erasmus' claim that '[a] letter… is a mutual conversation between absent friends, which should be neither unpolished, rough, or artificial, nor confined to a single topic, nor tediously long', only to point out how these standards 'clashed with his ideal of the open-hearted, familiar letter'.[59] Whyman also considers that while letter-writing manuals 'were reissued in France, England and America' on a regular basis, that 'the actual use of manuals is difficult to understand', noting that 'few' of the letters that she used to conduct her study into eighteenth-century letter-writing practices 'resembled those in published guides'.[60]

Although there are resemblances between the letters that Montagu wrote to the Duchess, and the letters written by influential authors such as Madam de Sévigné (and, as I will soon demonstrate, those of Elizabeth Singer Rowe), I argue that above all it was Montagu's own creativity and ingenuity, that made their epistolary relationship successful. Writing to the Duchess was an art that Montagu mastered through personal judgement and hours of practice, through which she learned how to pragmatically adapt her writing style and manner of self-presentation, to please her titled audience. I contend that it was for this reason that Freind sought out Montagu's personal advice upon his response to the Duchess' epistle, instead of seeking clarification within a contemporary letter-writing manual. He was not only appealing to Montagu as an authority who was well versed in writing to a member of the aristocracy, but well versed in writing to a member of the aristocracy in the capacity of a *friend*, and the various subtleties that this

[59] Susan Whyman, *The Pen and the People: English Letter Writers 1660-1800* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), p.11.
[60] Ibid, p.28.

epistolary position involved; he was conscious that with each carefully written letter to the Duchess, Montagu had employed her time towards honing a valuable and sought-after skill.

One can see Montagu's mastery of this tonal balance in the deferentially structured letter that she wrote to the Duchess in 1732, in which she described her act of writing as an 'impertinence which your Ladyship knows is so natural to me'. This is not to say that Montagu was the only bluestocking to ironically use the term 'impertinence' to describe the act of writing an epistle to a friend; for example, one can see Carter doing so in the first letter that she wrote to Talbot, in which Carter comically asked her correspondent to excuse the 'impertinence of a Letter'.[61] Notably, this is a joke that Carter felt emboldened to make from her confidence in the pleasure that they had both taken from one another's company, when they had first met shortly before. Indeed, and as Talbot acknowledged in response to this letter, by starting their correspondence Carter had written 'to one who she might be sure would receive any thing of her writing with a great deal of pleasure'.[62] Within this context, the ironic deployment of a polite letter-writing trope succeeded in inviting Talbot to participate within a familiar epistolary relationship, in which convention became a creative springboard for humour, imagination, and expressions of affection between one another.

What separates Montagu's handling of the term 'impertinence' from Carter and Talbot's is how she used this word in close proximity to the Duchess' aristocratic title of 'your Ladyship', thereby placing the Duchess' superior social position in a new light. Indeed, while the Duchess regularly began her letters by greeting Montagu informally as 'Fidget', Montagu responded by mobilising the Duchess' formal titles such as 'your Grace' and 'your Ladyship' as a means of affectionately, and playfully negotiating their difference in rank. When Montagu described her act of writing to the Duchess as an 'impertinence which your Ladyship knows is so natural to me' in her letter, she at once addressed and mocked the notion that

[61] Elizabeth Carter, 'Mrs. Carter to Miss Talbot. Deal, *August* 1, 1741', in *A Series of Letters between Mrs Elizabeth Carter and Miss Catherine Talbot,* ed. by Montagu Pennington, 4 vols (London, 1809), I pp.4-6 (p.5).
[62] Catherine Talbot, 'Miss Talbot to Mrs. Carter. Cuddesden, *Sept*. 15, 1741', in *A Series of Letters between Mrs Elizabeth Carter and Miss Catherine Talbot,* ed. by Montagu Pennington, 4 vols (London, 1809), I pp.6-8 (p.6).

through her letter she was stepping out of her place as a subject of her 'Ladyship', and committing an insolent act. Instead, both friends knew that by addressing Montagu as 'Fidget', the Duchess had welcomed her into a relationship in which Montagu was encouraged demonstrate the witty mental agility that had first recommended her to Portland.

