Leading Apes in Hell or Leading a Life Free from a Husband's Control? Singlewomen Choosing not to Marry in Early Modern England c.1604-1731

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Abstract

This thesis explores the lives of singlewomen in the seventeenth and early eighteenth century, in England and in some transcontinental ventures using a new methodological approach. Historians began to take an interest in this previously overlooked significant minority in early modern society several decades ago. Much of the work done on singlewomen was quantitative using local records, such as those for businesses and probate courts, which provided an analysis of their numbers and activities. Quantitative work demonstrated that these women were an active part of their communities; occasionally individual lives were considered briefly. This approach did not address in any depth their lived experiences, tending to focus on a single aspect of their lives such as land-owning or moneylending. This thesis uses probate records and letters as well as knowledge of the material worlds in which they lived to give us a different understanding of their lives. In each of three case studies it asks questions and suggests answers about the subject's experiences, exploring how each woman used the objects and activities available to her to achieve agency and control. In order to provide a context for these case studies, the thesis begins by examining the probate documents of a selection of unmarried women from the diocese of Norwich. These women ranged in age and circumstances, and their efforts as they approached death to control their property, however wealthy or poor they were, give us a picture of their lived experiences. The three case studies which follow used as a start point the work of previous historians, together with much archival material, but the subjects were approached in a new way. By identifying activities or incidents in their lives, which often had a start and an end point, and from there exploring the material possibilities open to them as singlewomen, it was possible to make reasonable assumptions about how and why they made choices and how they maintained degrees of freedom to live outside the constraints of marriage and childbearing. Paying attention to their material worlds by this approach, which is not chronological, shows their creativity and ingenuity, achieving independence and agency outside the normative heterosexual construct. This new intervention, asking questions about the lives of individuals, and answering with reasonable assumptions, is of particular value for considering the lives of women, where historical records are fewer than for the lives of men.

Contents

Declaration

This thesis is entirely my own work and has not been submitted for a degree at another university. None of the material in this thesis has been published prior to the date of submission.

Sandra L. Browne

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List of Abreviations

BLO	Bodleian Library Oxford
BL	British Library, London
EEBO	Early English Books Online
FP	Ferrar Papers, Magdalene College Library Old Library, Cambridge
HOPO	History of Parliament Online
NRO	Norfolk Record Office
ODNB	Oxford Dictionary of National Biography
TNA	The National Archives, London

N.B. All dates are in New Style with the years adjusted to begin on 1 January rather than 25 March

List of Illustrations

Chapter 1 Introduction

When, as a young girl before her marriage to a man who was thirty eight years older, Katherine Philips wittily denied the proverbial fate of unmarried women, stating that 'Theres no such thing as leading Apes in hell,' she was referencing the longstanding trope from English popular culture, embedded in a society which embraced the notion that all women would marry.[1] As the author of *The Lawes Resolution* expressed it: 'Women are either married or to be married.'[2] It is now accepted by historians that a significant minority of the female population during the early modern period did not fall into either category.[3] Because of the expectation in this period that all women would marry, girls and younger women who were yet to become wives were frequently referred to as 'maids' or 'virgins.' In their ground breaking collection of papers, Judith Bennett and Amy Froide identified this group as *lifecycle singlewomen*; they term those women who never married *lifelong singlewomen*.[4] Whilst the term *singlewomen* is used for the women studied here, none of whom married, the practice of labelling is potentially problematic, since it seems to create a homogenous group of people; in this study there is a continuing awareness that there will be a variety of reasons why an individual remained unmarried. Where singlewomen can be identified in the records, it is clear that they belonged to a whole range of classes, regions, lifestyles, and religious confessions; their family backgrounds, levels of literacy, political and economic circumstances were unique to each of them. The term 'singlewomen' was the most common description used in the probate records for the Norwich diocese examined here though, as Judith Spiksley has argued, the term 'spinster' became increasingly common throughout the seventeenth century in court

[1]Germaine Greer, Jeslyn Medoff, Melinda Sansome and Susan Hastings (eds), *Kissing the Rod: An Anthology of Seventeenth-Century Women's Verse* (London, 1988), p.189

[2] *The Lawes Resolutions of Womens Rights* (London, 1632)

[3] See Edward A.Wrigley and Roger S.Scofield, *The Population History of England, 1541-1871: A Reconstruction* (London, 1981); Peter Laslett, 'Size and Structure of the Household in England Over Three Centuries,' *Population Studies*, 3: 2 (1969), pp.199-223

[4] Judith M.Bennett and Amy M.Froide (eds), *Singlewomen in the European Past 1250-1800* (Philadelphia, 1999), p.2

and ecclesiastical records, and no longer necessarily referred to the woman's occupation.[5]

This thesis explores how three women, Mary Ward (1585-1645), Virginia Ferrar (1627-1688), and Mary Astell (1666-1731), who can be identified as choosing not to marry, and who thereby avoided handing direct control of their lives and property to husbands under the doctrine of *couverture*, pursued aims outside the social expectations for women. Historians have considered aspects of the lives of singlewomen in the early modern period mainly through statistical analysis; very occasionally the records of individuals, such as accounts and letters, provided enough information for what amounts to individual biographical studies. This study expands our understanding of how some women, who chose not to marry, achieved agency and remained single, by demonstrating how they created an identity and utilised those activities and objects which were available to them as women, things which were part of their material worlds, to exercise some degree of control and agency. The compound word 'singlewomen' has been chosen to describe these lifelong unmarried women of variable age. These women had lives which were quite distinct from the lives of 'widows' or 'maids.'

Social prejudice against lifelong singlewomen is reflected across the period in both popular and higher culture. A distinction in attitudes towards unmarried women is generally agreed to gain strength between Protestant and Catholic societies after the Reformation, because Catholic doctrine continued to value the concept of holy virginity.[6] Even that was not straightforward since, post Trent, it was clear that enclosed female religious must be strictly controlled by men. For Catholic women, as Olwen Hufton summarised it:

[5] Judith Spicksley, 'A Dynamic Model of Social Relations: Celibacy, Credit and the Identity of the 'Spinster' in Seventeenth-century England,' in Henry French and Jonathan Barry (eds), *Identity and Agency in England, 1500-1800* (Basingstoke, 2004), pp.106-146

[6] For the development of virginity as a gendered identity see: Sarah Salih, *Versions of Virginity in Late Medieval England* (Woodbridge, 2001)

> There was only one path to heaven and it demanded either sexual abstinence or a heterosexual, lifelong union in which the aim was the production of another generation of orthodox believers.[7]

For Protestant women, Luther's attack on clerical celibacy held sway and laid 'the foundations of a Protestant tradition in which the married state represented, at least in theory, the highest attainment for both men and women.'[8] This fundamental belief, about the need for men to control and direct women, was the product of a combination of Biblical reading and the continuing theories of ancient Greek medicine. Women who were free of male control were considered most likely to be unchaste and therefore to bring dishonour on their families; throughout the period, 'the overwhelming concern was to safeguard female chastity.'[9] When there was no suggestion, probably because of her age and class, that a woman was unchaste, the common attitude towards her was one of pity or contempt. These expectations and beliefs were taught, upheld, and enforced without question, by most women and men. This study concerns the significant minority of women who, for various reasons, challenged these gendered expectations, expectations which were reinforced through the words and images ascribed to singlewomen.[10] The power of that negative imagery and those words was countered by the self-identity and agency achieved by women themselves; how they achieved that forms the subject of this study.

Scholars have generally accepted that the first printed example in the English language of the popular condemnation of such women, the suggestion that they were destined to lead apes in Hell, is found in George Gascoigne's *A Hundreth Sundry Flowers bounde up in one small Poesie* (London,1573),[11] though Amy Froide states that its first appearance in the English language was in *The Book of Fortune* (c.1560).[12]

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[7] Olwen Hufton, *The Prospect before Her: A History of Women in Western Europe Volume One 1500-1800* (London, 1995), p.17
[8] Hufton, *The Prospect,* p.38
[9] Keith Thomas, *In Pursuit of Civility: Manners and Civilisation in Early Modern England* (London, 2018), p.47
[10] Judith Spicksley, 'Celibacy, Credit and the Identity of the 'Spinster' '
[11] Gwendolyn B. Needham, 'New Light on Maids Leading Apes in Hell', *The Journal of American Folklore,* 55:296, (April-June 1962), pp. 106-119
[12] Amy M.Froide, *Never Married: Singlewomen in Early Modern England* (Oxford, 2005), p.157

Illus. 1 Misericord from Bristol Cathedral c.1520

From Bristol Cathedral website.

As the carving on the misericord from Bristol Cathedral shown here makes clear, this trope was known and used in popular discourse and imagery before 1560, since the Cathedral dates this misericord to c.1520.[13] Gwendolyn Needham said 'the proverb more likely originated among the people,' but that would have been after the concept had been promoted through medieval sermons.[14] In Catholic doctrine, women who became Brides of Christ by entering enclosed orders were celebrated; the 'warning' to women who chose to remain unmarried and did not become nuns can therefore be assumed to be in circulation before Protestant ideas became widespread. English literary allusions to the proverb were plentiful well into the next century, often in the context of comedies, reinforcing the prevailing climate of opinion that this state was to be avoided if at all possible.[15] A search on EEBO for the phrase 'apes in Hell' shows one

[13] Bristol Cathedral website http://www.bristol-cathedral.co.uk/the-cathedral/search-the-collection594c.html?tag=furnishings&q=&page=4

[14] Gwendolyn Needham, 'New Light.'

[15] The best-known examples are from Shakespeare: see *The Taming of the Shrew*, Act 2, sc.i, lines.33-34 and *Much Ado About Nothing*, Act 2, sc.1, lines35-41. It is interesting to note that in his second

hundred and seven references in a variety of publications, including works by Aphra Behn and Margaret Duchess of Newcastle, revealing that many authors used the proverb, showing it was in common use, albeit in a light-hearted way. In the context of comedies, the phrase became not a stern warning but a piece of ridicule, which nevertheless would have helped to create a climate of thought emphasising the 'unpleasantness' of not marrying. It was not only in light literature and popular ballads that the point was pressed; conduct manuals, sermons and works about society also made clear that marriage was the only proper state for a woman in England. In John Donne's *Paradoxes and Problems* for example, he wrote that 'the name of virgin shall be exchanged for a farre more honourable name, A Wife.'[16]

Though the 'honourable name of Wife' or widow described most women in this period, in formal documents such as court records, the terms 'maid', if a lifecycle singlewoman and young enough to be married in due course, 'singlewoman', or 'spinster' acted as functional descriptions and did not carry the negative and scornful associations of the term 'Old Maid,' which was increasingly seen in popular literature, journalism and social commentaries as the period went on. Judith Spicksley states, 'by the late seventeenth century the negative stereotype of the Old Maid had been fully articulated.[17] Susan Lanser argues that, what was perceived as a need for growing numbers of British people to support economic and colonial expansion, helped fuel an increase in the hostility and nastiness of the attacks on 'the Old Maid' in the eighteenth century.[18] Whilst male authors like John Dunton describe them as 'rank …Proud, Prying, Conceited, Curious, Ridiculous Creatures,'[19] even women absorbed the unpleasant images and characteristics portrayed in both light and serious commentaries. Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, who was generally supportive of women, was influenced by the stereotype. In 1711, at a point in her life before her marriage,

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reference to the proverb, Shakespeare allows Beatrice to undermine the saying by suggesting that the Devil will keep the apes but send her up to heaven 'where the batchelors sit, and there we live as merry as the day is long.'

[16] John Donne*: Paradoxes and Problems* Helen Peters (ed.), (Oxford, 1980), p.58

[17] Spicksley, 'Celibacy, Credit and Spinster Identity', p.128

[18] Susan S.Lanser, 'Singular Politics: The Rise of the British Nation and the Production of the Old Maid', in Judith Bennett and Amy Froide (eds), *Singlewomen in the European Past, 1250-1800* (Philadelphia, 1999), pp.297-323

[19] John Dunton *The Challenge Sent by a Young Lady to Sir Thomas-and c. or, The Female War* (1697), pp.139-143, quoted in Spicksley, 'Celibacy, Credit and Spinster Identity', p.128

when considering the difficulties of finding a suitable husband, she wrote to a female friend in her typically lively way:

> I have a Mortal Aversion to be an Old Maid, and a decaid Oak before my Window, leavelesse, half rotten, and shaking its wither'd Top, puts me in Mind every morning of an Antiquated Virgin, Bald, with Rotten Teeth, and shaking of the Palsie.[20]

She also used the image of being condemned to 'lead Apes in Hell' in a light-hearted way. Montagu's picturesque revulsion at the idea of choosing to remain unmarried is a measure of the powerful effect of what Spicksley identifies as 'the use of linguistic suggestion, assisted by the expansion of the printing industry.'[21] As with the 'Leading Apes in Hell' gibe, many references to this sad and pitiable creature are found in plays; the 'Old Maid' seems to have been a favourite minor character for ridicule in Restoration comedies, and the term quickly entered popular and witty discourse. That this constant outpouring of negative imagery had an impact on those literate women in the middle ranks and above, who had access to capital, or other independent means, and who wished to retain control of their resources, is shown by the way Mary Astell, one of the three case studies here, took the term head-on in her first book, *A Serious Proposal to the Ladies* (1694). Identifying not as an Old Maid but as 'A Lover of Her Sex' she addresses

> the poor Lady [who] having past her prime in years…decays as fast as her Beauty quite terrified with the dreadful name of Old Maid, which yet none but Fools will reproach her with, nor any wise woman be afraid of. [22]

Astell's witty diatribes, which made her famous, do make clear that the pressure on women to marry, rather than remain independent, was very real. Astell's *Serious Proposal* was for an 'academy' for young women who were able to pay £500 to enter;

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[20] *Complete Letters of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu Vol.1 1708-1720,* (ed.), Robert Halsband (Oxford, 1965), p.112 (Letter to Philippa Mundy 12 December 1711)
[21] Spicksley, 'Celibacy, Credit and Spinster Identity', p.130
[22] Mary Astell, *A Serious Proposal to the Ladies, for the Advancement of their True and Greatest Interest by a Lover of Her Sex* (London,1694) EEBO https://www.proquest.com/books/serious-proposal-ladies-advancement-their-true/docview/2240880862/se-2.p.160

they would learn serious subjects such as philosophy, and Church of England teaching, as well as conventional female skills, such as needlework. Through their greater understanding they would avoid marrying unsuitable men if they chose to leave and get married. The importance of learning for women emerges in this study as a common aspiration for the three women in the individual case-studies. Recognising the significant number of unmarried women in the population in the second half of the seventeenth century, some men began to address 'the problem' in a more sympathetic, if patronising, way.

The proposal published in 1671 by Edward Chamberlayne for *An Academy or Colledge* for young ladies envisaged it a refuge also 'for sober, pious, elder virgins and widows' who could be employed as teachers and assistants in the Academy, acknowledging that some women might choose not to marry.[23] Chamberlayne's suggestion was followed up in 1675 by Clement Barksdale, another Church of England clergyman, who published *A Letter Touching a Colledge of Maids, or a Virgin Society,*[24] but his College was for young women who would later marry, without an option for older women. In 1698 the Rev. Sir George Wheler published *A Protestant Monastery*, which included a chapter on convents for women; he expected that those who were still marriageable would leave when they had found a suitable husband. The negative perception of older unmarried women is clear when he speaks of the benefit such institutions would offer for families 'burdened with daughters, their parents cannot, either for want of beauty, [or] money, dispose of in marriage…'[25] He was plainly sympathetic to the idea of some education for females, and, as rector of Houghton-le-Spring in County Durham, he founded and endowed a charity school for girls.[26] As Astell had discovered earlier, the suggestion of a 'religious retreat' for women, when made by a woman,

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[23]Chamberlayne, Edward, *An Academy Or Colledge, Wherein Young Ladies and Gentlewomen may at a very Moderate Expence be Duly Instructed in the True Protestant Religion, and in all Vertuous Qualities that may Adorn that Sex also be Carefully Preserved and Secured Till the Day of their Marriage (*London, 1671.) EEBO https://www.proquest.com/books/academy-colledge-wherein-young-ladies-gentlewomen/docview/2240898063/se-2;Reavley Gair, 'Chamberlayne,Edward (1616-1703)' ODNB: https://doi-org.uea.idm.oclc.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/5058

[24] Barksdale, Clement, *A Letter Touching a Colledge of Maids, Or, A Virgin-Society Written Aug. 12, 1675* (London, 1675) EEBO: https://www.proquest.com/books/letter-touching-colledge-maids-virgin-society/docview/2240861120/se-2.;John Coffey, 'Barksdale, Clement (1609-1687)' ODNB: https://doi-org.uea.idm.oclc.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/1425

[25] Quoted in Amy Froide, *Never Married: Singlewomen in Early Modern England* (Oxford, 2005) p.172

[26] N.G.Wilson, 'Wheler, Sir George (1651-1742)' ODNB: https://doi-org.uea.idm.oclc.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/29193

attracted hostility, being seen as 'a Popish nunnery'; presumably, the fact that Wheler was a respected male author and member of the Church of England clergy was the reason *his* suggestion was not treated with hostility.

The best known of these commentaries on singlewomen, which was published after Chamberlyne's and Barksdale's pieces, was by another clergyman, Richard Allestree: *The Ladies Calling* (1677), a companion piece to *The Gentlemans Calling.*[27] He identified that 'An Old Maid' was 'now thought such a Curse, as no Poetic fury can exceed, look'd on as the most calamitous Creature in Nature.' Allestree acknowledged that this 'vulgar contemt under which that state lies' might be a 'causeless Reproach' if the women chose not to be married because of a desire for 'the strictest Virtue and Piety' and behaved 'with Gravity and Reservedness.' So whilst he was prepared to acknowledge that they were the target of 'vulgar contemt,' his explanation was that they brought this on themselves by unseemly behaviour, in a characteristic example of what is now known as victim blaming. Against this tide of negative imagery and religious condemnation, the lighthearted way in which some ballads praised the single life would not have provided a strong counter-argument.[28] Occasional poems by women like Katherine Phillips and Jane Barker, again praising the freedom enjoyed by girls and women who did not marry, would have carried little weight.[29] Though the ballads would have reached a wide audience of non-elite women, Phillips' and Barker's works were available only to a relatively small audience. The universal expectation that marriage was the best and most desirable of lives for women, and that those poor souls who had been denied this opportunity for happiness were pitiable creatures, almost denied humanity, continued beyond the eighteenth century.