The deferential spaces that Montagu established on the physical surface of her letters, are paralleled by the space for mental play that she created through the ironic and familiar nature of her writing. Both of these literary techniques were crucial in formulating her letters to the Duchess, and both demand to be acknowledged. It was in this format that the imagining of Montagu as 'Fidget' was able to flourish, at once loosening Montagu's obligation to address her friend in earnestly formal terms, and helping her to establish a sense of friendship and intimacy. Although customary letter-writing practices posed challenges for Montagu to negotiate in her epistles to tprehe Duchess, one must also acknowledge the valuable, creative possibilities that this manner of communicating with her friend afforded her. Importantly, within their correspondence, Montagu was able to build upon imaginings of her character in ways that face-to-face interactions would have restricted.

This is not to say that Montagu did not, on occasion, describe the act of letter writing as akin to *conversing* with her correspondent, as demonstrated in a letter that she wrote to the Duchess in 1739. Here, Montagu writes to express her disappointment that she would unable to attend the Canterbury races that year, but consoles herself by reflecting that 'as I can employ the time in writing to you… then can I complain of being left to that conversation I most esteem'? Rather, that instead of viewing the physical absence of her correspondent as a problem to be dealt with, Montagu embraced letter-writing as an opportunity to strengthen her friendships, in particular by building upon notions of self-truth through satire, imagination and humour. By being absent from the Duchess, the task of animating herself as 'Fidget' could be fruitfully conducted.

Section 6) Animating 'Fidget': analysis of the moments in which Montagu brought this imagining of self to life in her early correspondence

The moments in which Montagu characterised herself as 'Fidget', are not always signposted with clear announcements such as 'as Fidget I am'. Indeed, the various narrative voices and techniques that Montagu employed to establish herself as this exaggerated self-caricature would, at times, have been undermined by the overt stage entrances and exits that Richard Steele employed, to bid farewell to the readership of *The Spectator*. Crucially, it was by repeatedly drawing upon a recognisable set of characteristics that Montagu made Fidget's presence known in her letters; the key aspects of which this final section will now explore.

To make sense of how Montagu effectively built upon the term 'Fidget' to shape this distinct imagining of her character, it is useful to reflect upon how her contemporary Jonathan Swift employed this word in his satirical verse 'Mad Mullinix and Timothy', which was first published in 1728. Because swift was an influential satirist and poet whose correspondence Montagu keenly read in her youth, it is likely that she was acquainted with his humorous framing of this term.[63] However, even if Montagu's writing had not been directly influenced by Swift's, their shared understanding of the humorous and creative potential of this word makes his work valuable for this investigation to consider. Within this dialogue, 'Mad Mullinix' levels the following accusations to his interlocutor:

> thou'rt the *Punch* to stir up trouble in;
>
> You Wrigle, Fidge, and make a Rout
>
> Put all your Brother Puppets out,

[63] In an undated letter written from Whitehall [likely in 1740/41], Montagu wrote to her sister Sarah Scott that 'I am reading Doctor Swift's and Mr. Pope's Letters; I like them much' (Elizabeth Montagu, 'To the Same [Sarah [Robinson] Scott]. Whitehall', in *The Letters of Mrs. Elizabeth Montagu*, ed. Matthew Montagu, vol. 1 (London, 1810), pp.127-129 (p.128).).

Run on in a perpetual Round,

To Teize, Perplex, Disturb and Confound,

Intrude with Monkey grin, and clatter

To interrupt all serious Matter (138-144)[64]

In this instance, to 'Fidge' is to take pleasure from acting in a disruptive manner, a trope that resonates with how Montagu ironically described her writing to the Duchess as an 'impertinence' in 1732. By employing this motif, Montagu irreverently frames the very act of her writing to her friend as disorderly, through which her unchecked desire to express affection had been translated into the troublesome, and invasive form of a letter. In this epistle, Montagu continues to claim that so strong was her 'impertinence' to write that 'I can't resist it', even though it 'will not furnish me with any thing to say', presenting the process of composing, writing, and sending letters to the Duchess as a 'Fidge' in its own right; an idea that Montagu complicates playfully, through the deference that we have seen her communicate to the Duchess both through her controlled handwriting, and the respectful spaces that she leaves on page.[65]

Portraying her carefully composed letters as a chaotic intrusion upon her correspondent's time, here Montagu celebrates and builds upon their collective memory of how she had first caught the favourable attention of the Duchess. In particular, she renders an imagining of herself as an uncultivated little girl who required her older friend's patience, benevolence, and good example to improve, while at the same time demonstrating her intellectual sophistication as a witty and satirical letter writer. Crucially, Montagu designed both the form and content of this letter to carry significant emotional weight, using sentiment to reaffirm the imaginative and intellectual pleasures that this fidgeting, youthful, and enthusiastic depiction of her character reliably gave to both friends.

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[64] Jonathan Swift, 'Mad Mullinix and Timothy', in *The Poems of Jonathan Swift,* ed. by Harold Williams, 2nd edn., 3 vols (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1958), III.
[65] Huntington, MO 236.

While ‘Fidget’ was primarily tailored to operate as a vehicle of friendship with the Duchess, Montagu also mobilised this character to playfully comment upon the idea of her remarkable physical energy to the other members of the Bulstrode circle; not just through the depiction of ‘Fidget’ as an impulsive letter-writer, but as a character with consistent recognisable traits that could be adapted to different circumstances. In a letter that Montagu wrote to Donnellan in November 1741, for instance, she mobilises the motif of Fidget’s energetic movement to reassure her friend that after a period of sickness, she was finally recovering her health and spirits. Here, Montagu reflects that ‘I did apprehend I might suffer in the locomotive character of a Fidget by a fit of the Rheumatism’, adding smilingly that she had been ‘under some concern how to support the dignity of an Elbow chair & feet reposed upon cushions’.[66] By describing her movement as a ‘locomotive’ force, Montagu was not literally suggesting to Donnellan that she was most at herself when in motion, to the extent that only illness could induce her to sit down or be still. Rather, that she was aware that her friends derived pleasure from the idea of her, in her ‘character of a Fidget’, as an embodiment of active, uncultivated, and youthful energy and enthusiasm.

Aware that her friend was anxious over her state of health, Montagu took pleasure in creating a familiar, nostalgic, and comic scene for Donnellan to enjoy within this letter, helping to reinforce and define their relationship over gaps of space and time. As testimony to its effectiveness, one can see Donnellan fondly use this trope in return, in a letter addressed to Montagu from Bulstrode in December 1743. Here Donnellan relates how, after a long period of Montagu’s absence from the estate, she and the Duchess liked to imagine their ‘Dr. Fidget coming jumping in among us & raising all our spirits’, portraying this character as a welcome change to their otherwise quiet and domestic daily routine. Within both of these instances, the idea of Montagu’s physical energy functioned as a powerful vehicle through which the friends found creative and nostalgic pleasure, in expressing their affection for one another.

[66] Montagu, ‘Elizabeth [Robinson] Montagu to Anne Donnellan, 1741, November [no precise date given]’, MO 827, *Elizabeth Montagu Robinson Papers,* The Huntington Library, San Marino, California.