For a working-class woman who did not have any financial resources, the situation was different, but the expectation of becoming a wife was just as strong. Since writing was a rare skill for any women in this class, there is an almost complete absence of any

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[27]Allestree, Richard, 1619-1681, *The Ladies Calling in Two Parts / by the Author of the Whole Duty of Man, &c*. (Oxford, 1675) pp.145-146. https://www.proquest.com/books/ladies-calling-two-parts-author-whole-duty-man-c/docview/2240890766/se-2.; John Spurr, 'Allestree, Richard (1621/2-1681)' ODNB: https://doi-org.uea.idm.oclc.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/395 (last accessed 10/05/2023)

[28] See for example '*A Fairing for Maids'* (1639), and *Tobias' Observations* (1687) both quoted in Christine Peters, 'Single Women in Early Modern England: attitudes and expectations', *Continuity and Change,* 12:3 (1997), p.340

[29] See Kathryn R.King,'Barker, Jane (c.1652-1732)'ODNB: https://doi-org.uea.idm.oclc.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/37153 (last accessed 24/10/2019)

evidence to tell us about the experiences and individual circumstances of any working-class women who were lifelong singlewomen. Olwen Hufton named 'spinster clustering' as a strategy adopted by poorer women with some skills in spinning and lacemaking, to describe small groups of unmarried women who lived together; but bare numbers tell us little.[30] However, some singlewomen, below the middling sort, who had enough possessions to warrant the making of a will, give us a brief insight into their lives, so these are considered in the first chapter of this study. The concern of the local authorities to ensure 'good order,' and to guard against the possible presence of women selling sex in their towns, lead to draconian orders for the control of 'masterless' young women.[31] Some accounts of these women appear in court records, the wording of which reflects the negative attitudes of the men in positions of authority; so for these women it is simply not possible to say whether they were making the best of a life they had not wanted, or making a positive choice to live as singlewomen. These limitations are acknowledged; nevertheless, using the information from probate documents, letters, and some associated material, this study broadens our understanding of how some women in this period achieved independence and agency, despite the social and economic pressures outlined above, without handing control of their lives and property to a husband.

Even when historians of the early modern period began in the 1960s to focus on women's lives, the significant minority of women who never married remained a very small part of their work. Whilst the varied experiences of single women were considered briefly by cultural historians Olwen Hufton and Merry Wiesner-Hanks, the specialist study of singlewomen received little attention.[32] As Karin Wulf pointed out:

> To conflate women and wives was to assume subordinance and dependence; to distinguish between the two…was to understand the legal and cultural constructions that bound all wives but not all

[30] Olwen Hufton, 'Women Without Men: Widows and Spinsters in Britain and France in the Eighteenth Century', *Journal of Family History,*9:4 (1984), pp.355-376; Hufton, *The Prospect,* pp.253-254; see also Pamela Sharpe, 'Literally Spinsters: A New Interpretation of Local Economy and Demography in Colyton in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries', *Economic History Review,* 44:1 (1991), pp.46-65
[31] Paul Griffiths, 'Masterless Young People in Norwich, 1560-1645' in Paul Griffiths, Adam Fox and Steve Hindle (eds), *The Experience of Authority in Early Modern England* (Basingstoke, 1996) pp.146-186
[32] See Hufton, *The Prospect,* pp. 250-256; Merry E Wiesner-Hanks, *Women and Gender in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge, 2008), pp.81-83

> women…unmarried women were free from some inequalities that historians have assumed applied to all women.[33]

There was already a shift in the work of scholars to consider singlewomen as a separate category for study when Wulf wrote in 2000. In a 1997 article, Christine Peters explored the circumstances of unmarried women, arguing that 'the dominance of the idea of marriage…has led historians to neglect the significance of celibacy in this period.'[34] Using evidence from wills, she argued that it was sometimes accepted that a never-married woman could be the head of a household, but that generally a single woman needed 'a raft of economic security, whether the proceed of years in service or a portion of the family inheritance.'[35] The short extracts from wills give strength to this assertion; Peters also used quantitative methods to analyse the inheritance patterns for landholding, pointing out the different regional practices involved.

Amy Louise Erickson produced a valuable book on the relationship of property law to women in early modern England, including some sections on what she called 'lone women.' In her work, based largely on probate records, she acknowledged that little attention had been paid by historians to lifelong singlewomen.[36] In her chapter entitled 'Lone women's wills' Erikson combined discussion of both widows and singlewomen, and, in common with many who use probate records, she used quantitative analysis as well as giving some brief accounts of individual testators.[37] A varied collection of essays edited by Nancy Wright, Margaret Ferguson and A.Buck in 2004, failed to offer any useful examination of never married women in the period.[38] At the same time another collection, edited by Laurel Amtower and Dorothy Kehler in 2003, offered more promise, but, like the previous collection, slanted towards literary analysis, and in line with the title, *The Single Woman in Medieval and Early Modern England: Her Life and Representation,* many contributions were based on medieval

[33] Karin Wulf, *Not All Wives: Women of Colonial Philadelphia* (Pennsylvania, 2000), pp. 1-2
[34] Christine Peters, 'Single women in early modern England: attitudes and expectations', *Continuity and Change,* 12:3 (1997), pp. 325-345
[35] Christine Peters, 'Single women', p.332
[36] Amy Louise Erikson, *Women and Property in Early Modern England* (London, 1993), pp.191-193
[37] Amy Erikson, *Women and Property,* pp.204-222
[38] Nancy E.Wright, Margaret W.Ferguson and A.Buck (eds), *Women, Property, and the Letters of the Law in Early Modern England* (Toronto, 2004)

subjects. One article stood out: an early essay by Judith Spicksley.[39] This significant contribution to the study of never-married women and their involvement with credit and moneylending will be considered in detail later in this section.

Judith Bennett and Amy Froide published a collection of essays in 1999, establishing the compound noun adopted here, acknowledging that 'singlewomen–both those who would eventually marry and those who would not–have been mostly ignored in European history.'[40] In that collection Bennett and Froide chose a wide range of scholars, whose expertise ranged across Europe and whose work ranged from the medieval period to the end of the eighteenth century. These studies are of a wide variety of women, varying in focus from Merry Wiesner's piece on employment and independence for singlewomen in Germany over three and a half centuries,[41] through discussions of sexuality,[42] to Susan Lanser's article on the development of the stereotype of the Old Maid mentioned above. Maryanne Kowaleski explored the use of demography by historians, using statistical analyses spanning centuries and cultures. The skills she discusses are part of the quantitative approach which forms an important part of work on singlewomen.[43]

Bridget Hill's *Women Alone: Spinsters in England, 1660-1850* (2001) stands almost alone as a survey of secondary literature, with a chapter on poor and working singlewomen. Using the work of economic historians to set out the patterns of work and life for singlewomen in agriculture, manufacturing, and business, she addressed poor spinsters, crime, and prostitution in other chapters. Hill's concern was 'with the degree of surveillance of single women by the authorities and the threat they were seen as presenting to social order.'[44] Having considered available population studies throughout the period, she concluded that 'the likely number of spinsters in Britain

[39] Judith Spicksley, 'To Be or Not To Be Married: Single Women, Money-lending, and the Question of Choice in Late Tudor and Stuart England' in Laurel Amtower and Dorothea Kehler (eds), *The Single Woman in Medieval and Early Modern England: Her Life and Representation* (Arizona, 2003), pp.66-96
[40] Judith M.Bennett and Amy M.Froide, *Singlewomen in the European Past, 1250-1800* (Philadelphia, 1999), p.3
[41] Merry E. Wiesner, 'Having Her Own Smoke: Employment and Independence for Singlewomen in Germany, 1400-1750' in Bennett and Froide (eds), *Singlewomen,* pp.192-216
[42] Ruth Mazo Karras, 'Sex and the Singlewoman' in Bennett and Froide, *Singlewomen,* pp.127-145
[43] Maryanne Kowleski, 'Singlewomen in Medieval and Early Modern Europe: The Demographic Perspective' in Bennett and Froide, *Singlewomen,* pp.38-81
[44] Bridget Hill, *Women alone: Spinsters in England 1660-1850* (London, 2001), p.15

reached a high point of about 16-18% in the 1680s.'[45] She considered 'ways of escape' for single women, identifying economic difficulties and hostile social perceptions as their main problems,[46] but discussed the importance of female friendship circles, in sustaining and supporting women.[47] Hill's examples of female friendship, drawn from correspondence and journals, are for elite and genteel women. The wills I examine in my second chapter complement this work by focusing on female friendship and support at lower social levels. Overall, Hill concluded that 'what characterises many single women in this period is not merely their endurance as victims in what was for many a dreary monotonous life but the way they were constantly probing the limits of what was permitted to them as single women.'[48] This view of the women as 'victims in what was for many a dreary monotonous life' is challenged by the findings in my thesis.

Historians' view of singlewomen, as people whose lives were limited and unfulfilled because they lived outside the socially approved role of 'wives,' was already being challenged when Hill was writing. Scholars were finding clear evidence that although singlewomen were discriminated against, and that limits were placed on what they could do, both by social pressure and by local laws and regulations, which particularly targeted middling and poorer women, a picture was emerging, through the work of scholars like Amy Froide, that numbers of singlewomen were living lives with a degree of freedom and success.[49]

Froide's book *Never Married: Singlewomen in Early Modern England* (2005) is a detailed study of women, identified through her extensive research in municipal and ecclesiastical archives in Southampton, Bristol, Oxford, and York, as well as literary works, diaries and letters. She explored the family, economic and civic lives of the women in these urban areas, giving many short descriptions of individual women and their varied circumstances, and creating a clear impression of a significant minority of women who had received little attention in the past; she mixed quantitative analysis

[45] Hill, *Women Alone,* p.11; see also Edward Anthony Wrigley and Roger S.Schofield *The Population History of England 1541-1871* (Cambridge, 1989), Chapters 9-10
[46] Hill, *Women Alone,* pp. 126-142
[47] Hill, *Women Alone,* pp.161-171
[48] Hill, *Women Alone,* p. 181
[49] Amy M.Froide, *Never Married: Singlewomen in Early Modern England* (Oxford, 2005)

with descriptions from contemporary documents. Froide does not suggest that all these women chose to remain unmarried, but she does give evidence of the positive ways in which those from the middling sort and more elite women frequently managed to make satisfactory lives for themselves 'as property holders, as private and public creditors, as householders, as tax- and ratepayers, and as philanthropists.'[50]

In common with other historians of this period, Froide did not focus on how individual women used and manipulated their material circumstances and the everyday realities of their environments, which is the approach to understanding their lives at the centre of this thesis. Her work on women's moneylending is helpful in that context, and this area of study is very much to the forefront of the work of Judith Spicksley, who has done much quantitative work on singlewomen. As an economic and social historian Spicksley has worked on singlewomen's involvement in business, money lending and most recently landowning. Drawing on inheritance provisions and probate repositories, her authoritative work highlights finances, using quantitative analysis of will registers, and gives brief extracts from wills to flesh out the figures. Spicksley's earlier work considered the evolving definition of the word 'spinster,' from an occupational description to a legal term for women who had not married. In a thorough survey of probate and court records, social commentaries and conduct books, she discussed the way in which singlewomen's ability to negotiate social categories within local communities, together with their increasing activities as moneylenders, gave them social credit and a sense of identity and agency in this period.[51] Focusing particularly on the money-lending activities of singlewomen,[52] she then broadened out her study of never married business women with a book on the household accounts of Joyce Jeffreys, in which she not only detailed the gentlewoman's moneylending and financial activities but gave a picture of her household and consumption patterns.[53] Jeffrey's accounts, her will and other relevant documents are reproduced; this is the only book-length study to date of an early

[50] Amy Froide, *Never Married* p.117
[51] Judith Spicksley, 'Celibacy, Credit and the Identity of the 'Spinster' ' in French and Barry (eds*), Identity and Agency in England,* pp. 106-146
[52] Judith Spicksley ' "Fly with a duck in thy mouth": single women as sources of credit in seventeenth-century England', *Social History,* 32:2 (May 2007), pp.187-207
[53] *The Business and Household Accounts of Joyce Jeffreys, Spinster of Hereford,* 1638-1648 (ed.), Judith Spicksley (Oxford, 2012)

modern spinster's life. Spicksley has focused her attention on probate records, to give quantitative surveys of never-married women's lending activities,[54] and their land-owning, reinforcing our knowledge of about previously recognised patterns of economic activity.[55] Pamela Sharpe's two monographs on Hester Pinney (1658-1740), the successful businesswoman and investor, give an individual and detailed case study of the way a determined and resourceful unmarried woman avoided the 'victim' status associated with singlewomen in this period.[56]

As long ago as 1998 Patricia Crawford and Sara Mendelson wrote that:

> Within the framework of a female culture, several elements provided a basis for women's intimate relationship to the world of material goods. Women of every social and matrimonial status assumed a kind of 'psychological' or 'moral' proprietorship of goods and possessions through their knowledge, labour, and customary use.[57]

As Amanda Capern summarised this, it was 'a culture of female property ownership that was tactile and involved activities like sewing and storing fabrics and using gifts as a form of female communication and exchange.'[58] This thesis explores the material culture of the women here to demonstrate how they created identities and developed strategies in their lives. Historians have recognised the importance of seeing women's aims and aspirations, for example, in their writing. This study focuses on the material aspects of the subjects' activities in a new way, to create insight into how they managed their lives.

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[54] Judith Spicksley, 'Never-married women and credit in early modern England', in *Women and credit in pre-industrial Europe* (Brepols online 2018), pp. 227-252 https://doi.org/10.1484/m.eer-eb.5.115755

[55] Judith Spicksley, 'Spinsters with Land in Early Modern England' in Amanda L.Capern, Briony Mcdonagh and Jennifer Aston (eds),*Women and the Land, 1500-1900* (Woodbridge, 2019), pp.51-76

[56] Pamela Sharpe, 'Dealing with Love: The Ambiguous Independence of the Single Woman in Early Modern England', *Gender & History,* 11:2 (July 1999), pp.209-232; Pamela Sharpe, 'A Woman's Worth: A Case Study of Capital Accumulation in Early Modern England', *Parergon,* 19:1 (January 2002), pp.173-184

[57] Pamela Crawford and Sara Mendelson, *Women in Early Modern England 1550-1720* (Oxford, 1998), p.222

[58] Amanda L.Capern, 'The Landed Woman in Early Modern England', *Parergon,* 19:1 (January, 2002) p.209

Attention by social historians to singlewomen has fallen back in the last two decades, as a broader interest in gender studies has developed. In 2012 David Hussey and Margaret Ponsonby's book *The Single Homemaker and Material Culture in the Long Eighteenth Century* reflected the aspirations of scholars not to focus too narrowly on one part of the population, and of the growing interest in material culture. Their study is of single men and women of the middling sort, identified as a complex and divergent social mix, but who largely expressed shared attitudes towards status and patterns of consumption, display and material possession.[59]

Whilst pointing out the distinction in social attitudes towards bachelors and widowers on the one hand, and to 'old maids' on the other, they often run them together in their thematic chapters, also merging the experiences of widows and lifelong singlewomen. They use quantitative methods to determine patterns of ownership and frequency of household goods, as well as extracts from probate records to give glimpses of individual ownership. This method of mixing quantitative methods with small scale details is common in the studies discussed above. In this thesis, the approach adopted offers answers to the question of how some women achieved degrees of freedom and agency in their lives as singlewomen.

In their introduction to the collection of papers *Writing Material Culture and History,* the editors Anne Gerritsen and Giorgio Riello identify the development of material culture history as a result of the shift towards 'what has come to be known as 'history from below' in which agency is given to the lives of common people.'[60] This area of scholarship has given rise to 'the growing interest in the everyday practices that shaped past lives.'[61] Although this study concerns the material worlds of singlewomen, it is not a study of material culture, as presented in Gerritsen and Riello's collection. In those essays, the focus is on objects; the lives of people using them become ancillary to the central enquiry. The wide-ranging insights gained, often through quantitative

[59] David Hussey and Margaret Ponsonby, *The Single Homemaker and Material Culture in the Long Eighteenth Century* (Farnham, 2012), p.2

[60] Anne Gerritsen and Giorgio Riello (eds), *Writing Material Culture History* (London, 2015), p.4. This collection of essays from 2015 shows the broad range of scholarship engaged in material culture history, with contributions dealing with objects as diverse as the London Foundling Hospital Tokens, to a basket woven by a Chumash woman from California; see also Karen Harvey (ed.), *History and Material Culture: A Student's Guide to Approaching Alternative Sources* (Abingdon, 2009)

[61] Gerritsen and Riello, *Writing Material Culture* p.4

analysis, about trade, manufacture, lines of communication and the belief systems embodied in objects by those scholars of material culture certainly enrich our understanding of the past; but as Serena Dyer notes in her 'State of the Field' article '[m]aterial culture has emerged as a sometimes slippery term within historical studies, which is often applied to anything involving objects. Crucially, material culture centres on objects and their meaning.'[62] The 'slippery term' has given rise to some interesting but potentially misleading scholarship. Lyndal Roper had apparently adopted 'the material turn' in her recent book on Martin Luther.[63] It was 'lavishly illustrated' and 'each chapter begins or ends with a piece of art or material culture.'[64] In the event Roper uses the illustrations, not to consider Luther's relationship with his material world, but to explore his ideas and emotions through texts by or about him; so her apparent adoption of the 'material turn' was a good example of what Dyer calls 'a slippery term.' A recent collection of essays brought together by Catherine Richardson, a literary scholar, Tara Hamling, an art historian, and David Gaimster, an archaeologist and museum director, demonstrates just how broad an area the work in material culture has become.[65] They state that their 'view of materiality goes far beyond focussed object studies…and aspires to ask suggestive questions about the whole material world as a context for lived experience in the early modern period.'[66] My thesis focuses on the 'lived experience' of several women who never married. By using case studies of three women whose lives spanned the seventeenth century it offers a new approach, suggesting ways in which they developed identity and agency as singlewomen, which allowed them to experience levels of freedom which they could not have enjoyed had they married. My approach was influenced by the work of scholars who study different forms of material culture and its relationship to the lives of individuals.

Historians with specialist skills in fabrics and clothing, such as Sarah Bendall and Susan North, have focused on surviving artifacts and representations in paintings and texts,

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[62] Serena Dyer, 'State of the Field: Material Culture', *History,* 106:370 (2021), pp.289-292
[63] Lyndal Roper, *Living I was Your Plague: Martin Luther's World and Legacy* (Princeton and Oxford, 2021)
[64] Marietta Kosma, 'Review', *International Journal of Philosophy and Theology,* 84:1 (2023) pp.95-97
[65] Catherine Richardson, Tara Hamling and David Gaimster (eds), *The Routledge Handbook of Material Culture in Early Modern Europe* (Abingdon, 2017); see also Melissa Calaresu, 'The Material Worlds of Food in Early Modern Europe', *Journal of Early Modern History,* 24 (2020), pp.1-16
[66] Richardson, Hamling and Gaimster, *Material Culture in Early Modern Europe* p.4

to create an understanding of how people from all classes experienced their clothing, both as a physical reality together with the social implications for how they were perceived.[67] Others have examined the book trade, book ownership, printing and writing from a material perspective.[68] Our understanding of the physical everyday experiences of people has been expanded by the work of Emily Cockayne.[69] Julia Laite has shown that drawing details from textual records can give a clear picture of subjects' material circumstances and their lived experiences.[70] Gemma Watson describes her account of the life of the Tudor herald Roger Machado, as a microhistory using interdisciplinary research as a 'unique methodological approach', combining as it does both archaeological and documentary evidence.[71] She defines material culture as 'the material manifestation of culture,' and considers 'the relationship between human agent and object …..to be reciprocal.'[72] Perhaps the single form of the noun 'culture' is unhelpful here, since in any society there will be subcultures within a predominant overarching culture, but the relevant point for this thesis is that the lives and material worlds of these singlewomen are being explored not as 'biography,' but as a way of understanding the actions and strategies they utilised in surviving and pursuing their aims, living lives outside marriage.