Montagu's efforts at self-caricature were so successful, that even in the moments where she did not plainly refer to herself as 'Fidget', she was able to evoke the presence of this character in her writing. In January 1739, for example, she wrote to the Duchess that 'when your letter was brought in to the Room there was the trifling obstacles of a few chairs and a table which I surmounted by jumping over them as I believe, tho in the joy of my heart I hardly knew how I got at the other side of them'.[67] Here, various recognisable 'Fidget' characteristics are in place, with Montagu's affection for her friend translating into an impulsive, remarkable, and disruptive physical outburst. Abandoning decorum, she claims to have then 'snatch'd the letter' from the hand of her footman 'in great impatience', in a manner reminiscent of the 'fidge' who wriggles and makes a rout in Swift's writing.[68]

The humorous nature of this chaotic scene does not stem from a notion that to be enthusiastic about receiving a letter from a friend is laughable. Nor does the exaggerated manner of her writing mean that Montagu must have, conversely, felt no 'joy' at the prospect of hearing from the Duchess. Indeed, it is vital to assert that the non-literal manner of Montagu's writing, does not automatically discredit the sentiments that she communicates in this letter. Instead, the notions of reality and absurdity coexist within this scene, helping Montagu to illustrate the problematic nature of creating and communicating a 'true' account of self as a friend, as related through descriptions of one's 'affections', 'behaviours', and 'sentiments'. While it is likely that Montagu did hurry to receive the Duchess' letter, that she did so by literally 'jumping' over chairs and a table (comically framed as 'trifling obstacles') operates as a knowing amplification, rather than a faithful representation of how Montagu received this letter in practice.

Running parallel to this character's pleasure in disruptive physical movement, was her impulse to 'prate', a term Montagu pointedly separated from enlightening, useful, and benevolent forms of conversation in her early correspondence. She wrote to Donnellan in 1740, for example, that 'I find there is a love of

[67] Montagu, 'Elizabeth [Robinson] Montagu to Margaret Cavendish [Harley] Bentick, Duchess of Portland, 1739/40, January [no precise date given]', MO 293, *Elizabeth Montagu Robinson Papers,* The Huntington Library, San Marino, California.
[68] Ibid.

talking implanted in us distinct from the benevolence and design of improving our hearers', and 'we are impelled by a kind of instinct to prate'.[69] The mock modesty of this claim is striking, as the friends were well aware that both Montagu's writing, and the conversations that they shared together, were no mere prate. However, this definition of chattering, aimless speech did provide Montagu with another useful creative tool to help her bring 'Fidget' to life in her early correspondence. For example, after enduring a period of illness in December 1741, she wrote to Donnellan that 'truly till my tongue could Fidget & my voice pronounce ten thousand words in five minutes I was quite low spirited'.[70] By creating these carefully constructed images of physical activity and speech for the delight of her correspondents, Montagu was investing her time in strengthening her friendships, through the demonstration of her own mental nimbleness.

Here, it is helpful for us to consider how Montagu's energetic imagining of self can also be related to contemporary notions of femininity, along with the light that this can shine on other bluestocking sobriquets. As Heller argues for instance, Vesey's 'figuration as the "Sylph"' presented Montagu's fellow blue as 'an unpredictable, mysterious, and indeterminate being who enjoyed almost magical powers of invention, energy, and freedom'.[71] Although Heller continues that 'the Sylphic self claims a space free from constraining definitions and norms' (opening the way to 'an ungendered, autonomous self'), the idea of Vesey as an 'unpredictable, mysterious, and indeterminate' being in many ways supports contemporary notions of the female character and intellect, bringing us back to gendered definitions and norms.[72]

As we considered in the introduction to this thesis, women were commonly seen as intellectually inferior to men in eighteenth-century Britain. Often, this inferiority was framed in terms of the perceived unpredictability, liveliness, and fanciful nature of the female mind, which was understood to prevent

[69] Montagu, 'Elizabeth [Robinson] Montagu to Anne Donnellan, 1740 [no precise date given]', MO 811, *Elizabeth Montagu Robinson Papers,* The Huntington Library, San Marino, California.
[70] Montagu, 'Elizabeth [Robinson] Montagu to Anne Donnellan, [1741], December 2nd', MO 828, *Elizabeth Montagu Robinson Papers,* The Huntington Library, San Marino, California.
[71] Heller, p.217.
[72] Ibid.

women from thinking in a grounded and logical nature. In his 1787 tract *Strictures on Female Education* for instance, John Bennett argues that '[t]he conceptions of a girl, instantaneous as lightening [sic], astonish and surprise'; that '[h]er fancy gives a pleasing hue to every image she receives'; that her 'imagination' is 'warm and vigorous'; and that her mental '[v]ivacity' can be contrasted with 'profound thinking and accurate investigation' that characterises male intellectual ability.[73]

A host of widely-acclaimed London assemblies, and champion of intellectual activity and achievement, Vesey regularly demonstrated her ability to think and act in ways that were discerning, concentrated, and constructive in front of her bluestocking peers. The nickname that this society gave to her was therefore no literal representation of her character or abilities, but a satirical acknowledgement of ideas outlined in publications such as *Strictures on Female Education.* More than an in-joke about her indecipherable handwriting, the playful imagining of Vesey of an unpredictable and mysterious 'Sylph' allowed the bluestockings to consider how all of their intellectual ambitions, projects, and achievements upset customary notions of the female mind and temperament.

When we unpack Montagu's adolescent alias 'Fidget', we are able to recognise that from a young age, the Queen of the Blues also irreverently engaged with contemporary notions of female intellectual ability. Excitedly leaping over furniture to receive letters from her friends, 'Fidget' is driven by lively, warm, an instantaneous ideas and impulses, while as a prating figure, she is unable to hold sustained and logical trains of thought. Importantly, the 'Sylph' and 'Fidget' illustrate ways in which sobriquets offered bluestocking women ways of thinking about and satirising popular imaginings of femininity, along with how these sobriquets – as displays of intellectual agility and play – operated as effective vehicles of bluestocking friendship.

Above all else, 'Fidget' enabled Montagu to express her eager, youthful devotion towards the Duchess. By embracing the nickname 'Fidget' as her favourite manner of addressing Montagu, the Duchess gave

[73] John Bennett, *Strictures on Female Education; chiefly as it relates to the culture of the heart, in four essays* (London: T. Cadell, 1787), pp.106-108.

these aspects of her friend's character a lease of life in their own right, and in turn, Montagu ensured that her 'character of a Fidget' was not only deferential to, but dependent upon the Duchess for survival. This is a concept that Montagu particularly stressed when long periods of time passed without bringing letters from her friend, writing to the Duchess after a fortnight of her friend's silence in January 1739, for example, that 'I really believe you have entirely forgot there is a forlorn Fidget in the world, I can hardly say she lives while she is so far from you'.[74]

Montagu expands upon this theme in a remarkable letter written to the Duchess in the same year, expressing her disappointment at her friend's failure to meet with her as they had previously planned. While this epistle is not signed from Fidget, the presence of this character is made evident by the various narrative devices that Montagu employs. 'As I always acquaint your Grace with my motions from place to place', she wrote, 'I think it incumbent upon me to let you know I died last Thursday', and 'have since cross'd the styx.'[75] Montagu then proceeds to paint her passage into, and life in the underworld, embellishing her writing with themes from Greek mythology both to showcase her learning, and entertain her well-read friend.

As her letter continues, Montagu describes how the gate-keeper to the underworld, Pluto, transported her across the styx on his boat, during which journey he informed her that the 'Lady' Duchess 'has sent many lovers there by her cruelty', but that 'I was the first friend who was dispatch'd by her neglect.'[76] Blending ancient references with contemporary, Montagu quips that 'I thought it proper to acquaint you with my misfortune', and 'so called for the pen & ink of Mrs Rowe had made use of to write her letters from the Dead to the Living' to compose her letter.[77] As Peter Walmsley has observed of the work that Montagu alluded to, specifically Singer Rowe's series of fictional epistles entitled *Friendship in Death*, '[e]ach