The scholar whose approach is perhaps nearest to the one adopted in this study is Catherine Richardson, who begins by observing that the quantitative analysis adopted by some historians of material culture demonstrates the development of consumption practices over time, but 'what we do not get close to is material experience….We cannot understand individuals' interaction with their material environment, and it is

[67] Sarah A. Bendall, *Shaping Femininity: Foundation Garments, the Body and Women in Early Modern England* (London, 2022); Susan North, *Sweet and Clean?: Bodies and Clothes in Early Modern England* (Oxford, 2020); see also Danae Tankard, *Clothing in 17th Century Provincial England* (London, 2020); Ulinka Rublack, *Dressing Up: Cultural Identity in Renaissance Europe* (Oxford, 2010)

[68] Helen Smith, *'Grossly Material Things': Women and Book Production in Early Modern England* (Oxford, 2012); Patricia Pender and Rosalind Smith (eds), *Material Cultures of Early Modern Women's Writing* (Basingstoke, 2014)

[69] Emily Cockayne, *Hubbub: Filth, Noise & Stench in England 1600-1770* (London, 2007); Emily Cockayne, *Cheek by Jowl: A History of Neighbours* (London, 2012)

[70] Julia Laite, *The Disappearance of Lydia Harvey: A True Story of Sex, Crime and the Meaning of Justice* (London, 2021); see also Hallie Rubenhold, *The Five: The Untold Lives of the Women Killed by Jack the Ripper* (London, 2019)

[71] Gemma L.Watson, 'Roger Machado: A life in Objects', in Robert F.W.Smith and Gemma Watson (eds), *Writing the Lives of People and Things, AD 500-1700:A Multi-disciplinary Future for Biography* (Farnham, 2016), pp.89-113

[72] Watson, 'Roger Machado', p.93

into this gap that literary analysis can step.'[73] This thesis seeks not simply to understand individuals' interaction with their material environments, but in this new intervention, to show also how they used and manipulated those elements available to them to advance their aims.

Methodology

The methodology devised here has a relationship to the "pragmatist" approach to historical research, by focussing on the practices and negotiations of singlewomen; but it introduces a new development by exploring the vital part played by an individual's material circumstances and lived experiences. These are identified by close textual reading, taken together with knowledge of the individual's material environment. Some significant activities are chosen, often with a verifiable start and end point, raising questions about the nature of the subject's experiences and choices, questions which can then be answered with reasonable assumptions, and answers to some of these questions permit an assessment of possibilities put forward by other historians or biographers. This thematic approach gives us new insights into the individual's strategies and may even contradict their own accounts. At the same time, it allows us to provide a fresh interpretation of the agency and identity of individuals whose partial invisibility in the historical record reflected a lack of attention from their contemporaries.

The seventeenth century, in common with every other period, is one of both continuity and change, but the ongoing ruptures in religion, together with the social upheaval of politics in the mid-century and developments in economic, scientific, and philosophical beliefs and practices, provide a fruitful period for examining how women who stood outside the socially approved norm lived in a period which was one of change for lifelong singlewomen in particular.[74] To broaden out this research and give a wider context of women from different backgrounds for this thesis, first a database was created of about 300 singlewomen's wills from the *Index of Wills Proved in the*

[73] Catherine Richardson, 'Written Texts and the Performance of Materiality', in Gerritsen and Riello, *Writing Material Culture,* pp.43-58; see also Catherine Richardson, *Domestic life and domestic tragedy in early modern England: The material life of the household* (Manchester, 2006)
[74] Froide, *Never Married* p.7

Consistory Court of Norwich, 1604 to 1686.[75] [Appendix 1] From this database ten women from each decade were selected on a random basis and their wills were transcribed from microfilm images at the Norfolk Records Office; in a very few cases probate inventories were available. The wills provided evidence of their circumstances at the time of their deaths. Several common themes emerged: their material possessions, how they had lived; the importance for them of controlling the events around their burials; who they wished to benefit from their deaths; and the desire to exercise control over beneficiaries in the future. It also emerged that several of them were successful as higher-ranking servants. These women are the subject of the first chapter.

Following on from this, three women, who chose to remain unmarried and whose lives spanned the whole of the seventeenth and a little of the eighteenth century, were identified as suitable for case-studies. These women attracted attention for their activities during their lifetimes so were not typical singlewomen, but each provided plenty of material for the new intervention developed by this thesis. The three were chosen because no historian to date has studied them with the approach used here. For each of these case studies the start point was to create very full timelines including a great deal of detail from documentary evidence from archival sources, together with relevant additional contemporary information. Important aspects of the subjects lives and activities were then identified; this is central to this new methodology. Simplified timelines are included at Appendices 2, 3 and 4, allowing an overview of the women's lives, and demonstrating the distinction between a general biographical study, and the thematic approach developed in this thesis.

The first subject was the Catholic recusant Mary Ward, who was born in Yorkshire in 1585 to a gentry family. She wished to create an unenclosed order of women, modelled on the Jesuits, and spent most of her adult life travelling extensively on the European mainland between communities of her women followers, returning to Yorkshire towards the end of her life, where she died in 1645. Her letters and many other documents, in six languages from archives in ten different European countries, were collected and transcribed by a team of scholars headed by Ursula Dirmeier and

[75] *Index of Wills Proved in the Consistory Court of Norwich, 1604-1686* (Norfolk Record Society, 1958)

published in a four-volume edition in Germany in 2007.[76] The English language letters of Ward and her colleagues in Dirmeier's collection were studied, as they provided a reliable and accessible source of material which spanned the first part of the period and demonstrated Ward's transnational activities. Some translations of Ward documents were commissioned, to make better use of Dirmeier's glosses.[77]

Virginia Ferrar, the daughter of John Ferrar and his wife Bathsheba (nee Owen), was born in 1627 in the religious community of Little Gidding in Huntingdonshire, founded by John's brother Nicholas and their mother, Mary Woodnoth Ferrar. Nicholas and John had both been heavily involved previously with the Virginia Company; the regime at Little Gidding included education for both girls and boys. Virginia and other members of her family left a large collection of letters, which are held at Magdalene College, Cambridge and have been digitised by Adam Matthew Digital, as *The Ferrar Papers,* part of the Virginia Company Archives.[78] Transcripts were made of letters identified as significant for this work. There are no full studies of Virginia Ferrar to date, though her work as a sericulturist has attracted some scholarly attention. She and her father corresponded widely with colonists in Virginia. She never travelled far in England, and though she moved with her father to Europe for the first few years of the Wars of the Three Kingdoms, there is no information about their time on the Continent. Her letters reveal a lively interest in the colony of Virginia; this correspondence abated after her father's death in 1657. Although she did not travel to Virginia, her vision and interest stretched beyond the parochial world of Little Gidding. Her extensive correspondence continued up to her death in 1688 and gives us an insight into the material world of a modestly well-off unmarried gentlewoman. The later years of her life cover the period up to the emergence of the final woman in the case studies, Mary Astell, a singlewoman with ambitions as a writer.

Born in Newcastle in 1666, Astell's ambitions took her to London, where she pursued life as an author of High Anglican and Tory values and was supported by a small circle

[76] Ursula Dirmeier (ed.), *Mary Ward und ihre Grundung: Die Quellentexte bis 1645* 4 vols. (Munster, 2007).
[77] Included in this thesis: Dirmeier *Mary Ward* Vol.II Doc.633 Translated by George Oppitz-Trotman; Vol.III Doc. 1425, translation.
[78] Magdalene College, Cambridge: *The Ferrar Papers*, accessed through Adam Matthews Digital during the period of lockdown in 2020.

of elite singlewomen. Denied access to traditional seats of learning, she achieved success as a political and philosophical writer through her private studies; her acute intellect is shown in the way she used her books, and her practical methods are examined in this thesis. Never actually travelling beyond the southeast of England after her move from Newcastle, she engaged in contemporary philosophical and scientific ideas and studied the new scientific theories about matter and the origins of life. Although she stuck firmly to a belief in hierarchical order, she became a kind of subversive by assisting the Jacobite cause as a go-between for the Duchess of Ormonde and her husband who was exiled in Europe. Very little of Astell's correspondence seems to have survived or was available for this research. The largest collection of her letters was accessed and transcribed by Ruth Perry from the private collections of the Duke of Beaufort and G.H.H.Wheler.[79]

These three women, whose lives spanned the entire period of my research, had much in common. They were literate and their correspondence, together with some other documents, provides much of the evidence considered here. The timelines created allowed key elements or activities for each of them to be identified, which in turn gave rise to questions about how these women operated and how they responded, in particular circumstances. Relatively reliable facts about them were the starting and concluding points, but this thesis took a new direction by asking questions, not asked before about their activities, beyond those basic facts, and proposing reasonable assumptions to answer those questions. Where they were available, objects with which the women were associated were examined, such as the marginalia in the newly discovered books belonging to Mary Astell, and the gospel harmony made by Virginia Ferrar. Where no material objects have survived, this thesis recreates what could be assumed of their activities from details given, examples of which include Mary Ward's travelling, and Ferrar's sericulture experiments. Though few objects which had been in their possession remain it was possible from surrounding evidence to draw conclusions about their lived experiences, and reasonable assumptions are made about the women's use of material elements and practices, suggesting how they achieved varying degrees of control. A coherent narrative emerged, filling gaps in previously

[79] Ruth Perry, *The Celebrated Mary Astell: An Early English Feminist* (Chicago, 1986), Appendix C. Mary Astell's Letters, 1693-1730, pp.355-399

unconsidered aspects of their lives. This approach, locating individuals in their environments, sometimes drawing on wider sources, and identifying what they were actually doing with the materials and activities available to them as women, is a new way of understanding how they lived and worked. It moves us towards an appreciation of the diversity in the lives of singlewomen in the early modern period, as well as identifying some common elements. As Nadine Akkerman says: 'Women's records are too scant and patchy….to be easily mined for statistics. A series of case studies can nevertheless reveal trends, especially when ordered chronologically.'[80] Although Akkerman advocates a chronological approach this thesis adopts a thematic method to achieve something other than a general biography.

With the exception of a small amount of autobiography by Ward, none of the women's writing considered here is self-writing of the kind found in confessional accounts or journals. Scholars of those genres consider the extent to which an individual was consciously creating or emphasising a particular identity for potential readers, and how the writer understood their position in society.[81] As James Daybell says: 'writers of such sources as diaries and memoirs…generally conform to strict religious interpretive models.'[82] Of course, in writing their letters, these three women would have been aware of the impressions their words were creating in the recipient, but the contents of Ward's and Ferrar's letters were often basic communications with instructions or requests, and therefore not specifically self-aware or concerned with the writer's feelings and emotions in the way that much self-writing is. Astell's letters to the elite women in her circle are written with conventional deference but are read here with the purpose of determining her actions and material circumstances. In all three case studies, where appropriate, other contemporary sources are used to create a full picture of the way these women negotiated their lives in the circumstances and environments in which they lived, giving us a new understanding of how they built lives which were free of a husband's control.

[80] Nadine Akkerman, *Invisible Agents: Women and Espionage in Seventeenth-Century Britain* (Oxford, 2018), p.25
[81] Henry French and Jonathan Barry (eds), *Identity and Agency in England, 1500-1800* (Basingstoke, 2004), pp.1-37.
[82] James Daybell (ed.), *Early Modern Women's Letter Writing, 1450-1700* (Basingstoke, 2001), p.4; see also James Daybell and Andrew Gordon (eds), *Cultures of Correspondence in Early Modern Britain* (Philadelphia, 2016)

Chapter 2 “Being sicke in body but perfect in minde….” The wills of Singlewomen.

In July 1666 the brief nuncupative will of Anne Beckett, a singlewoman of Norwich, was witnessed by one man and two women each of whom signed with a cross. She gave ‘all that I have’ to Jane Hawes, the wife of John Hawes, a butcher ‘to provide a Coffin for me.’ In a vivid glimpse of a small but significant episode in the life of a singlewoman, the witnesses state that she ‘did cast her Keys out of a window to her and bid her take the Keys of what she had for all she had was hers after her Death or words to that effect.’[1] This small document allows us to conclude that Beckett was unwell, knew she was dying, and was unable to invite her witnesses into her home. In 1666 Norwich was experiencing a severe attack of bubonic plague and it may well be that Beckett was a victim of the disease.[2] It also shows that Beckett was of relatively modest means, without family support at this time and anxious to have a dignified burial. She was the unmarried daughter of Nicholas Beckett and was thirty-two years old when she died. Her father was a Norwich barber who died in 1653, leaving an estate of £100 to support his widow, as well as the tools of his trade. This was to be divided between Anne and her married sister Elizabeth Phips in the event of his widow’s death or remarriage.[3]

The limitation of wills as an historical source is summarised by Nigel Goose and Nesta Evans because ‘they survive for only a proportion of the early modern population and this survival is strongly biased by age, social class and gender,’[4] but the large number of wills surviving from the early modern period in some county archives does provide a rich source for historians of the early modern period. They contain a wealth of information on parts of the population who have not left other records of their

[1] Anne Beckett (1666) NRO: 281 Stockdell (MF419)
[2] John Pound ‘Government to 1660’ in *Norwich since 1550* in Carole Rawcliffe and Richard Wilson (eds), *Norwich since 1550* (London, 2004), p.44
[3] Nicholas Beckett (1653) NRO: ANW 1653 fo.42, no.41 (MF/RO 325/4)
[4] Tom Arkell, Nesta Evans and Nigel Goose (eds), *When Death Do Us Part: Understanding and Interpreting the Probate Records of Early Modern England* (Oxford, 2000), p.38

material goods or their social, religious, and cultural backgrounds. In her study *Women's Voices in Tudor Wills* (2015) Susan James says:

> that women found a variety of ways to exercise the legal and emotional tools provided by the will-making process to distribute their possessions, comment on their lives, and exercise their authority over events that would necessarily happen after their deaths.[5]

As this thesis will show, this is the case for the non-elite women examined here, though it is acknowledged that 'within any region people who made wills tended to be wealthier than those who did not.'[6] Much of the work done previously on women's wills has been quantitative, and has shown that the proportion of wills made by women increased in the seventeenth century to around twenty percent, with the vast majority of women's wills 'made by widows (about 80 percent) and single women (up to 20 percent).'[7] As Lloyd Davis observes:

> Simultaneously exceptional and unexceptional, private and public, individual and collective, wills illustrate elite and ordinary women's involvement in producing texts, entering discourse, and representing themselves as capable of acting constructively in interpersonal and institutional contexts.[8]

Amy Erickson, Christine Peters, Christine Church, Judith Spicksley, Jane Whittle and particularly Amy Froide have all drawn on wills as a valuable source of information on the lives of single women.[9] These scholars use a combination of quantitative analysis together with extracts from some wills.

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[5] Susan E.James, *Women's Voices in Tudor Wills, 1485-1603: Authority, Influence and Material Culture* (Abingdon, 2015), p.1

[6] Amy Louise Erickson, *Women and Property in Early Modern England* (London, 1993), p.207

[7] Erickson, *Women and Property* p.204

[8] Lloyd Davis, 'Women's Wills in Early Modern England' in Nancy E.Wright, Margaret W.Ferguson, and A.R.Buck (eds), *Women, Property, and the Letters of the Law in Early Modern England* (Toronto, 2004), p.223

[9] See: Amy M.Froide, *Never Married: Singlewomen in Early Modern England* (Oxford, 2005); Christine Peters, 'Single Women in Early Modern England: Attitudes and Expectations,' *Continuity and Change* 12:3 (1997), pp.325-345; Christine Church, 'Women and Property in Early Modern England: A case-Study,' *Social History* 23:2 (1998), pp. 165-180; Judith Spicksley, 'Spinsters with Land in Early Modern

This chapter does not use quantitative analysis. Instead, a database for singlewomen was created from the *Index of Wills proved in the Consistory Court of Norwich between 1604 to 1686* (1958) and this provided a way of exploring the material circumstances of a selection of women who were not married or widowed.[10] As the example of Anne Beckett above shows, it is possible to use previously overlooked sources to fill in more details about the background of individuals. Their wills show us the things owned by these women, usually as they approached death, as well as how they wished their property to be distributed, often suggesting the circumstances in which they lived at that time, how they might have acquired their goods, how they saw themselves, and how much control they wished to have over their property after their deaths. On the rarer occasions where the archives also have a Probate Inventory for these individuals, an even fuller picture emerges. The documents examined here provide a context for the three case studies which follow in later chapters, and cover most of the century. They reveal some common features, which are considered in turn: the desire of the women to control the manner of their funerals and the distribution of their property; the special relationships revealed by their bequests, both with families and friends; the way some of them had engaged in lending money; and lastly, a significant number of singlewomen who had worked as servants, several of whom were reasonably wealthy at the time of their deaths.

There were many reasons why women did not marry. Remaining unmarried might not have been a positive choice for many of them, having been forced on them by circumstances. Nonetheless in reading many of their wills, pictures emerge of individuals who demonstrate varying degrees of agency and self-regard. Whilst some may have been living under the relative control of a father or brother, none had surrendered their own property to a husband. Law and custom allowed them to state how they wished to be buried, how they should be remembered and who was to have their property after their deaths. Anne Beckett's nuncupative will simply expressed her

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England: Inheritance, Possession and Use,' in Amanda L.Capern, Briony McDonagh & Jennifer Aston (eds), *Women and the Land, 1500-1900* (Martlesham, 2019), pp.51-76; Jane Whittle, 'Servants in rural England c.1450-1650: hired work as a means of accumulating wealth and skills before marriage,' in Maria Ågren and Amy Erickson (eds),*The Marital Economy in Scandinavia and Britain 1400-1900* (Farnham, 2005), pp.89-107, fn 42.

[10] *Index of Wills Proved in the Consistory Court of Norwich 1604-1686* Vol. XXVIII (Norfolk Record Society 1958)

wish for a coffin, but several of the women considered next had more elaborate plans for their funerals.

'My bodie to be buried in the churche or churche porche…'

In her will dated 25 February 1604, Elizabeth Meake, singlewoman of Saxlingham Nethergate in Norfolk bequeathed 'unto the p[ar]ish of Saxlingham Nethergate aforesaid tenne shilling[es] towards a new gr[ea]t bell so that it be bought and hanged readie to be runge within one year after my decease.'[11] As an encouragement to ensure that she was buried according to her wishes, she gave 6s 8d to the church and asked that 'my bodie to be buried in the Churche or Churche porche.' As was customary, she instructed her executor to give '4d a peece unto so many poore people of the town of Saxlingham as shall bee thought goode unto him and my supervisor likewise after named,' and this was with the command that it be done 'the next sevenday[es] after my burial.' After that the poor of Saxlingham were to receive 6s 8d a year. Other bequests of money and chattels willed to family members show that she was a woman of some substance. Clearly Meake wished to be remembered within her community, showing that she was a woman who had a sense of importance and standing in a small rural town, despite her unmarried status. As Sarah Tarlow remarks, 'Dead individuals, like the collective dead, can continue to influence both their own obsequies and the course of human affairs after their own death', and that was Meake's intention.[12]

Some of the testators examined for this study stated where they wished to be buried. Discussing changing burial practices, Tarlow quotes Ralph Houlbrooke who found that 'In Norwich 84% of wills registered in 1649 did not say where the body should be interred.'[13] Houlbrooke's finding accords with the selection of women's wills examined here, because there is a marked diminution of burial site requests in the second half of the century, though some still asked for burial at a particular church.[14] One younger

[11] Elizabeth Meake (1606) NRO: 202 Bowrne (MF78)
[12] Sarah Tarlow, *Ritual, Belief and the Dead in Early Modern Britain and Ireland* (Cambridge, 2010), p.11
[13] Ralph Houlbrooke, *Death, Religion and the Family in England 1480 -1750* (Oxford, 1998), p.125
[14] See for examples for burial place requests: Blyth Norton (1604) NRO:113 Cockes (MF77); Margaret Duffield (1608) NRO:227 Spencer (MF79); Elizabeth Daudye (1614) NRO:133 Bull (MF83); Anne Barnard (1622) NRO:23 Lawson (MF86); Thomasine Awcocke (1626) NRO:143 Mittings (MF88); Emma Jay (1628) NRO:110 Jay (MF89); Ursula Bate (1634) NRO:209 Playford (MF409); Margaret Butler (1638) NRO:127

testator made a specific request to be buried between her sister and her mother, making gifts of 6s12d each to several parish churches in the area, perhaps to reinforce her specific and emotional request.[15] The wills considered here also demonstrate that, where they had the means, the women followed the common practice of instructing the executor to provide money to beneficiaries, with instructions to them to purchase material items, usually rings, sometimes gloves and occasionally a piece of plate. By this the dead woman could hope that she would be remembered by those who had known her. These memorial gifts increased in frequency as the century progressed.[16] Most women in this period expected to be remembered by having children and continuing the family name, but these childless women found means to be remembered even though they did not have children to succeed them. In common with male testators, gifts to the poor also perpetuated their presence within the community, and they sometimes instructed the executors as to the manner, timing and matter of these charitable donations.[17] Funeral arrangements were generally left to the executors, but one Norwich testator wanted to choreograph her burial in a way which stands out as unique in the wills considered here, though the practice of using female bearers was not unknown.

Alice Brewer's will was executed on 6 February 1648 and proved on 20 January 1651. She describes herself as 'very aged & infirme,' presenting as a pious woman because she says her wealth is 'th[e] little porcion wi[ch] God hath bestowed upon me.' She then gifts twenty shillings to the poor of the parish and twenty more to the poor of the City; these generalised gifts are followed by a long list of named beneficiaries who are, without exception, the daughters of various men in the city of Norwich, such as a woollen draper, a grocer and a hosier. Then she states that 'I will & my minde is that the six maydes,' who are the daughters listed above as beneficiaries, 'shall beare me to th[e] grave' and gifts 'unto everie of the s[ai]d bearers two shillings & five pence, one

Smythe (MF412); Ann Downing (1661) NRO:368 Tennant (MF420)

[15] Margaret Duffield (1608) NRO:227 Spencer (MF79)

[16] See for example: Ursula Bate (1634) NRO:209 Playford (MF409); Elizabeth Love (1664) NRO:104 Stockdell (MF419); Judah Holle (1673) NRO:499 Alden (MF422); Elizabeth Baker (1666) NRO:279 Stockdell (MF419).

[17] For examples of gifts to the poor of the parish see: Elizabeth Daudye (above); Martha Brereton (1616) NRO:69 Sayer (MF84); Margaret Butler (1638) NRO:127 Smythe (MF412); Elizabeth Cady (1650) NRO:70 Battelle (MF94); Alice Harrison (1671) NRO:404 Alden (MF422); Bridget Gladdon (1674) NRO:98 Wiseman (MF/RO281/1,2)

paire of gloves & one pocket handkerchiefe to be paid & delivered unto them at the time of my buriall.' There is no proof that her specific instructions were followed; but if they were, then her funeral must have attracted attention and comment. Mendelson and Crawford say that it was customary at the funeral of a young singlewoman for her unmarried female friends to serve as pallbearers, but Brewer was 'very aged & infirme' so her instructions fall outside the usual practice.[18] Brewer seems to have belonged to the merchant class in Norwich and was clearly favouring other women with her wealth.[19] Are the dates significant here, as the country moved into a new and very different period? Her instructions show a particularly strong-minded woman, who wished to control events around her death in a visible way. The specific purpose of wills was to control how and to whom their material things were passed on. In giving to family members or friends, testators sometimes gave specific instructions, suggesting tensions and divisions within their families or communities. Such conditional gifts show that these singlewomen wanted to have continuing control after their deaths.

'as condition for the payment…'

Blythe Norton, whose will was proved in 1604, introduced conditions in relation to the residue of her estate. Her 'goods and Chattels' included 'imovable bonds and debts' which she was owed by her brother William Norton, and all the residue of her estate, including these debts, was to be paid to John Chirkling, whom she describes as her brother-in-law. In fact he was probably her step-brother, because she names her mother as 'Alice Chirkling'. We can see from her will that Blythe was probably not very elderly, as her mother is still alive; that she was relatively well off and was not as close to her brother as to her step-brother, for the conditions she included in her will were designed to ensure that William Norton did not benefit at her death.[20] Whilst the common purpose of wills was to determine who got what, the inclusion of conditions to be enforced by executors shows that some women, like Blythe Norton, wished to control the behaviour of family and friends after their bodies had been laid to rest.

[18] Sara Mendelson and Patricia Crawford, *Women in Early Modern England, 1550-1720* (Oxford, 1998), pp.198-199, illustration p.173
[19] Alice Brewer (1651) NRO:104 Battelle (MF94)
[20] Blythe Norton (1604) NRO:113 Cockes (MF77)

These conditions usually required specific behaviour by those named before they could receive their bequest.

Concern about future trouble between 'my kinsfolk & friends,' was expressed by another women who states that she is making this last will and testament 'to th[e] intent th[a]t no strife or controversy maie hereafter rise …after my decease for and concerning such goodes of mine w[hi]ch in this Transitory life I doe here possess.'[21] A singlewoman of Yaxham, whose nuncupative will was proved on 1 November 1607, was clear: all her goods were to go to her niece Joane, 'and [she] sayde that Thomas Beales brother of the sayde Jone should not have any p[ar]te of those goodes.'[22] Elizabeth Allison of South Bergh was similarly clear. Her brother Thomas Allison is to receive twenty shillings but on the condition that he does not interfere with the work of her executrix, who is to

> dispose of the [gifts and legacies] according to [th]e tenor of this my last will w[i]thout any manner of let or gaynsaying of the s[ai]d Thomas my brother. And if he shall refuse soe to doe then I frustrate & make void [th]e s[ai]d legacie of twenty shillings as if it had never bin given or bequeathed.[23]

The potential conflicts which might arise from the controls and conditions imposed by these women can be illustrated by the will of Margaret March of Ringland, written on 15 August 1659 and proved following January. March gave her niece 'and her heirs forever that Messauage Cottage or Tenement with the appurtenancies whatsoever situate in Ringland' on condition she paid Robert March, her brother, and Daniel and James, Robert's children, twenty shillings apiece, and gave ten shillings to Thomas March her nephew. If her niece didn't satisfy these terms any of the men named were to enter the dwelling until they are paid, together with all the costs they have incurred.[24] We can imagine the ensuing uproar which would have followed if these terms had not been complied with. Similar potential interference with the occupation

[21] Mary Downing (1619) NRO:29 Mason (MF85)
[22] Elizabeth Bale (1607) NRO:152 Rowland (MF78)
[23] Elizabeth Allison (1640) NRO:18 Gibson (MF413)
[24] Margaret March (1660) NRO:238 Tennant (MF420)

of a bequeathed dwelling is found in the will of Mary Cooper of Hoxne written on 14 June 1674. Looking into the future she gives:

> [t]o Benjamin Tillney sonn of Hillary Tillney and his heires forever all that messuage with an orchard and garden ajoining with a pightle thereunto belonging all the which my father Benjamin Cooper late of Hoxne purchased of John Burgis the which I have in reversion and I am to have at the death of Elizabeth Cooper my mother in law.

But the complications of Cooper's will go further, for after listing gifts of money to a number of people, she goes on to state that each in turn can take possession of the house she has gifted to Tillney if he doesn't pay them this money. Perhaps there was work for lawyers for years to come in Cooper's will.[25]

Possible further trouble is anticipated by Mary Foster in 1660, when she makes a gift of five pounds to 'George Heblethwait my kinsman,' stating that if

> the said George shall at any time or times disturbe molest or weaken or indeavour to weaken this my p[er]fect estate & testimony hereby given unto my executor by making of any claime witness or tytol unto himselfe or to any other person or persons whatsoever to the damage of my within named executor And also & if the said George shall neglect or detayne any such sume or sumes of money or goods being personal chattels from this my said Executor which said sume or sumes of money & Chattels which were given unto me the said Mary by the last will & Testament of George Woods my welbeloved uncle deceased; Then I give [him] but twelve peence of lawful money of England instead of the said five pounds.[26]

[25] Mary Cooper (1674) NRO:60 Wiseman (MF/RO 281/1,2). See for other conditions: Helen Cole's will written March 1656, proved in 1660: NRO:188 Tennant (MF420); Ann Hickling (1661) NRO:578 Tennant (MF420); Elizabeth Aggs (1666) NRO:253 Stockdell (MF419)
[26] Mary Foster (1660) NRO:28 Tennant (MF420)

Foster is an intriguing and wealthy woman, for she bequeaths 'messuages houses lands tenements & hereditaments whatsoever both freehold and copiehold or Charter lying and being in the towne or townes of Wolsingham ' and elsewhere to a James Moore of Holt, gentleman, 'phisition in consideration of my entire and sole love which I owe unto him.' This unusual and seemingly very generous gift raises questions about her relationship with James Moore, to whom perhaps she was engaged.[27] Caution about such bad faith and legal actions by relatives and conditions to control their behaviour, however, are comparatively rare.[28] Most of the singlewomen here give straightforward gifts to family members or to friends, most frequently of their clothing, household goods or sums of money.

'I give to Elizabeth my sister all my stuffe we bought together'

Judith Bennett and Amy Froide said that singlewomen were particularly close to their female kin, forming some of their most important relationships with mothers, sisters, and nieces.[29] As Amy Erickson noted, this closeness was reflected in the fact that 'singlewomen favoured female legatees even more strongly than widows. Nieces were a particular favourite [and] the preference for female legatees was not limited to bequests of clothing,…….. but extended to all types of household goods, cash and land.'[30] The likely explanation is that single women knew males were generally the main beneficiaries of family wealth, and they would have accepted this as the 'natural order, ' but without husbands they had the opportunity to do as they wanted with their things; favouring female relatives would have come naturally as a kind of compensation. Most frequently of course the gifts were of clothing and household stuff and therefore were most appropriately given to other women. Sometimes the items given were not specified, for example a woman gave 'my sister one chest with what is in it,' but also gave another woman 'my best hatt, my best westcote, my best

[27] For the will of her uncle George Woods see PCC Wills 1655-1659 Piece 249: Aylett, Quire Nos. 319-372 fo.352 (Will of George Woods 1655)
[28] Other examples of conditions against interference or failure to comply with instructions by relatives are Helen Cole (1660) NRO:188 Tennant (MF420); Margaret March (1660) NRO:283 Tennant (MF420); Elizabeth Pedder (1668) NRO:83 Proctor (MF421); Anne Barnard (1623) NRO:23 Lawson (MF86); Mary Bolton (1666) NRO:268 Stockdell (MF419); Mary Crowe (1677) NRO:OW 122 (MF/RO 452/1)
[29] Judith M.Bennett and Amy M Froide (eds), *Singlewomen in the European Past, 1250-1800* (Philadelphia, 1999), p.24
[30] Erickson, *Women and Property* pp.216-217

peticote,' so the contents of the chest given to her sister remain unknown.[31] The family tensions and conflicts considered above are not reflected in the majority of wills considered; most testators examined here distributed their goods to relatives; where there is no mention of mothers or fathers it seems likely that these women are older, and in the absence of siblings or other younger relatives, a network of female friends might be gifted goods or money.[32] Judah Holle gave her brother 'all my rings & Jewells which I now have' but gifted other items to several women. The residue went to her executors Henry Stebbing 'gentelman' and his son, but with apparent uncertainty, and concern for her care in old age, for she placed on them a request that 'they shall well and sufficiently reward all others of the family whereof I shall happen to live and die who shall take care trouble & paines about me.'[33] Another testator makes no reference to any family, but seems only to have had support from a couple who are residuary legatees, so it is likely that she was a lodger in their house.[34] Younger women who had not intended to remain single but who died unmarried are occasionally represented, with mention of the men to whom they were betrothed.[35] Joan Ulfe had been 'contracted' to John Flepper and had given birth to a daughter Margaret. No doubt she expected to marry him but, being unmarried when she died, she was able to bequeath 'all the residue of her goodes & chattels' to her young daughter, who was also to receive ten pounds, an illustration of the way in which an unmarried woman was free to pass her property on to whoever she chose. A different kind of close relationship is revealed by reading backwards from the will of Elizabeth Neale of Reepham, dated 12 June 1680.[36]

It is necessary first to examine the wills of Edward Neale, described in his will as 'Edward Neale the elder of Reepham in the Countie of Norfolk yeoman,'[37]and his brother Christopher Neale.[38] When Edward Neale died in September 1658, he gave Elizabeth Neale 'the daughter of Christopher Neale deceased 'all that is in the kitchin

[31] Anne Daber,Dauber (1604) NRO:4 Cockes (MF77)
[32] Lucy Mancer (1663) NRO:139 Alden (MF421)
[33] Judah Holle (1673) NRO:499 Alden (MF422)
[34] Ellen Moore (1648) NRO:87 Purgold (MF93)
[35] See for example Joan Ulfe (1631) NRO:53 Purgall (MF91); Elizabeth Payne (1646) NRO:109 Cally (MF416)
[36] Elizabeth Neale (1680) NRO:332 Calthorpe (MF424).
[37] Edward Neale (1658) NRO:ANW, will register, 1653-1660, fo.529, no.535 (MF/RO326)
[38] Christopher Neale (1638) NRO:ANW, will register, 1638-1639, fo.68, no.54 (MF/RO 326)

Chamber,' and made her his executrix, together with William Neale 'the sonne of William Neale deceased'. Elizabeth was also joint residuary legatee with William Neale, who was probably her cousin. Depending on how this property was shared between them it seems possible that Elizabeth benefitted significantly from her uncle Edward the elder. The Neales were a large family: Elizabeth's parents Christopher and Martha Neale had at least nine children, seven boys and two girls, who were alive at the time of her father's death in 1638. Christopher is also described as a yeoman; he distributed his landholdings to his male heirs, several of whom were then under twenty-one, and gave Elizabeth forty pounds. He also made a provision that if any of his underage sons died before 'the time aforesaid' then the houses and land otherwise given to them were to be divided equally amongst the survivors, so it is possible that Elizabeth received property on the death of a sibling or siblings.

Although the records are frustratingly incomplete, the Neales were a relatively well-established family in and around Reepham. Edward the elder did not name any children in his will, though he had a wife, also called Martha. He gave small sums of money to his servants, most notably to Sara Carman, who was to receive three shillings and four pence. Though we cannot guess at the nature of their relationship, it becomes clear from Elizabeth Neale's will twenty-two years later that she and Sara Carman were close. Sara was to receive two acres of land at Salle near Reepham, plus the residue of Elizabeth's estate, and was to be her sole executrix.[39] Elizabeth Neale's Probate Inventory was not registered until 1685, which is an unusually long interval between her death and the making of an inventory.[40] We cannot tell just how close Elizabeth and Sara were, and whether it was a simple servant/mistress relationship; nor do we know if Sara herself stayed single or if she married. The evidence of the accumulation of wealth by singlewomen who spent time in service as Sara did, is examined later in this chapter, but the material goods in Elizabeth Neale's Probate Inventory gives a us picture of how Elizabeth was living towards the end of her life, as she had given her sister Esther 'the house wherein I now live.'

[39] Elizabeth Neale (1680) NRO:332 Calthorpe (MF424)
[40] NRO:DN/INV 63/153 (MF/X17)

'In her parler…'

Neale had possessions worth a total of £17-17sh-6d. She lived in a single story dwelling with a main room where she must have slept, for it contained 'one bedde as it stands & a bedde stoole' as well as 'one table & 5 joynt stooles & carpet, backe Chayer & 4 Cussins, 2 Chests & 2 box[es] & a littel table' as well as two 'old book[es].' There was a kitchen, which had a table, chairs, stools and an assortment of kitchen equipment, some of which Elizabeth may have inherited from her uncle Edward, since he had given her 'all that is in the kitchin Chamber.' The 'Kitching Chamber' in Elizabeth's inventory would have been a small room off the kitchen, and here her servant slept on a 'trundle bedsted & 3 sheet[es].'We do not know if this servant was Sara Carman, who clearly meant so much to Elizabeth. In her will she says that the house enjoys and contains 'by estimate half an acre be it more or less', and the inventory shows that outside was a 'deyrey,' a 'barne' with 'corne & hay & strawe' and a yard with one cow, one hog, a cock and two hens plus wood, muck and lumber. Half an acre would not have been sufficient for this livestock, so Elizabeth may have grazed her cow on any common land or on the land of a neighbour. The picture emerges of a woman who lived a modest rural existence as 'her wearing apparel & mony' were valued at only £2, but she had a degree of self-sufficiency and independence, some involvement with her brother Christopher and concern for her sister Esther, who was also unmarried. Above all she had a close relationship with her uncle's former servant Sara Carman. Since her father's will of 1638 does not describe her as under twenty-one, Elizabeth Neale must have been elderly when she died, and Sara Carman, who was a servant in 1638, was also elderly; as an unmarried woman Elizabeth was free to give Sara Carman, the woman to whom she was close, whatever property she wanted her to have.

The wills listing the possessions passed on by Norfolk women like Elizabeth show how varied their wealth and material circumstances were and strengthen one argument of this thesis, that singlewomen were a diverse part of society, though sharing some experiences and practices. Those of very modest means would frequently declare their testamentary wishes before witnesses in nuncupative wills.[41] The greatest number of

[41] See for example: Elizabeth Bale (1607) NRO:152 Rowland (MF78); Alice Hobson (1611) NRO:236 Styward (MF81); Dorothy Kenninghall (1622) NRO:158 Bradstritt (MF86)

wills examined here were written and attested by women who generally had more property than those who had nuncupative wills, and many gifted sums of money and land, which will be considered later; but the items of clothing which they bequeathed give us another opportunity to see the material circumstances of their lives.