[74] Montagu, 'Elizabeth [Robinson] Montagu to Margaret Cavendish [Harley] Bentick, Duchess of Portland, 1739/40, January 4th', MO 288, *Elizabeth Montagu Robinson Papers,* The Huntington Library, San Marino, California.
[75] Montagu, 'Elizabeth [Robinson] Montagu to Margaret Cavendish [Harley] Bentick, Duchess of Portland, 1739 [no precise date given]', MO 287, *Elizabeth Montagu Robinson Papers,* The Huntington Library, San Marino, California.
[76] Ibid.
[77] Ibid.

letter offers comfort or warnings from beyond the grave, and each evokes a distinctive scenario', offering 'a comforting account of the afterlife as a place of boundless love'.[78] In her 1739 letter, Montagu employs this motif to humorously communicate how 'Fidget' was a creation shared between herself and her friend, and as such, was dependent upon the time and attention of both parties to survive.

The body of their early correspondence demonstrates how the Duchess was, in fact, acutely sensitive to the importance of her role in keeping this imagining of Montagu's character, and by extension the close and unique dynamic of their friendship, alive. This awareness is particularly well-illustrated in the letters that the Duchess wrote in the wake of her young friend's marriage to Edward Montagu, in August 1742. Poignantly, the day after the wedding, the Duchess wrote to claim that she would gladly 'execute any commission of yours my Dear Mrs Montagu (for I must not call you any longer Fidget)', before asking for her correspondent's reassurance that 'I shall still have a corner of your affections'.[79]

On one hand, it is important for us to recognise that the declaration 'I must not call you any longer Fidget' was not literally meant by the Duchess, and that the habits and dynamics of her epistolary friendship with Montagu did not change overnight. For instance, although celebrating her friend's marriage in this letter, the Duchess maintains her previous informal writing style (writing playfully that 'I am ashamed to send this Blotted Scribble' in the post-script), and only a few weeks would pass before she took up her pen and paper to address Montagu as 'My Dear Fidget' again.[80] Similarly, in letters written to the Duchess throughout her marriage, pregnancy, and sadly short-lived period of motherhood, Montagu continued to refer to herself as 'Fidget'; during her lying-in for instance, she wrote that 'I am impatient to know my doom whether I am to sit here like patience on a monument or may be allow'd in my character of a Fidget

[78] Peter Walmsley, 'Whigs in Heaven: Elizabeth Rowe's "Friendship in Death"', *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 44 (2011) 315-330 (p.316).
[79] Cavendish Bentick, 'Margaret Cavendish [Harley] Bentick, Duchess of Portland to Elizabeth [Robinson] Montagu, 1742, Aug 6th', MO 192, *Elizabeth Montagu Robinson Papers,* The Huntington Library, San Marino, California.
[80] Cavendish Bentick, 'Margaret Cavendish [Harley] Bentick, Duchess of Portland to Elizabeth [Robinson] Montagu, 1742, Aug 19th', MO 193, *Elizabeth Montagu Robinson Papers,* The Huntington Library, San Marino, California.

to bustle into the bustling world', and again after giving birth to thank her for her 'kind enquiry after the young Fidget who loves laughing and dancing & is worthy of the mother he sprang from'.[81]

At the same time however, it also remains important for us to recognise that by claiming that she must no longer call Montagu Fidget in her August 1742 letter, the Duchess was acknowledging that their relationship was entering uncharted territory. Her younger friend was coming of age, and was doing so by forming an alliance with a wealthy land owner; a union that would not necessarily raze, but likely complicate the social and material foundations upon which 'Fidget' had been built. Crucially, whereas the Duchess's marriage to William Bentick, Duke of Portland in 1734 had served only to strengthen her identity as Fidget's older and wiser social superior, Montagu's new status as a married woman found friction with the imagining of her as a youthful, lively, and deferential character.

Throughout their correspondence, 'Fidget' operated as a lens through which the two friends were able to view their past, present, and future selves. This character wasn't just about Montagu's attempts of self-imagining, but the Duchess' too, and through it she had enjoyed her position as the paramount object of her friend's time and devotion. As an embodiment of their friendship, both women keenly protected, named, and recalled this satirical projection of Montagu's character throughout their early correspondence. While the task of animating 'Fidget' through sophisticated character writing was most readily pursued by Montagu, it was the Duchess' care for her younger, talented friend that kept this character a vibrant and relevant presence throughout their exchange of letters. Though 'Fidget', both friends were able to devote their time, talents, and imagination, towards fulfilling and rewarding ends.