'all my clothes both linnen & woollen whatsoever'

In her study of foundation garments in early modern England, Sarah Bendall observes that 'Clothing did not just visually symbolize wealth; it was also literal stored wealth' and sometimes a woman's main possession.[42] These wills sometimes give details of the clothing the women had to pass on at the time of their deaths and, whilst their levels of wealth and material possessions vary, some common threads can be drawn out; testators were conscious of giving useful items, which could be enjoyed as they were, adapted for size, refashioned into newer designs or possibly sold to release their monetary value. As Danae Tankard states:

> Clothing … carried with it entrenched societal values, …which undoubtedly shaped men's and women's relationship with their own clothing and provided the cultural spectrum through which they viewed that of others.[43]

The frequent gifts of clothing are not often described in detail, other than occasionally distinguishing between a 'russet wastecote' and a 'best wastecote'.[44] Sometimes it was enough for a testator to simply refer to 'my wearing apparel.' Tankard gives a summary of female clothing throughout this period, which consisted of:

> the waistcoat and petticoat, which together made up a 'suit,' and the gown, which could either be a one-piece or made up of two separate elements, the bodice (also described as a waistcoat) and the petticoat.[45]

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[42] Sarah A. Bendall, *Shaping Femininity: Foundation Garments, the Body and Women in Early Modern England* (London, 2022) p.103

[43] Danae Tankard, *Clothing in 17th Century Provincial England* (London, 2020) p.2

[44] See for example: Mary Stacy (1613) NRO:240 Cooney (MF83); Elizabeth Daudye (1614) NRO:133 Bull (MF83); Katharine Dyer (1627) NRO:O.W.352 (MF/RO472)

[45] Tankard, *Clothing* p.130. She provided more detail about changing styles and other items of clothing on pp.130-134

Bendall details how almost all women wore 'bodies', the item which Tankard identifies with waistcoats. The bodies was 'a garment that covered the torso, could be outer- or underwear and have detachable sleeves.'[46] It 'was stiffened with buckram, a heavy coarse fabric that could be further stiffened with paste, starch or even stitching, creating a straight torso.'[47] These are all terms for clothing which appear frequently in these wills. Both Tankard and Bendall's studies show that non-elite married women of the middling sort aimed to dress and present as appropriately as possible, but Tankard uses contemporary commentaries and letters to argue that women who lived in rural locations or provincial towns were unlikely to keep up with the very latest fashions. Most of the testators in this study, over sixty in number, lived in rural areas, villages or small towns; fewer than twenty lived in Norwich, Ipswich or King's Lynn. A woman may have prized her 'best Rufe' in 1643, but ruffs were no longer fashionable.[48] Nevertheless, as Susan North has pointed out, such a ruff would very possibly have valuable lacework, and this would have been unpicked and refashioned into another garment. If a bodies was stiffened with strips of whalebone these could be removed and placed in a new bodies. Travelling tailors visited outlying villages and could have altered tailored clothing such as outer coats, and specialist seamstresses were common, so gifts of 'my wearing apparel' meant that these bequests would be welcomed.[49]

In her work on the cost of clothing in this period, Margaret Spufford used the tables drawn up by the political economist Gregory King in 1688.[50] Spufford used the prices available from relatively rare probate accounts, and compared these with King's figures, arriving at average prices for standard items of clothing. Shoes and hats, which needed a specialist maker, were significantly more expensive than gowns, petticoats and waistcoats. Perhaps this extra value in shoes explains the gift one wealthy woman from Norwich made of 'a pair of my best sho[es] unto my said brother.'[51] These singlewomen were concerned with presenting an image of respectability suitable to

[46] Bendall, *Shaping Femininity* p.254
[47] Bendall, *Shaping Femininity* p.32
[48] Alice Bridge (1643) NRO:112 Alston (MF415)
[49] Dr Susan North (Curator of Early Modern Textiles, V & A) (pers. com)
[50] Margaret Spufford, 'The cost of apparel in seventeenth-century England, and the accuracy of Gregory King,' *Economic History Review*, 53:4 (2000), pp.677-705; Julian Hoppit 'King, Gregory (1648-1712),'ODNB https://doi-org.uea.idm.oclc.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/15563 (accessed 15/08/23)
[51] Mary Cokler (1670) NRO:24 Alden (MF421)

their standing in the community, and their clothing reflected their status; reference to qualifiers such as 'my best hatt,' ' my best westcote,' and 'my best peticote' show that they were able to wear clothing in which they could present themselves as 'respectable.'[52] These 'best' items were worn when they attended church, or went out in public to local fairs, civic gatherings or out with a servant to shop.

As Ulinka Rublack says, when arguing for the importance of material objects for our understanding of the past: 'Central here must be clothes …., because they played such an immediate role in constituting identities;'[53] but there is a double aspect to clothing because, as well as allowing the wearer to create and present an identity, the material reality of clothing also acts on the body of the wearer to influence their activities, the way they move in the spaces which they inhabit and to which they have access, telling us something of the lived reality of women and men. As already noted, bodies were universal wear for women of all classes and Bendall shows that they would have been repaired and reused many times.[54] Straps around the shoulders were sometimes added to restrain the more genteel woman from raising her arms, ensuring a more dignified carriage; these could be removed if the bodies was a gift to a working woman below the status of the testator.[55]

Clothing and household goods represented the largest number of bequests, but the wills in this selection show that some singlewomen were able to give landed property to their beneficiaries. How did they become landowners? Although widows often held land, married women were usually unable to hold landed property because of *couverture*, but this did not apply to women who never married. Details in the sample of wills studied sometimes indicate that these never married women had either inherited landed property or had purchased it; sometimes the document is frustratingly silent; but their ownership of land goes towards explaining how they were able to live more independent lives.

[52] See for example: Anne Daber (1604) NRO:4 Cockes (MF77); Alice Bridge (1643) NRO:112 Alston (MF415); Mary Mickleburgh (1660) NRO:246 Tennant (MF420); Sisley Gunn (1677) NRO:O.W. 12 (MF423).
[53] Ulinka Rublack, *Dressing Up: Cultural Identity in Renaissance Europe* (Oxford, 2010) p.3
[54] Bendall, *Shaping Femininity* pp.94-105
[55] Bendall, *Shaping Femininity* p.98

‘some women can shift it well enough’[56]

Judith Spicksley has examined the landholding of unmarried women in early modern England.[57] Building on the work of Amy Erickson, her approach is quantitative as she compares the landholdings of never married women in four areas – Chester, Durham, Lincoln, and Norfolk - using a sample of wills and a few probate records. She uses ‘the broadest definition of ‘land’…from both a tenurial and agricultural perspective.’[58] In this study the same broad definition has been adopted and the examples found here range from ‘her house or tenement,’ and some small parcels of land, to a larger estate of farmlands. The wills examined here rarely state how the women obtained this property, and very few mention directly that it was inherited, though it is reasonable to assume that many did in fact inherit land from relatives.[59] Froide’s research confirms this.[60] The account books of Joyce Jeffries, the Herefordshire singlewoman, show that she invested substantial sums of money in both real estate and moneylending, and it is possible that some of the testators here were also successful in buying properties for income generation. For Jeffries and for Hester Pinney, the Dorset singlewoman and entrepreneur in the lace making business, documentation survives which shows that they both operated on a large scale, much greater than any of the women in this sample of wills.[61]

As Erickson states, most people lived in leasehold or copyhold dwellings.[62] For singlewomen we should include the likelihood of their living in lodgings or with other family members. Bridget Corbett, the sister of Miles Corbett, the Yarmouth M.P. and regicide, must have been living with another brother, Sir John Corbett, since she gives

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[56] Anonymous *The Lawes Resolutions of Womens Rights* (London, 1632)
[57] Spicksley, ‘Spinsters with Land’ in Capern, McDonagh, & Aston (eds), *Women and the Land: 1500-1900* pp.51-76; Amanda Capern ‘The Landed Woman in Early Modern England,’ *Parergon* 19:1 (2002), pp.185-214 see also Erickson, *Women and Property* pp.21-45 for legal background to landholding by women.
[58] Spicksley, ‘Spinsters with Land’ p 57
[59] Elizabeth Carre (1639) NRO:21 Green (MF412); Dorothy Bell (1652) NRO:105 Battelle (MF94); Mary Cooper (1674) NRO:60 Wiseman (MF/RO281/1,2)
[60]Froide, *Never Married* p.121
[61] For Jeffries see Spicksley, ‘Spinsters with Land’ pp.64-65; for Pinney, see Pamela Sharpe, ‘A Woman’s Worth: A Case Study of Capital Accumulation in Early Modern England,’ *Parergon* 19:1 (2002), pp.173-184; Pamela Sharpe, ‘Dealing with Love: The Ambiguous Independence of the Single Woman in Early Modern England,’ *Gender and History* 11:2 (1999), pp.209-232; Pamela Sharpe ‘Pinney, Hester (1658-1740),’ ODNB https://doi-org.uea.idm.oclc.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/55393 (accessed 15/08/23)
[62]Erickson, *Women and Property* p.64

money to the four maidservants in the house.[63] Older women, or women who were needing care, sometimes mention their circumstances such as the 'paynes taken within the time of this my sicknesse.'[64] Occasionally a woman will refer to where she now lodges.[65] However, many of these women had furniture and other chattels to bequeath, and it follows that they were probably living in houses which they owned or leased, or had rooms within. The house where Elizabeth Neale lived, which was described earlier from her probate inventory, gives a picture of the more modest kind of living space of women of lower gentry status. Erickson calculates that:

> Cottages in southern England rented for about £1 p.a. in the first half of the seventeenth century; a house in the city of Hereford could be had for £2 p.a. Their purchase price would have been between £10 and £20.[66]

These sums suggest what a woman who was living independently would have paid for her dwelling, but they also show what value land had as a source of income if she rented out property. These are not high values when compared with the estimates in probate inventories for moveable goods such as furniture, kitchen equipment and clothing, but getting even a small sum from rented property was a secure source of income to be enjoyed during a woman's life. Furthermore, as Amanda Capern states, as well as a source of income: 'Ownership [of land] involved a relationship to and with property as a component of female identity.'[67]

The nature of the real estate owned by these testators ranges from a few acres of grazing land, such as 'my fourth part of copiehold messuage or cottage lying in Denver';[68] 'my meadowe called Depmore meadowe an estimated foure acres & allsoe one pece of land close by estimated two acres';[69] 'my tenement with appurtenances & other houses, ground parcel of ground, chamber drawing well sedge liberties and

[63] Bridget Corbett (1627) NRO:85 Spendlove (MF410)
[64] Elizabeth Allison (1640) NRO:18 Gibson (MF413); see also: Ellen Moore (1648) NRO:87 Purgold (MF93); Judah Holle (1673) NRO:499 Alde (MF422); Ann Jubbes (1675) NRO:199 Wiseman (MF/RO281/1,2)
[65] Judith Hassett (1684) NRO:441 Calthorpe (MF424); Susan Harrison (1632) NRO:2 Tuck (MF/RO281/1,2); Ann Downing (1661) NRO:368 Tennant (MF420)
[66] Erickson, *Women and Property* pp.64-65
[67] Amanda L.Capern, 'The Landed Woman in Early Modern England,' *Parergon,* 19.1 (2002), p.186
[68] Agnes Gebon (1644) NRO:47 Amyson (MF416)
[69] Mary Browne (1627) NRO:O.W.405 (MF/RO472)

easements situate in the p[ar]ish of St Andrews in Norwich';[70] to 'all those my messuages houses lands tenements & hereditaments whatsoever both freehold and copiehold lying & being in the towne or townes of Wolsingham or new Wolsingham.'[71] The variation in homes, incomes, and therefore lifestyles of these women is again seen as diverse, but for some their ability to remain independent would have relied in part on income from any property they owned, but also , as recent scholarship has shown, might be derived increasingly from moneylending and investment.

'the Bond obliging payment to her'[72]

In her study of singlewomen *Never Married,* (2005) Amy Froide stated that though

> never-married women of the middling sort went unnoticed…[they] played an important role in urban communities as property holders, as private and public creditors, as householders, as tax and ratepayers, and as philanthropists.[73]

The women in the wills studied here mostly lived in small towns and villages, though a few lived in urban areas. They were almost never of gentry or elite status, and most of them fit into Froide's category of the unnoticed middling sort. Their wills contain very many pecuniary bequests, ranging from the small sums of pence or shillings to be given to the poor of the parish, to larger sums of £5, £10 or £20 pounds to be given to relatives or friends. It is rarely possible to know how these women acquired this capital, though very occasionally they speak of a legacy from a relative ('the mony left by my grandmother')[74] or from a benefactor ('£150 give unto me in and by the last will & testament of Charles Le Grosee'),[75] but some certainly engaged in moneylending for income generation. This expands Froide's earlier work, which demonstrated widespread moneylending as a common and important source of income for singlewomen in the towns of Southampton, Bristol, Oxford, and York.

[70] Elizabeth Carre (1639) NRO:21 Green (MF412)
[71] Mary Foster (1660) NRO:28 Tennant (MF420)
[72] Katherine Dyer (1627) NRO:O.W. 352 (MF/RO472)
[73] Froide, *Never Married* p.117. See also pp. 128-136
[74] Ann Hickling (1661) NRO:578 Tennant (MF420)
[75] Elizabeth Stevenson (1674) NRO:116 Wiseman (MF/RO281/1,2)

Like Froide's singlewomen, the women in the Norwich diocese frequently used written instruments to record their loans; the majority of references in the wills are to bonds, which were 'written deeds in which debtors obliged themselves to pay their creditors a certain sum of money by a specific date, along with a fixed rate of interest.'[76] Some of these bills, bonds or informal loans were to family members, and were either written off as part of a testamentary bequest, or transferred to another family member. Here there is new evidence that a number of never married women who were in service were well enough off to make loans to their employers, and the new insight into these servants is explored next.

Never married women as servants: a chosen career?

In his study of household servants in this period R.C.Richardson provides a thorough survey of both scholarly and more popular work on the subject for both Britain and other countries.[77] In reviewing Tim Meldrum's book *Domestic Service and Gender, 1660-1750* (2000) he adopts Meldrum's observation that 'what servants actually experienced in different kinds of households could vary markedly.'[78] Much work has been done by scholars using the household accounts, journals and diaries written by employers, but in this thesis the voices of servants themselves have been recovered through their wills. The evidence for unmarried women working as servants in family households is mixed. Samuel Pepys took in his unmarried sister Paulina, known as Pell; he made clear to her that he 'was to have her come not as a sister in any respect but as a servant.'[79] As a consequence of her status within his household he wrote 'I do not let her sit down at table with me.'[80] Amanda Vickery says that: 'The mortification of spinsters in the households of kin can be found from the nobility to the middling.'[81] This suggests a negative and unpleasant experience for women working as servants in the better off households of their own family, but was it inevitably the case? Not all wider families were necessarily as grudging as Pepys, and some young women may well have been happy to leave their immediate home environment for an opportunity

[76] Froide, *Never Married* p.134
[77] R.C.Richardson, *Household Servants in Early Modern England* (Manchester, 2010), pp.1-10
[78] Richardson, *Household Servants* p.7
[79] *The Shorter Pepys* (eds), Robert Latham and William Matthews (London, 1986), p.93
[80] *Shorter Pepys* p.108
[81] Amanda Vickery, *Behind Closed Doors: At Home in Georgian England* (London, 2009) p.192

to experience life in a different household. The case study of Virginia Ferrar in chapter four, details a letter she wrote in 1655, in which she writes very positively and enthusiastically about being offered a position as gentlewoman to a 'Lady Lenthrop'. The evidence from several of these wills also suggests something more positive about service. Since poor, and almost certainly illiterate, women working as servants in poorer households did not have the wealth to justify the making of wills, it is not possible to consider their experiences here. Again, their experiences may well have been mixed, though *The Maids Petition* presented to Parliament in 1647, if genuine, suggests that there was dissatisfaction amongst women servants in London. 'Virgins, Maids, and other young Women not married' sought a ruling that they should be given the same two days a month for recreation accorded to apprentices, as a relief from the 'uncessant drudgery essentially relating our too much kirring occupation or family function by reason of the uncontrolable impositions of our surly Madams.'[82]

The wills examined in this study support the argument that some, who were in service in the Norwich diocese, were not the victims of 'surly Madams', for we have a selection of singlewomen whose wills indicate that they had possessions, including money to dispose of, and who express warmth towards their employers. The close relationship between Elizabeth Neale and Sara Carman was discussed earlier; this may be a rare example, but some testators show a notable degree of loyalty and trust in the people they worked for. These wills raise questions about the choice of some women to remain single. This choice, if choice it was, meant that they remained free from the demands of marriage, though clearly not from the demands of their employers. In this study women have been identified as servants when there are references in the wills, for example, 'my mistress …and all my fellow servants';[83] 'my mistress Anne Downes';[84] 'my master John Browne';[85] 'my master John Westgate';[86] 'my mistress Dorothy Bedingfield'.[87] From the contents of their wills it is clear that the

[82] *The maids petition. To the Honourable members of both Houses. Or The humble petition of many thousands of the well-affected, within and without the lines of communication, virgins, maids, and other young women not married, &c.* (London, 1647) EEBO https://www.proquest.com/eebo/docview/2240951382/99862289/9351B2A2FF9047D3PQ/1?accountid=10637

[83] Mary Downing (1619) NRO:29 Mason (MF85)

[84] Mary Mendham (1621) NRO:200 Bradstritt (MF86)

[85] Elizabeth Breese (1633) NRO:445 Tuck (MF409)

[86] Elizabeth Fulcher (1643) NRO:133 Alston (MF415)

[87] Alice Harrison (1671) NRO:404 Alden (MF421)

material possessions and money of these women does vary considerably; this is likely to be a consequence of their social standing when they entered service, the nature of the households in which they worked and the positions they held. Sarah Bendall states that the annual income for a maidservant in Norfolk was around 20s in1613.[88] Richardson points out: 'Servants wages varied considerably over time, from place to place and depended on their occupational function, and on the household size.'[89] Out of the overall sample of just over eighty wills, eleven can be identified as servants, and for most of them their work seems to have given them the opportunity to acquire or retain modest wealth and agency, as well as security within a household. Two examples give some insight into the lives of singlewomen servants in gentry households outside Norwich, showing how closely involved these women were with their employers, even to the extent of lending them money. These are followed by the example of a woman who had worked for a prominent Norwich City merchant and had now retired into what appears to be comfortable old age.