Conclusion: the nature of time devoted towards animating 'Fidget'

[81] Montagu, 'Elizabeth [Robinson] Montagu to Margaret Cavendish [Harley] Bentick, Duchess of Portland, 1742, November 5th', MO 334, *Elizabeth Montagu Robinson Papers,* The Huntington Library, San Marino, California, & Montagu, 'Elizabeth [Robinson] Montagu to Margaret Cavendish [Harley] Bentick, Duchess of Portland, 1743, July 12th', MO 345, *Elizabeth Montagu Robinson Papers,* The Huntington Library, San Marino, California.

When the young Elizabeth Montagu considered Wollaston's moral account of time, friendship, truth and happiness in her 1740 letter to Donnellan, it would be wrong to suggest that she was viewing his work as an unquestionable moral guide to which she planned to live her life in strict accordance. What *The Religion of Nature Delineated* offered Montagu instead, was a popular philosophical framework, around which she could make sense of her own thoughts about the nature and purpose of time devoted towards being and having a friend. Significantly, this was a framework from which she creatively departed when she sought to sustain these relationships in practice, as illustrated by the ways in which she animated herself as 'Fidget' in her early correspondence.

Rather than using 'Fidget' to embark upon the 'difficult' task of communicating self-truth to others, Montagu embraced this alias to depict a multifaceted, irreverent, and nostalgic imagining of her character, sharpening her abilities as a witty and insightful writer in the process. In particular, the talents that she displayed while animating herself as 'Fidget' enabled Montagu to cement her friendship with the Duchess of Portland, allowing her to creatively subvert the letter-writing conventions that stressed the division of the social status to her advantage. The welcome diversion that this active, talkative, and satirical character gave to both friends demonstrates how 'Fidget' was born and sustained not from the moral pursuit of happiness, but from their shared enthusiasm for imaginative and intellectual pleasures.

Although a pleasurable employment, animating 'Fidget' was no frivolous use of Montagu's time and abilities, but a masterfully executed effort to improve her intellectual capabilities and social prospects. It is for these reasons that this chapter asserts that the imagining of Montagu as 'Fidget', has considerably more critical value than has previously been recognised. By investing her 'allotted hours' not towards the moral goals of truth and happiness that Wollaston outlined in his tract, but animating herself as this entertaining character, Montagu ingratiated herself into the society of the Bulstrode circle. As a close friend of the Duchess, Montagu was able to lay the groundwork upon which both the bluestocking assemblies, and her own later reputation as the 'Queen of the Blues', could go on to be raised.

Conclusion: Of Time, Employment, and Bluestocking Letters and Writings

'Let me think then, and think deeply, how I have employed this week past. Have I advanced in, or deviated from the path that leads to life? Has my time been improved or lost, or worse than lost, misspent'?

Over the course of this thesis, we have unpacked ways in which Catherine Talbot, Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, Elizabeth Carter, Mary Delany, and Elizabeth Montagu engaged with conflicting models of well-employed and wasted time. As well as using this engagement to find new methods of thinking about the lives and legacies of these five women, we have considered how their reflections upon this subject provides us with a little-studied, fertile method of defining the nature and shape of the bluestocking movement. In these closing remarks, this study focuses on how these five bluestockings mobilised their writings on time, employment, and morality to cultivate their relationships with other well-read, well-bred women, exposing the social, intellectual, and cultural significance of their choice to share their experiences.

By looking to the critical tradition that followed Pennington's analysis of Talbot's letters, we have seen how her writings on time and employment have often been used to portray her as an inward looking, bitter character. Through our examination of her essays and correspondence however, we have recognised the optimism, creativity, and humour with which Talbot wrote about her moral growth over time, along with how she communicated her thoughts in ways that she understood would be engaging and relatable to her correspondents. Although there are multiple instances of Talbot writing in this manner, the letter that she wrote to Carter on the 14th of November 1746 provides us with an effective illustration of this point.