Anne Brandon of Little Hautbois and Anne Bateson of Barningham Northwood

The families for whom these two women worked were part of a network of gentry families in Norfolk. Anne Brandon, also known as Agnes, made a will which was dated 2 January 1606, but was not proved until 1611. This suggests that she had a period of sickness in 1607, recovered, but died some four years later.[90] Her will is detailed, with bequests to members of her family of furniture, household goods and money. As well as bequests of small sums of shillings and pence to individual family members, she gave larger sums of several pounds, said to be 'in the hands of' three men, suggesting possible informal loans. She gave Christopher Armstrong 'the fowre pounds ten shillings w[hi]ch he have of myne' and she gave her nephew Henry Brandon 'that fowre pounds ten shillinges w[hi]ch he hath of myne.' She had furniture which was in the possession of her sister Mary Lea: a featherbed, bolster, a pair of blankets, two pillows and a coverlet, as well as a chafing dish and a candlestick. Since this will was

[88] Bendall, *Shaping Femininity* p.103. Bendall is quoting Eleanor Hubbard, *City Women: Money Sex, and the Social Order in Early Modern London* (Oxford, 2012)
[89] Richardson, *Household Servants* p. 80
[90] Ann Brandon (1611) NRO:170 Stywarde (MF81)

written when Ann was seriously ill in 1607 it seems possible that she was living at that time with her sister, who was nursing her, and this may explain why she had furniture at her sister's house. She had been employed by the Baspoole family of Little Hautbois, for at the end of her will she gives 'my Mistress Mary Baspoole 6 pounds,' and makes 'Master William Baspoole the younger of Little Hautbois my sole executor.'

Rye says of the Baspoole family: 'They were also of Catfield and Coltishall, and I think built the picturesque Manor House of Hautbois Parva.'[91] Little Hautbois Hall, near Coltishall is a 'house leased from 1553 by William Baspoole who probably had it built… it is a charming small Elizabethan house.'[92] Though described as 'small,' the manor house is still standing, and seems certain to be the place where Anne Brandon lived and worked. The break of four years until the will was proved suggests that she returned to work in some capacity for the Baspooles before she died. William Baspoole carried out his duty as her executor by producing a probate inventory of 1615-1616, detailing her estate, and there is no mention of her featherbed or other furniture.[93] Instead he begins by listing the livestock she owned: 'ij ewes w[i]th ij sucking lambes & ij wether hogg shepe', valued at twenty shillings, animals which presumably were kept at the Baspoole's home farm. He then lists items of clothing which are 'In hir trunke, 'lynnen in hir cofer' and 'Hir Apparell'. Her clothing is mostly described as 'old' except for 'one new paire of shoes,' supporting the suggestion that she returned to the Baspooles after her illness in 1607. Finally, he lists her cash: 'Item: in good debt[es] and mone 40 li'. From both her will and the later probate inventory we can see that Ann Brandon was relatively well-off, and had lived with the family she served, although she seemed to be on good terms with her birth family. In her will she makes a bequest to her sister's grandchildren, so she was relatively old when she died. Like other singlewomen, she had loaned out money from which she probably gained a return. It seems that working for the Baspooles was a positive choice for her; clearly, she trusted them and had maintained or acquired a significant number of material possessions and money whilst in their service.

[91] Walter Rye, *Norfolk Families* (Norwich, 1913), p.30
[92] Nikolaus Pevsner and Bill Wilson, *The Buildings of England: Norfolk Vol.1: Norwich and North East* (London, 1997), p.543
[93] NRO:DN/INV 27B/61 (MF X8)

Ann Bateson, 'commonly called Anne Corke' made a nuncupative will in 1634, dying on the 30 June.[94] She is described as 'singlewoman late of Barningham Northwood,' and may have been living in North Barningham Hall, the home of the Palgrave family when she died. The witness says that she declared her long involvement with two elite gentry women:

> that for the kindnesse wh[ich] shee had received from the Ladie Spelman whome shee had long served, as also from the Ladie Palgrave her sister she did make the said Ladie Spelman and Ladie Palgrave her executor[es] to whome shee gave all her moni[es] goodes & chattel[es] whatsoe[ver] to be disposed in a manner & forme following…

Thereafter she detailed the gifts she wished to make, and what they reveal about her will be discussed shortly. Firstly it is possible to reconstruct her background, and that of the two women to whom she felt so close.

Lady Ursula Spelman was the daughter of Sir John Willoughby of Risley in Derbyshire and the second wife of Sir Clement Spelman of Narborough, marrying him when she was a young teenager, though he was over thirty years older. The Spelmans had held land in Norfolk since the fourteenth century. Ursula gave birth to John Spelman, in September 1606.[95] Sir Clement died in 1607. Ursula became the second wife of John Potts, who was a moderate Parliamentarian.[96] She had married John Potts in about 1617, but Potts was not knighted and created baronet until 1641 explaining why Bateson continued to refer to her as 'Lady Spelman' in her will of 1634. After her marriage to Potts, Ursula lived at Mannington Hall, and this was where Ann Bateson would have been employed. Ursula's sister, Lady Palgrave, married Sir Austin Palgrave in c.1604 and lived with him at North Barningham Hall. After 1617 when Ursula Potts

[94] Ann Bateson (1634) NRO:172 Playford (MF409)
[95] M.W.Helms, Paula Watson and Basil Duke Henning, 'Spelman, John (1603-1663) of Narborough, Norfolk,' https://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1660-1690/member/spelman-john-1606-63 HOPO (accessed 10/01/23)
[96] M.W.Helms and Eveline Cruikshanks, 'Potts, Sir John, (1592-1673) of Mannington, Norfolk,' https://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1660-1690/member/potts-sir-john-1592-1673 HOPO (accessed 11/01/23)

lived at Mannington Hall, the two sisters were living close to one another, which is why Ann Bateson links them both in her will as co-executrixes.

In the witnesses' depositions, Ann Bateson was said to be 'late of Northwood Barningham' and that she wished to be buried in the church of 'Norwood Barningham'. The parish register for 1634 has this entry: 'Anne Bateson was buryed the ffirst day of July,'[97] confirming that Bateson was living at or near North Barningham Hall. Although the Index of Wills and the parish register name her as Ann(e) Bateson, one of the depositions states that she 'was commonly called Anne Corke,' so it is possible that this woman may be the Anne Corke who, according to the parish register, was baptised at Lessingham, Norfolk as the daughter of Robert Corke on 3 December 1580.[98] A Robert Corke, possibly her father, was buried in Lessingham on 9 December 1584.[99] If this man was her father, he died when she was just four years old, and her widowed mother may have subsequently married a Mr Bateson, explaining the two names. We have no way of knowing how this young woman Ann(e) Corke/Bateson came to be in the service of Lady Ursula Spelman of Narborough, which is a considerable distance away on the other side of north Norfolk. The only possible link would be Lady Elizabeth Palgrave, who was living at Northwood Barningham after 1604, much closer to Lessingham. It is speculative but possible that Lady Ursula met and liked the young woman whilst she was visiting her newly married sister, and therefore employed her. By whatever means Ann Bateson came to work for Lady Ursula, there is no doubt that she felt a strong loyalty to both the sisters. She gave away over fifty pounds as monetary bequests, including twenty pounds to Lady Palgrave. A second testator stated that Bateson had told her of loans she had made to two local people, amounting to over thirty-one pounds, so this singlewoman servant is another example of a servant having capital which she uses in moneylending. Anne Brandon and Ann Bateson lived and worked for well-established families living in rural Norfolk, but the will of a Norwich city woman, Elizabeth Cady, shows that she had reached a comfortable retirement living in the city, having been in service to a rising city merchant; she also engaged in moneylending.

[97] Anne Bateson, (burial 1 July 1634) NRO:PD *230/1*
[98] Anne Corke (baptised 1580) NRO:PD274/1
[99] Robert Corke (buried 1584) NRO:PD274/1

Elizabeth Cady, 'singlewoman of the parish of St Michael at the Thorn'

Elizabeth Cady, whose will was written in 1649 and proved in 1650, is an example of a singlewoman servant who was retired and living in some apparent comfort in lodgings in Norwich.[100] Having made many specific bequests of money and furniture, she left the remainder of her estate to 'Thomas Neave, late of the City, merchant and sometime my master,' appointed him as her sole executor, and signed her will. John Pound observes that 'Tudor and Stuart Norwich contained a complex urban society, characterised by extremes of wealth and deprivation,' and from about the 1620's to 1670's had a population of about 20,000, 'assessed from the Heath Tax returns and the Compton Census.'[101] Cady lived in lodgings with the Slaney family in the parish of St Michael at the Thorn, on the south east side of Ber Street, inside the city walls. Celia Fiennes reported in 1698 that buildings within the walls were 'all …of an old form' that is timber framed.[102] It is apparent from Cady's will that in her final years she was neither extremely wealthy, nor was she destitute, but she was certainly comfortably off; she had furniture and money in her lodgings: 'my cabinet in my chamber…my bedd & beddstead with all the furniture thereunto belonging as they are used together….one litell rug under my bed … [and] all other household stuff.' At the time she wrote her will she was contemplating her death because she writes of 'the sheete I am minded to be wound in.' Although, unusually, she does not mention any gifts of clothing, she is likely to have worn good clothing as she walked the short distance down Timberhill from her lodgings to the marketplace for shopping, no doubt accompanied by a maid, or perhaps by Margaret Slaney, daughter of William Slaney, to whom she left her bedroom furniture. She had some connections with the parish of St Gregory some distance away on the west side of the city, because she gave the poor of that parish forty shillings and gave a further twenty shillings 'in bredd at fowre quarters in the yeare following my death', so it is likely that this was the parish where her former master Thomas Neave had his home, and where Cady had lived and worshipped.

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[100] Elizabeth Cady (1649) NRO:70 Battelle (MF94)

[101] John Pound, 'Government to 1660', in Rawcliffe and Wilson (eds), *Norwich since 1550* (London, 2004) p.36

[102] *The Illustrated Journeys of Celia Fiennes, c.1682-1712,* Christopher Morris (ed.), (London, 1982) pp.136-137

Thomas Neave died in London in July 1664. In his will, where he is described as 'merchant of Norwich & London,' he says that he has 'suffered much for my duty of loyalty to my sovereign in the late horrid rebellion & usurpation,'[103] so it seems clear that Neave would have kept a low profile during the Interregnum, whilst still managing to trade as a merchant in Norwich. Working as a valued and trusted servant in the Neave household, Cady was likely to share Neave's royalist sympathies. This interpretation is reinforced by her involvement with a member of the Anguish family, who were also known 'to support the royalist cause.'[104] Cady, in common with the other well-off singlewomen servants who used their capital to achieve an income, details the debt of three pounds she was owed by Master Edmund Anguish of Great Melton, 'by bond'. It isn't possible to say what work Cady did in the Neave household; how she came to be employed there; or how much she earned; but she was literate, signing her will, and may well have had a key role, since she maintained or had acquired a significant amount of money by the end of her life. Richardson states that housekeepers, and sometimes cooks, were an exception to the rule that women servants were paid much less than men, so that if any of the three women servants considered here had such positions, then they would have been relatively well paid.[105] The loyalty and affection which they show is a reflection of the way they were regarded by those who employed them, and an indication of the trust and responsibility placed on them. As lifelong singlewomen, they had a degree of authority, agency, and integrity in their work, different to the conventional domestic world of some married women or poorer domestic servants.

Conclusion

By examining this selection of singlewomen's wills, registered in the Norwich Diocese during this period, it has been possible to gain insight into the lives and material possessions of a wide variety of women who would otherwise remain unknown as the overlooked 'middling sort'. It is important to note several qualifications here: these documents were transcribed by male clerks, and the depositions taken for the nuncupative wills were, again, recorded by men; it is not claimed that here we have

[103] Thomas Neave (164) NRO: Stockdell 34 (MF 419,MF/RO 237/4)
[104] Andrew Hopper, 'The Civil Wars,' in Rawcliffe and Wilson (eds), *Norwich since 1550* p.91
[105] Richardson, *Household Servants* p.80

the accurate direct words of the women, though the scribes would have checked their drafting with the testator. If the women had written letters or journals their voices would in some respects be more direct; but then we would have to ask for whom a woman was writing, and how was she tailoring her words for the intended reader, and what effect was she trying to achieve? In these testamentary documents there is often an impression of the testator being very aware of her audience; this can be seen in the commands given about who is to receive what, and upon what conditions, which are discussed above. With some of the longer wills, where more clauses are introduced piece by piece, the impression is given of a woman who is thinking hard about her worldly goods and to whom she wishes to give them. The most significant factor about these documents is that the women had ownership and control of their possessions in a way not available to a married woman without the permission of her husband; the level of their wealth varies a great deal, but many had significant sums of money and material possessions, and from these it has been possible to construct a picture of their lives, whilst acknowledging that never marrying may not have been a choice for them all, but may have been forced on them by circumstances. It is possible to draw some conclusions about what they did make of their lives by the end, whether freely chosen or not.

Almost all of them seen to have lived with a network of friends. Many of the gifts they gave are an acknowledgement of the web of friendship they enjoyed and were supported by, though there were also plenty of bequests to family members. We cannot know to what extent this was done out of a sense of duty, but the particular choice of nieces, as well as the daughters of neighbours, and god-daughters does suggest a deliberate favouring of women.

The presence within the selection of well-off women servants is another feature here. The practical working needs of early modern households meant that the demand for servants was very great, and it is acknowledged that the voices of poorer unmarried women are absent from this study. Those women would receive little payment other than bed and board of the most basic kind. Some householders may have been kind, and a degree of loyalty and respect may well have developed, but the experiences of Ann Brandon, Ann Bateson, and Elizabeth Cady are very different. It is argued here that the lives of these three women, in so far as they can be constructed from their wills

and background information, suggest a sort of ‘career-pathway’ which they may have chosen as an alternative to the life of a wife and mother. The three women whose case studies follow here also chose single lives, with the freedom that brought them to advance their ambitions in religion and learning, or perhaps just enjoyment, free from the control of a husband and the demands of childrearing.

Chapter 3 'Ther is no such difference between men and weomen that weomen may not doe great matters': Mary Ward, the 'Holy Amazon'

Mary Ward was not forgotten after her death in 1645. Her *story* was cherished and recorded in loving detail by women who had been her close companions in the experiment in religious living which she had made her life's work. For two and a half centuries, those Catholic women and men resisted, and sometimes compromised with the Papal suppression of her name and her aspirations. Ward and her followers believed that their activities were divinely inspired by revelations she had received; in pursuit of her aspirations Ward demonstrated a remarkable degree of agency. Her vision of self-governing communities of singlewomen with freedom to work in society saw her refuse to accede to the pressure that she should marry and raise a family of Catholics. This determination to remain unmarried to an earthly husband, she wrote in 1618/19, was because she was being 'ledd from all els' by the 'parent of parence, and frind of all frinds …[whose] intent in thus disposinge was different from thos.'[1] In her life writing Ward consistently ascribes her activities to God working through her, denying any agency to herself. Many of the scholars who have studied Ward have done so from a religious perspective, whilst others situate her in the tradition of the early modern women's religious movements which aimed for an active apostolate. This thesis breaks new ground by examining the material circumstances of Ward and her followers, using the letters she wrote to her followers in English, filled out by the Autobiographical Fragments and the *English Vita* to reach a new understanding of *how* she set about her aims as distinct from *why* she worked as she did.[2]

[1] Christina Kenworthy-Browne (ed.), *Mary Ward 1585-1645: A Briefe Relation with Autobiographical Fragments and a Selection of Letters* (Woodbridge, 2008) p.113, hereinafter: Kenworthy-Browne, *Mary Ward*

[2] The *English Vita* is believed to be the earliest biography of Mary Ward and is said to have been written a few years after her death by Mary Poyntz, one of Mary's closest companions. The earliest copy is dated 1716 and is in the Bar Convent archives in York.

Coinciding with the growth of feminist studies in the 1970s, historians explored the efforts of some Catholic women to resist the rule for strict enclosure for women religious which was re-imposed with increasing force during the Counter Reformation. If a woman was not to marry, from choice or other circumstances, the need for male control dictated that she must be locked up in a convent under the charge of a bishop, according to the Bull *Circa Pastoralis* (1566) issued after the Council of Trent. Scholarship has since shown that communities of singlewomen, frequently called beguines, continued to exist after this. Alison Weber pointed to the wide diversity in lifestyles and names of the women who sought to lead religious lives outside convent walls, often in shared communities, settling on the umbrella term 'devout laywomen'. For Ward there was no question of being a lay woman; she was determined to achieve recognition for herself and her followers as female religious in a new order. A more recent trend in scholarship, exemplified in the collection of essays edited by Weber, demonstrates that strict divides between religious and lay, Catholic and Protestant, no longer apply. We are encouraged 'to question these traditional binaries.'[3] These communities of singlewomen, living outside convents and not under direct male control, have been the subject of increasing study in the last twenty years.[4] Continental archives have proved rich in material and two aspects of these communities have absorbed scholars: the way in which these women used scripture and religious teachings to justify their work, in particular their creative use of gender stereotypes to undermine the repressive gendered arguments of their opponents;[5] and the practical aspects of their activities, together with the support and encouragement they received from the lay communities and some priests.[6]

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[3] Alison Weber (ed.), *Devout Laywomen in the Early Modern World* (Abingdon, 2016), p.16

[4] See: Walter Simons, *Cities of Ladies: Beguine Communities in the Medieval Low Countries 1200-1540* (Pennsylvania, 2001) passim; Susan E. Dinan, 'Female Religious Communities Beyond the Convent', in Allyson M.Poska, Jane Couchman and Katherine A. McIver (eds), *The Ashgate Research Companion to Women and Gender in Early Modern Europe* (Farnham, 2013), pp.115-127; Katherine A. Lynch, *Individuals, Families and Communities in Europe, 1200-1800: The Urban Foundations of Western Society* (Cambridge, 2003), pp.77-87; Marit Monteiro, 'Spiritual Virgins and Power in Piety: Inspiration, Ambitions and Strategies of Spiritual Virgins in the Northern Netherlands during the Seventeenth Century', in Laurence Lux-Sterritt and Carmen C. Mangion (eds), *Gender, Catholicism And Spirituality: Women and the Roman Catholic Church in Britain and Europe, 1200-1900* (Basingstoke, 2011), pp.115-130; Elizabeth Rapley, *The Devotes: Women and Church in Seventeenth Century France* (Montreal, 1990) passim; Silvia Evangelisti, *Nuns: A History of Convent Life* (Oxford, 2007), pp.201-230. For the parallel movement of enclosed orders who resisted strict enclosure see Amy Leonard, *Nails in the Wall: Catholic Nuns in Reformation Germany* (Chicago, 2005) passim; Simone Laqua-O'Donnell, *Women and the Counter-Reformation in Early Modern Munster* (Oxford, 2014), pp.15-49; Elizabeth Lehfeldt, *Religious*

Examining the books by priests published in the Netherlands dealing with 'spiritual virgins' Marit Monteiro argues that 'they acknowledged the canonically approved status of the nun, while at the same time providing legitimizations for an alternative way of life for women besides marriage or convent.' The authors set out rules which distinguished the women within the community: 'plain clothing, modest behaviour, intense devotional practises and works of charity.'[7] This pattern was adopted by Ward when it suited many situations but departed from on other occasions. The struggle to establish themselves and justify their aspirations allowed the women to mould their own agendas, giving them a degree of freedom which strict conformity to Catholic teaching denied. Characteristic of the communities is the way confessional boundaries were crossed. Jennifer Kolpacoff Deane, writing of beguine communities in early modern Germany, argues that many people valued the presence of these communities. Stating that 'even the presumably clear divide between Catholic and Protestant does not hold in beguine contexts,' Deane points to a notable degree of pragmatism exercised by many of the women and the communities in which they operated.[8] Ward's work on mainland Europe was in Catholic countries, but she also established small undercover communities in England. The model of Jesuit apostolic action and 'freedom to run in the world' was Ward's aspiration for these women. Exploring this shared aspiration between Ward's English Ladies and the French Ursulines, to be active participants in the Counter-Reformation movement to drive back the advance of Protestant teaching across Europe, Laurence Lux-Sterritt concludes that these women did not rebel against ecclesiastical order, rather 'when they abandoned the ideal of monastic life and the serenity of private devotion to labour as evangelists in the world, their vocation became their cross. Their mixed life

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Women in Golden Age Spain: The Permeable Cloister (Aldershot, 2005); Silvia Evangelisti, ' "We Do Not Have It, and We Do Not Want It": Women, Power, and Convent Reform in Florence', in *Sixteenth Century Journal* 34:3 (2003), pp.677-700

[5] See Alison Weber, *Teresa of Avila and the Rhetoric of Femininity* (Princeton, 1990) passim.