As we considered in the first chapter of this thesis, Talbot opens this letter by depicting herself as host to two warring inclinations: her sense of obligation towards matters of domestic duty, and her desire to write to Carter. Although in one moment Talbot claims to have 'absolutely no time' to write, in the next she renders an imagining of herself wondering listlessly from one room to another, struggling to employ her

time in a purposeful and fulfilling manner. Crucially, Talbot understood that Carter would also grasp how domestic work could be at once an important and frivolous use of time, drawing on this collective emotional and imaginative experience as a means of cementing their friendship.

In our examination of Lady Mary's writings, we considered how both her aristocratic privileges, and difficult residency in Brescia could complicate her imaginings of self as a learned, uncustomary, and contented woman of quality. At the same time as recognising these complications however, we have also seen how Lady Mary's accounts of self as a learned, uncustomary, and happy gentlewomen offers us valuable insights into the conflicts that characterised social and intellectual lives. Importantly, in her Brescia letters Lady Mary shares her experiences of navigating conflicting models of well-employed time to create an emotional bond with her distant family, anticipating that like her, her granddaughters may at times benefit from (and find pleasure in) upsetting customary expectations of appropriate female conduct.

While unpacking Carter's letters, we noted the conflict that she portrayed between her social and unsocial tendencies, as well as her social and intellectual lives, recognising how the time she devoted to walking and translating confused popular ideas of gentlewomanly behaviour. Yet we also noted how Carter saw the process of sharing these conflicts with Talbot as an entertaining, fruitful way of improving her social and intellectual moral progress over time simultaneously. Notably, she composed playful portrayals of herself rambling alone to divert her friend, enabling her to not only cultivate their relationship, but improve her literary abilities. Like Talbot, Carter also grasped that her correspondent would relate to the conflicts underpinning her writing, turning to this shared experience as a further way of connecting with her friend.

Through our exploration of Delany's letters, we considered how this bluestocking artist viewed her lesser-studied shell crafts as both a trivial and improving use of her time. For instance, we saw how on the 6th of October 1750, she wrote a letter to Dewes outlining how her skilled crafts could be seen as frivolous, as conveyed by her comparison of their store-rooms. While drawing on these spaces to flag up differences in their daily routines, Delany also uses this comparison as a way of tightening her relationship with Dewes.

She grasped that just as she could be accused of failing in models of female virtue such as motherhood, Dewes' could be charged with neglecting to master creative feminine accomplishments, recognising how both her and her sister faced conflicting models of well-employed time.

Finally, by looking to Montagu's adolescent correspondence, we examined how 'Fidget' complicated her account of true friendship as the most effective and happy vehicle of moral progress over time. However, we also considered ways in which this exaggerated, figurative, and humorous alias enabled Montagu to enrich her intellectual and social lives. Vitally, this character operated as a friendship device between Montagu, Donnellan, and the Duchess of Portland, with all three women sharing their imaginings of Montagu as 'Fidget' to maintain and nurture their relationships. Through making these moves, they illustrated their understanding of friendship as both an imaginative performance and rational virtue, participating in relationship model that would later be replicated in bluestocking familiar correspondence.

Throughout this thesis, we have encountered a series of complex, ongoing, and thoughtful negotiations, undertaken by women whose intelligence, learning, and high social standing encouraged them to view their everyday employments in relation to differing models of well-employed time. By unpacking their writings, we have seen ways in which these negotiations were embraced by bluestocking women as a way of nurturing their rational cultivation over time. Crucially, they understood that by sharing conflicting accounts of their moral progress they could strengthen their relationships with other well-read, leisured women, sustaining the principles of social affection, intellectual rigor, and imaginative play upon which bluestocking society was founded and thrived.

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