[6] See Ruth Manning, 'A Confessor and His Spiritual Child: Francois de Sales, Jeanne de Chantal, and the Foundation of the Order of the Visitation' in Ruth Harris and Lyndal Roper (eds), *The Art of Survival: Gender and History in Europe, 1450-2000* (Oxford, 2006), pp.101-117; Henriette Peters, *Mary Ward: A World in Contemplation* (Leominster, 1994), pp. 218-221; Elizabeth Rapley, *The Devotes,* pp.84-95; Simone Laqua-O'Donnell, *Women and the Counter-Reformation,* pp. 27-28; Ulrike Strasser, *State of Virginity: Gender, Religion, and Politics in an Early Modern Catholic State* (Michigan, 2004), pp. 149-172

[7] Marit Monteiro, 'Spiritual Virgins and Power in Piety' pp.121-122

[8] Jennifer Kolpacoff Deane, 'Elastic Institutions: Beguine Communities in Early Modern Germany', in Weber (ed.), *Devout Laywomen,* pp.175-195

was their ultimate sacrifice.'[9] Lux-Sterritt's work, like that of Elizabeth Rapley in her study of the Devotes movement in France, is based on analysis of the writings of the women themselves, which expressed their religious beliefs and ideas; it is not concerned much with the practical realities of their lives.

People of faith have been notably active in Ward scholarship, most recently those women who are members of the order which developed from Ward's English Ladies. Mary Chambers wrote at the end of the nineteenth century, using archival sources available to her at that time; her two volume biography of Ward is still a reference point for scholars.[10] Ward was finally recognised as the founder of the Order by the Papal authorities in 1909 and the communities, first known as the Institute of the Blessed Virgin Mary (IBVM) are now renamed 'The Companions of Jesus'. Henriette Peters CJ expanded Chambers' biography in 1991 using Vatican archives and those of the Society of Jesus in Rome unavailable to Chambers.[11] These scholars all approached Ward's life and work from the point of view of their faith, interpreting the texts as demonstrations of the way in which Ward's activities were dictated by revelations from God; this has been driven by their desire to achieve beatification for Ward. This thesis directly challenges that approach, by presenting the lived reality and material circumstances of Ward and her followers, leading to an interpretation which omits divine intervention and inspiration. Archival material by and about Ward, written in six languages and located in ten different European countries, has been collected in is the comprehensive scholarly four volume collection of archival material published in Germany in 2007, edited by Sr.Ursula Dirmeier CJ; it consists of transcripts of all the texts which Dirmeier and her team could locate in Continental and English archives relating to Ward and her foundation up to 1645.[12] These volumes have been invaluable. They were drawn on by Christina Kenworthy-Browne.[13] David Wallace used the Dirmeier volumes and Kenworthy-Browne's book to explore the way in which the

[9] Laurence Lux-Sterritt, *Redefining Female Religious Life: French Ursulines and English Ladies in Seventeenth-Century Catholicism* (Aldershot, 2005), p.189
[10] Mary C.E. Chambers, *The Life of Mary Ward 1585-1645,* I & II (London, 1882-1885)
[11] Henriette Peters, *Mary Ward: A World in Contemplation* (Leominster, 1994) hereafter: Peters, *Mary Ward* See also: Emmanuel Orchard (ed) *Till God Will: Mary Ward through her writings* (London, 1985); Immolata Wetter, *Mary Ward Under the Shadow of the Inquisition 1630-1637* (Oxford, 2006)
[12] Ursula Dirmeier (ed.), *Mary Ward und ihre Grundung: Die Quellentext bis 1645* 4 Vols. (Munster, 2007) hereafter noted as Dirmeier:
[13] Kenworthy-Browne, *Mary Ward*

Briefe Relation and Ward's own life writing presents her as a *mulier fortis* or 'Holy Amazon,' creating a rare premodern Catholic 'female mediated textual corpus.'[14] Wallace bases his account of Ward's life on these texts and the 'Painted Lives' sequence of fifty oil paintings, produced in Germany, commissioned soon after 1662, arguing convincingly that '[g]enerically, they sometimes seem caught between *hagiography* and *romance*-especially when telling of a heroine who, from her earliest days is romanced by a God whose intentions are obscure; who is absolute in his demands, and tactically ruthless.'[15] Ward's followers and supporters have never questioned that her mission was divinely inspired.

Exploring Ward's life using contemporary or near contemporary documents, this thesis adopts a new approach focused on Ward's material world. It will present a new way of understanding the life and work of a remarkable singlewoman by showing in concrete terms what she did and how she did it. On the face of it Ward denied herself agency by believing that she was acting according to the will of God rather than submitting to the will of men. The activities, which grew from this strong and sincere belief, meant that she was condemned as disruptive and dangerous by the ecclesiastical hierarchy; at the same time, she inspired her female followers to struggle for agency as singlewomen free from direct male control, carrying out work which they would be denied if living enclosed, and so she became a powerful agent for change. Beginning with an examination of her frequent travels and particularly an extraordinary journey she made with some companions in 1621, this thesis then considers how Ward chose different modes of dress to further her aims. Her travels and changes of appearance supported her as an agent and spy; frequent visits to spas are shown to reflect her covert activities, as well as addressing her health problems. Finally, the way in which she promoted material skills in needlework and crafts as gifts for supporters is considered. Rather than relying on divine intervention, Ward was actually using material means to further her project.

[14] David Wallace, *Strong Women: Life, Text, and Territory 1347-1645* (Oxford, 2011), pp.133-200
[15] Wallace, *Strong Women,* p.140

On the move

When members of a religious community are periodically the target of punitive fiscal or other measures, moving about can be a frequent and necessary response.[16] Protestant gentry were more likely to stay in their localities, though children would move on marriage or for education. In 1598 Ward's parents moved from their home in Mulworth to Topcliffe Great Park near Ripon and Mary was sent to live relatively nearby at Harewell. In 1600, when the Wards moved further north, Ward was then sent on from Harewell to Osgodby, south of York, to the home of the Babthorpes, apparently because her delicate health.[17] Another motive for her placement with the Babthorpes, and the consequences of this, is hinted at in Ward's autobiographical writing and will be considered in detail at the end of this chapter.

In 1606 Ward was in London with her father. She had finally obtained his permission to travel to the Low Countries to join an enclosed religious community and she recounts how she travelled to Canterbury on a route that was used by pilgrims before the Reformation.[18] Pilgrimage and pilgrim routes, would play a part in Ward's travelling across Europe in the future. She left the Convent of the Poor Clares in 1607 and began to develop her plans for communities of unenclosed women religious. From about 1615 onwards Ward travelled frequently through Continental Europe, and pilgrimages were often a cover for other motives; this was the case with the very long journey she made from Liege to Rome in 1621.This journey, made by Ward and her companions at remarkable speed and safety, even though the Continental powers were at war, was possible because they almost certainly travelled along the Spanish Road.

[16] Perhaps the most prominent example of this is the Jewish diaspora. See: Simon Schama, *The Story of the Jews: Finding the Words 1000 BCE – 1492 CE* (London, 2013); the twentieth and twenty-first centuries provide many examples of religious communities from a variety of faiths forced to move frequently because of persecution.
[17] Kenworthy-Browne, *Mary Ward,* p.112
[18] Kenworthy-Browne, *Mary Ward,* p.119

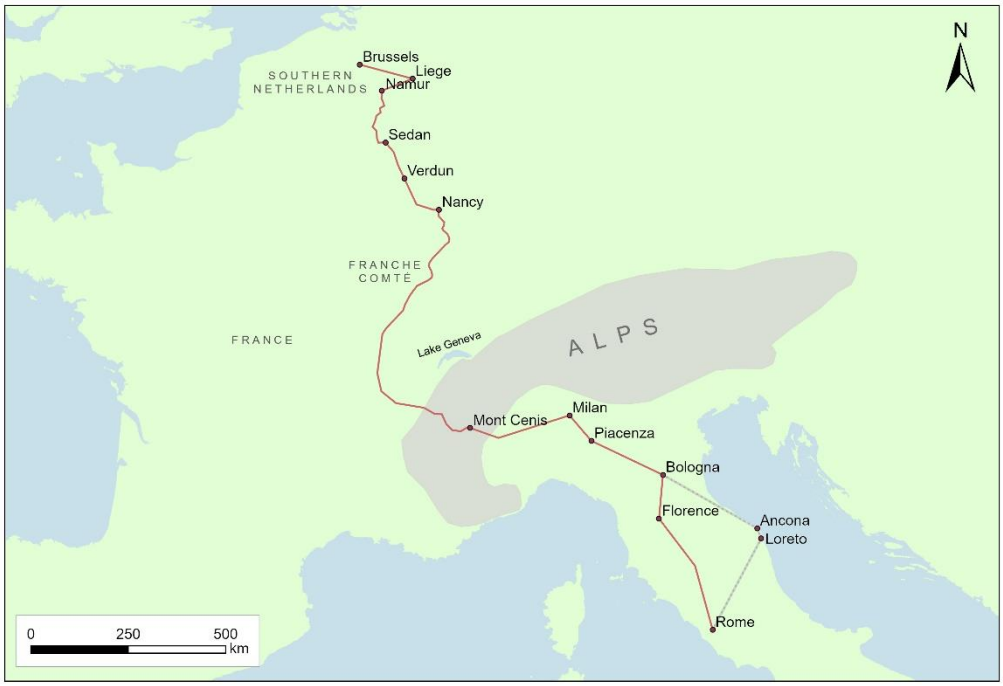
The Spanish Road

The two parts of the continental Spanish empire, Spain itself and her sister state, known as the Spanish Netherlands, were separated by various dukedoms or principalities, some of which were allies, some fiercely independent, and some under the influence of Spain's great continental rival France. The United Provinces formed a Protestant state bordering the north of the Spanish or Southern Netherlands, and Spain maintained an army, the Army of Flanders, in the Low Countries; the Spanish Road, forming the direct overland route between Spain and her sister state in the north was secured by cultivating close alliances with the rulers of territories which separated the two parts.[19] There was therefore friendly Catholic territory for Ward's journey from the Spanish Netherlands down into Italy.

Whilst it is not possible to recreate accurate details for her journey from Liege to Rome in 1621, it is most likely that the journey was along the Spanish Road. From Franche-Comte the Road went across the Alps at Mont Cenis, then into Savoy and then Milan. Mont Cenis was in the control of Spain at this time because in 1621, at the request of the Republic of Geneva, Dr Isaac Wake, the English ambassador at Turin persuaded the Spaniards to use the Mont Cenis pass rather than the Little St Bernard, so that the route for Spanish troops would be further from Geneva.[20] Initially Ward had the support of some Jesuits and the Jesuit movement was strongly supported by the Spanish. Ward was identified by others, and identified herself, with Spanish and Jesuit interests, so the use of the Spanish Road, and the Jesuit networks along it were the obvious way for Ward and her small party to travel in relative safety; but they undertook this journey in the most difficult winter conditions.

[19] Geoffrey Parker, *The Army of Flanders and the Spanish Road* (Cambridge, 1972), pp 59-69 for details of the complex dealings between Spain and these rulers and the conflicts between Spain and France in this area from the mid-sixteenth century.
[20] Parker, *The Army of Flanders,* p.63

The journey from Liege to Rome, 1621



Illus. 2 Map of Ward's probable route to Rome, 1621 (Credit Jon Gregory)

On 1 January 1622 Ambassador Juan Bautista Vives wrote to Secretary Charles de la Faille from Rome, stating that when the English Ladies arrived in Rome their clothing immediately grabbed attention, particularly 'los sombreros grandes'.[21] They wore these wide-brimmed hats on the advice of the Archduchess, Infanta Isabella Clara Eugenia, whom Ward had visited in Brussels before beginning her journey; the Archduchess had suggested that they wore pilgrim costumes on the journey for greater safety. The guises and disguises of Ward and her women will be discussed in detail later in this chapter.

Ward was given valuable practical assistance by the Archduchess as well as advice. In her letter of I January 1622 from Rome to the Archduchess, she writes about 'la virtue de la passe port de Votre Altezze'.[22] The Archduchess's 'passe port' also excused them payment of any taxes on the journey. In making this journey of over 2000 kilometres or about 1250 miles, Ward's aim was to have a direct audience with the Pope. The fact that Ward and her small group of women set out at the worst time of the year to be

[21] Doc 302. Dirmeier I, p.606.
[22] Doc. 303. Dirmeier I, p.607

making such a journey raised questions, since there was no compelling reason for them to travel then. Ward had been trying for several years to obtain support for her institute or order, and was no doubt frustrated at the continual opposition she had received; her choice to travel at this difficult time must have been deliberate, chosen to demonstrate the physical and mental strength of women. In an address to her followers in 1617 she had called for a kind of spiritual equality between men and women of faith, significantly arguing more than once that 'Ther is no such difference between men and weomen that weomen may not doe great matters.'[23] Her argument there was for spiritual equality, but the speed and boldness shown by Ward and her women, taken together with the hardships endured on this and other journeys, also demonstrated in real terms a certain unstated degree of physical equality. Successful completion of a long, hard journey at the onset of winter in less than seventy days by a group of women, travelling without the facilities which would be available to elite male travellers, would be proof of their abilities. They set out in pilgrims' dress as advised by the Archduchess. As noted above, Ambassador Juan Bautista Vives told the Archduchess that the English Ladies were attracting attention at the Papal court; even the Pope had noticed them and had asked the Ambassador about them and their unusual hats.[24] Ward was deliberately drawing attention to herself and her group by their mode of dress. She also knew that help would be offered to a group of women travelling as pilgrims; this is an example of her ability to present whatever clothing and manner was best suited to particular circumstances.

The letter which Ward wrote to the Archduchess on 1 January 1622 is the only first-hand account of the journey by Ward.[25] She states that their journey passed without any 'infirmite corporelle…. du tout a pieds, n'attendasmes nul temps, et quelques fois sommes marche 25 lieu Italiens sur un iour qui est plus que 8 lieu de Flandres.' This cannot be taken at face value, as it would be extremely unlikely, if not impossible, for them to travel on foot all the way from Liege to Rome in about seventy days. Twenty-five Italian miles was the equivalent of 44.6 kilometres according to Dirmeier's footnote,[26] so this would mean that they walked over twenty-seven miles each day.

[23] Doc. 166. Dirmeier I, p.358
[24] Doc 302. Dirmeier I, p.606
[25] Doc. 303. Dirmeier I, p.607
[26] Doc 303. Dirmeier I, p.608 FN 1.

Peter Wilson calculated that the average distance marched each day for soldiers travelling on the Spanish Road from Milan to Flanders was twenty-three kilometres.[27] The journey may well have been on foot in some places, but Ward's claim that it was all on foot is disingenuous. Travelling by river, and by wagon or horseback was standard in this period.

Illus. 3 Ward and companions travelling by coach, Painted Life of Mary Ward No 45. In Augsburg IBVM (Alamy)

Fynes Moryson, who spent ten years travelling across continental Europe, details many occasions when he hired a horse to ride from one city to another, together with the cost.[28] A letter from Wilhelm Rinck von Baldenstein, Prince Bishop of Basel dated 1627 to a person referred to as 'Your Highness' seeks permission and financial and practical support for five nuns of the Ursuline order to 'visit their homeland and blood relatives in Konstanz.' The request is for horses to enable them to travel as well as 'fees and payment to cover freight and carriage.'[29] For Ward's journey to Rome in 1621, such high-level support and funding would not have been available. More humble means of transport would have been used, and lack of funds would almost certainly have ruled

[27] Peter H.Wilson, *Europe's Tragedy: A New History of the Thirty Years War* (London, 2009), p.152. Wilson draws on Geoffrey Parker, *Empire, War and Faith in Early Modern Europe* (London, 2003), pp.127-42 and C.Paoletti 'L'Italia et il cammino di Fiandra', *Armi del Souvrano* (2001), http://www.assostoria.it.

[28] *An itinerary vvritten by Fynes Moryson gent., first in the Latine tongue, and then translated by him into English.* (London, 1617)

[29] Doc. 663. Dirmeier II, pp.205-207 (Translated by George Oppitz-Trotman)

out hiring horses, though the *English Vita* does state that they travelled with two horses, one to carry baggage, the other to take any of the group who were exhausted.[30] Sometimes Moryson travelled by waggon, and this would seem a likely option for the group. Their general route along the Spanish Road has been suggested above; it seems certain that they would have travelled through Catholic areas only; local people would have probably helped them wherever possible by offering lifts in waggons or occasionally carriages.

Sometimes they may have travelled by river. Antoni Maczak writes that river traffic was 'incomparably more comfortable' than travelling on a road. For this group it presented a particular advantage, for Maczak goes on to say:

> In many respects a journey by river was also safer: travellers were not exposed to the traps laid by unattached bands of soldiers or professional robbers…..river transportation in those days was reputed to be both convenient and unproblematic.[31]

Peters suggests that the party followed the valley of the Meuse from Liege to Namur, Sedan, Verdun and so to Nancy.[32] River travel would have been quicker and easier at this time of year. 'Travellers were very eager to make use of [river transport] because it was incomparably more comfortable.'[33] The route from Nancy to Milan is not given in contemporary sources. Peters argues for a route following the upper Mosel valley and the Saone and Rhone valleys to reach southern Europe.[34] Again this suggests that in some parts river transport was likely. Citing a later account of the last part of the journey by Margaret Horde, Chambers says that the party diverted across to the Holy House at Loreto on the eastern side of Italy, adding some two hundred and fifty miles to their journey. *The English Vita's* very brief account of this journey also states that Ward stopped for one day at Loreto.[35] Although this adds colour to the spiritual nature

[30] Kenworthy-Browne, *Mary Ward,* p.24
[31] Antoni Maczak, *Travel in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge, 1995), p.19, hereinafter Maczak *Travel*
[32] Peters, *Mary Ward,* p.312
[33] Maczak, *Travel,* p.19
[34] Peters, *Mary Ward,* p.312
[35] Kenworthy-Browne, *Mary Ward,* p.24

of Ward's pilgrimage, which her supporters were keen to emphasise, it very unlikely that this happened when the time taken overall is considered.[36]

The party consisted of Ward, four members of her community, a lay sister, a priest, a serving man and a gentleman, probably Robert Wright, a relative of Ward.[37] Because of the danger from robbers on the less secure parts of the journey, Robert Wright would have carried a sword. Nevertheless, Ambassador Vives, reporting to Archduchess Isabella Clara Eugenia on 31 December 1621, states that Ward's group was robbed during their journey to Rome.[38] This unfortunate event never made it into Ward's account or into the later account in the *English Vita*. This omission points to the way in which the narrative was being framed by Ward and her followers from the outset: their journey is a triumph of speed through difficult and dangerous circumstances, all of which shows that she is carrying out the will of God. We are given no details of the practical circumstances of their journey, or where they slept whilst travelling, and there is no evidence on this matter, but reasonable assumptions can be made.

Secular travellers, like Moryson, would have stayed at wayside inns and hostelries.[39] Wherever there were no alternatives Ward and her party might have done the same, but it is likely that where there were convents or other religious establishments the group would have been offered shelter and hospitality for the night, and any households large enough would offer them accommodation; they were travelling as a party of 'pilgrims' in Catholic territory, so offering such hospitality would be expected. The likely options were either sleeping in barns wrapped only in blankets against the cold or enjoying the comfort of warmer rooms and proper beds. According to Ward's letter to the Archduchess they did not linger anywhere.[40] It is reasonable to assume that the group, moving as quickly as they could through an increasingly cold landscape, experienced both relatively comfortable and some uncomfortable accommodation on their journey. And then there is the Alpine crossing itself. The crossing at Mont Cenis is described by Maczak:

[36] Chambers, *Mary Ward*, Vol 1. pp.494-496
[37] Kenworthy-Browne, *Mary Ward,* pp.24-25
[38] From Dirmeier's synopsis of this letter, (trans by G. Oppitz-Trotman) Dirmeier, I p. 601
[39] Maczak, *Travel,* pp.30-71
[40] Doc.303. Dirmeier I, p.607 ('…n'attendasmes nul temps…')

> In Savoy, especially on Mount Cenis, the litter and sledge were the chief means of conveyance. Professional guides-cum-bearers, in groups of eight and in two shifts, would carry the traveller up the mountain in a litter and then let him slide down the other side as though on a sledge.[41]

We do not know if Ward and her companions travelled by guided sledge on this crossing, but they were unlikely to have experienced the sense of adventure expressed by Fynes Moryson or Thomas Coryate; the women travelled as a means to an end, not an end in itself.[42] The frequent long journeys made by Ward and her followers support the idea that she was deliberately demonstrating women's strength and abilities. The two core freedoms which she sought for herself and other singlewomen were freedom from direct control by men, and freedom to be active in communities. Their moving around earned them the disparaging epithets of 'galloping girls' and 'Jesuitesses' from both Catholic and Protestant men, but Ward believed that the travelling was at God's direction. Support for this belief was bolstered by accounts of episodes on Ward's travels crafted to demonstrate her holiness. There was potential danger from marauding bands of soldiers, armed mercenaries and locally conscripted forces, because the Continental powers had been at war since 1618.[43] The description of one such encounter is another example of the way the narrative was being crafted. The *English Vita* records that when she was travelling along the Meuse between Charleville and Dinant in 1637:

> upon the river…. Fifteene Souldiers at once bourded her boate with barbarous and horrid aspects, no sooner had they beheld her, but one might visibly see a dread and feare to seize upon them which made them thinke long till out of the boate againe, and petitioned it as a

[41] Maczak, *Travel*, p.9

[42] Thomas, Coryate, *Coriats crudities; Coriats crambe; Coryats crudities.; Coryats crudities* (London: Imprinted [by George Eld] for Thomas Thorp, 1611)

[43] Wilson, *Europe's Tragedy*; Parker, *The Thirty Years' War*; See also *The Lamentations of Germany. Wherein, as in a Glasse, we may Behold Her Miserable Condition, and Reade the Woefull Effects of Sinne. / Composed by an Eye-Witnesse Thereof: And Illustrated by Pictures, the More to Affect the Reader. by Dr. Vincent. Theol.* London: 1638.EEBO https://www.proquest.com/books/lamentations-germany-wherein-as-glasse-we-may/docview/2248501620/se-2. This is a book of Protestant propaganda describing and illustrating in gruesome images the atrocities allegedly committed by Catholic armies on civilians.

> grace. She had hyred the Boate for herselfe and her owne Company and gave 3 poore Passengers, 2 Men and one Women their place…[44]

The physical challenges and the hardships which the group must have experienced on the 1621 journey fitted with the Catholic belief in the role of suffering and sacrifice necessary to purge humans of sin. The timing of the journey to Rome in 1621 provides an example of Ward's ability to shape her actions to give strength to her purpose. It was surely not by chance that she arrived in Rome on Christmas Eve, a profoundly important day in Christian culture, again reinforcing the idea that her mission was directed by God.

Guises and Disguises

The taxing journey described above is one of the many long journeys Ward made. This frequent travelling gave her ample opportunity to act as an agent bringing information

Illus. 4 Mary Ward as a pilgrim. In Ausburg IBVM (Alamy)

to those who were helping her mission. The women travelled from Liege to Rome dressed as pilgrims, as the Archduchess had said that they would therefore 'be thought of as others needy of humane and ordinary helps.'[45] Attire for this journey was

[44] Kenworthy-Browne, *Mary Ward,* p.62
[45] Kenworthy-Browne, *Mary Ward,* p.24

retained on their arrival, suggesting that their distinctive clothing performed another purpose, as Ward had intended. A portrait of Ward which is now in the Augsburg house of the Institute of the Blessed Virgin Mary shows her dressed as a pilgrim.

Whilst Peters points out that this is not a contemporary image, it is revealing in several ways: she is shown 'in dark brown clothing with a fine ruff and lace cuffs….The little cap…. is likewise trimmed with lace.'[46] The lace ruff and cuffs, if they were in fact part of her clothing, indicate a higher status and are not the humble clothing of a poor pilgrim. It may be that the later portrait showed these adornments because Ward's gentry class was an important signifier of the authority which she and her followers sought. In Rome the women continued to attract attention, as Henry Wotton wrote to Dudley Carlton on 21 January:

> They yeilde theare much wonder at theire habits and here at theire purpose……Haveremo un nuovo ordine di Giesuitesse, for that seemeth a branche of theire vows, that they will cathechize girls as fast as the masculine Jesuites doe boyes.[47]

Ward's strategy was to be very noticeable and to present as 'female Jesuits' because of their journey and through their clothing. Ward was always careful to dress in a way which fitted the role she was presenting to observers.

The changes in dress and presentation of Ward and her companions indicate how radical their behaviour was. For enclosed female religious clothing had more than one purpose; it gave the women a group identity, demonstrating their rank within the order; additionally, the restrictions of their garments prevented them having inappropriate thoughts or behaviour. As Silvia Evangelisti says: 'The habit, as well as the veil and cloak, was the sign of their definitive departure from the world, and their inclusion in the spiritual family of the monastic community.'[48] Ward's instructions to her communities set out the modest dress the women must wear: 'they dressed in long black silk cloaks which covered their bodies entirely from head to toe, and a white linen band which covered their forehead, giving them an unmistakable resemblance to

[46] Peters, *Mary Ward,* p.311
[47] Doc.314. Dirmeirer I, p.619.
[48] Evangelisti, *Nuns,* p.29

the traditional convent outfit of nuns.'[49] It is notable that they apparently dressed in silk, a luxury fabric which was becoming more widely available at that time.[50] The transgressive nature of Ward's project becomes even more apparent from the references in the letters and *Vitae* to the occasions when she or her followers adopted different guises. Changes of dress and appearance gave them agency, allowing behaviour which would otherwise be impossible. It is this use of different forms of dress which enabled Ward and her women to act in ways that were unusual or even dangerous for singlewomen, both in England and on mainland Europe. In England they did not dress as nuns or 'Jesuitesses,' unlike the Spanish noblewoman Luisa de Carvajal, who tried in a highly visible way to convert the Protestant 'heretics'.[51] When Carvajal was arrested after a pre-dawn raid on her 'little convent' in Spitalfields and was driven to Lambeth Palace for interrogation 'through the public streets the people thronging round call[ed] out, "English nuns, English nuns!"[52]

It is almost certain that Ward knew Luisa de Carvajal personally, as they had contacts and friends in the recusant community in common. Carvajal demonstrated her Catholicism openly through her manner of dress, and her public disputes with people in the street, but as a member of the Spanish nobility she was frequently protected from the Protestant authorities by the Spanish ambassador. As the *English Vita* and the autobiographical fragments make clear, Ward and her women were careful to avoid any outward signs of their faith and activities when in England. An anecdote from Ward's youth in England shows that the strategy of altering her dress and appearance was a long-held practice. Whilst she was living in Osgodby, between the ages of fourteen and twenty-one, the *English Vita* says:

> finding in her selfe (as all noble harts naturally doe) great Love to her owne ranke and degree by birth, when she had seene strangers, who knew her not, nor cou'd know the truth of what she did, wou'd trusse

[49] Evangelisti, *Nuns,* p.215, from Chambers, *The life of Mary Ward* Vol.I
[50] Linda Levy Peck, *Consuming Splendor: Society and Culture in Seventeenth-Century England* (Cambridge, 2005), pp.73-74
[51] See Glyn Redworth, *The She-Apostle: The Extraordinary Life and Death of Luisa de Carvajal* (Oxford, 2008), passim; *The Life and Writings of Luisa de Carvajal y Mendoza* (ed and trans), Anne.J.Cruz (Toronto, 2014), passim.
[52] Chambers, *The Life of Mary Ward* 1, p.330. Chambers provides a translation of a lost address by Ward to her community, dated 1615, which is transcribed in German in the early biography of Ward by Marcus Fridl *Englische Tugendschul*, 2 Vols (Augsburg, 1732)

> up her Sleeves, put on an Apron, take a broome in her hand, and so passe through the hall where the strangers were, that they might thinke she lived there in the nature of a Servant….[53]

The choice of clothing to be worn in public or semi-public shared spaces has a double effect, first on the wearer, and then on those who observe the wearer; so also does the nature of the activity in which they are engaged. Both guise and disguise are matters of choice, and in this thesis 'guise' is generally taken to be a way of presenting oneself which reflects your nature, and 'disguise' as a way of concealing oneself. In this example Ward was disguising her true status, whereas in wearing pilgrim clothing she was adopting a disguise of sorts for practical purposes. But the boundaries were sometimes blurred, for it could be argued that when they travelled to Rome, Ward and her women were making a kind of 'pilgrimage', the purpose of their arduous journey being bound up with their religious beliefs. Whilst in Catholic Europe they would show two other guises, dressing occasionally as women from the gentry, and later, increasingly as religious women with clothing which reflected their aspiration to be accepted as Jesuitesses; both guises were strategically chosen to reflect their purpose in particular encounters. When living and working in England they avoided any suggestion of dressing like nuns.

On a mission to England in 1617 the *English Vita* recounts how Ward employed two priests in her house, one to serve the women living there with her, and the second to go out to Catholics in the wider community:

> especially the poore to whome Priests could not get but with great danger, and by Night, not having justifiable pretexts, as to those of quality they have, their Houses being frequented by all sorts. To remedy this want *our dearest Mother employed herself and hers, sometimes disguised, sometimes in her owne clothes,* using sometimes familiar conversation, other times authority amongst the common and poore sort [54] [my italics]

[53] Kenworthy-Browne, *Mary Ward,* pp.7-8
[54] Kenworthy-Browne, *Mary Ward,* p.20

Despite these efforts at secrecy, the Protestant authorities sometimes caught up with her, and their surveillance nearly resulted in her arrest when the house she was staying in 'neere London' was 'besett, but at distance, yet so as none cou'd passe in or out without note….. Ours in particular begged our dearest Mother to disguise herself and so slip away.'[55] At first Ward refused, but two days later she left the house just before it was raided, in the disguise of an elite lady, departing 'by the publicke doore in Coach, accompanyed with two other Coaches, besides horses.'[56] This account gives evidence of the kind of resources available to Ward.

Pawn or Player?

On 5 August 1624 a new play by Thomas Middleton called 'A Game at Chess' opened at the King's Men's Globe Theatre. The first character to speak, the Black Queen's Pawn, says:

> I am myself a secular Jesuitess,
> As many ladies are of wealth and worth[57]

The play was a topical satire, with the players represented as chess pieces. It attacked the Spanish ambassador and the Jesuits for their supposed plots to overturn the Church of England and impose Catholicism. The Black Queen's Pawn is almost certainly a representation of Ward, and her inclusion in their schemes within the play supports the argument that Ward was widely understood to be acting as an agent for Jesuit interests in England at this time.[58] The play is anti-Spanish propaganda, but it also points to some of Ward's activities which have been overlooked by historians. Her missionary work in England would certainly identify her, as far as the English government was concerned, as a 'foreign agent', and this thesis argues that, as she travelled around Europe and crossed back and forth to England, Ward was almost certainly involved in providing and disseminating information to her Jesuit supporters and others. As Ann Hughes says: 'Women made good spies and intermediaries, in war

[55] Kenworthy-Browne, *Mary Ward,* p.22
[56] Kenworthy-Browne, *Mary Ward,* p.23
[57] Thomas Middleton: *A Game at Chess* (ed.), T.H.Howard-Hill, (Manchester, 1993) Act I sc.1 l.41-42. p.75
[58] Christine Hicks, 'Staging the Jesuitess in A Game at Chess', *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900,* 49:2 (Spring 2009), pp.463-484

and peace.'[59] This new interpretation shows Ward as a determined and courageous woman with an activist role as an agent for those who supported her cause.

Within the Catholic hierarchy the Jesuits were rivals of the secular priests, especially in relation to the mission in England.[60] As Ellen Macek noted, there was argument within the Catholic community between the secular priests and the Jesuits over leadership and strategy.[61] This conflict was well known in England.[62] In November 1621 John Bennet, the Roman Agent of the English secular clergy, presented a petition written by the late William Harrison, Archpriest of the English Catholic mission to the Holy See.[63] Harrison stated that there had been members of Ward's Institute in England for some years, women who modelled themselves on the Jesuits and had been prepared for missionary activity in England: they learnt Latin and practised speaking in public to hold religious conversation with outsiders. Ward was keen that her followers themselves taught Latin to the most able girls.[64] Harrison condemned them for 'living as they liked,' gadding about the country, insinuating themselves into the houses of the aristocracy, wearing different sorts of dress, consorting with men, talking with people of ill-repute and travelling between England and Belgium.

Harrison's document presents damning 'evidence' against Ward and her women and is partly an indirect attack on the Jesuit mission itself. This thesis does not argue here that she was being manipulated by the Jesuits who supported her; it is clear that she herself formed an alliance with those men who supported her aspirations, and it almost certain that she acted as a go-between, carrying information between the countries in which she travelled, very probably adding to it from her own knowledge

[59] Ann Hughes, *Gender and the English Revolution* (Abingdon, 2012), p.36

[60] Arnold Pritchard, *Catholic Loyalism in Elizabethan England* (London, 1979), pp. 3-10. The long running rivalry which sometimes resulted in outright hostility, stretched into the period when Ward was travelling to and from England.

[61] Ellen A. Macek, '"Ghostly Fathers" and their "Virtuous Daughters": The Role of Spiritual Direction in the Lives of Three Early Modern English Women', *The Catholic Historical Review,* 90: 2 (2004) p.214; Laurence Lux-Sterritt, 'An Analysis of the Controversy Caused by Mary Ward's Institute in the 1620's', *Recusant History*, 25:4 (2001) pp. 636-647

[62] Thomas James, *The Iesuits downefall threatned against them by the secular priests for their wicked liues, accursed manners, hereticall doctrine, and more then Matchianvillian policie. Together with the life of Father Parsons an English Iesuit* (London, 1612)

[63] Doc.240 Dirmeier *Mary Ward* I, pp. 521-528; Summary of the Latin text in Peters, *Mary Ward,* pp.339-341

[64] Doc.713 Dirmeier II, pp.253-254: Ward to Winefrid Wigmore 'I would have Cicilia, and Catherina to begin out of hand to learn the rudiments of lattin, fear not ther loss of virtue by that means, for this must and wilbe so common to all as ther wilbe noe caus for complicence'

and experience. There is no direct evidence of covert activities by Ward, which is hardly surprising since they are, by definition, secret and therefore very unlikely to be recorded in any form. In 1614 Ward told her community at St Omer that she had to travel to England to undertake a task which no-one else could do.[65] It may be that this was family business, as Chambers suggests,[66] but it may also in part have been secret work undertaken in conjunction with the Belgian Jesuits who were helping Ward in this early stage of her enterprise.

In her study of female intelligencers Nadine Akkerman makes the point that women often 'got away with it' because they were thought to be incapable of the rational thought or intelligence necessary to engage in espionage; additionally 'they enjoyed a freedom of movement often denied to men during wars.'[67] Mary Ward's situation was distinct from that of the women whose information-gathering was of use to governments. She had been subject to surveillance from the outset by both English government agents such as William Trumbull, the English envoy in the Netherlands, and by the secular English Catholic priests. Since Ward was very public about her determination to obtain Papal approval for an order of unenclosed women, she was an obvious target for observation and counterpropaganda. The men watching her wanted to find out who was likely to support her; these people could then be dissuaded from helping her. The need for greater secrecy became clear to Ward when her earliest appeals to the Pope for recognition met with delay and strong opposition. This is clear in a letter of 1625 she wrote to Winefrid Wigmore in Naples:

> Mister Rant the English priest who negotiates hear…makes himself horse with speaking against the English Gentlewoemen, and ther Institute……. full of horrible lyes to his holyness, ……. and with him hath don us much hurte very lately.[68]

[65] Doc.101 Dirmeier I, p.214. This is an extract from a commentary in German by Marcus Fridl, who was able to use some documents which were subsequently lost. Chambers provides a translation *Mary Ward* I p.304
[66] Chambers, *Mary Ward* I, p.304-305.
[67] Nadine Akkerman, *Invisible Agents: Women and Espionage in Seventeenth Century Britain* (Oxford, 2018), p.4
[68] Doc. 559 Dirmeier II, pp.95-97

The need for concealment is explicit in her next letter to Wigmore, requesting her to send a document which Ward thought she had left behind in Naples: 'Send yt my good Mother speedily and carefully, take of the cover, and make yt upp lyke a great packitt of letters.'[69] Communicating by letters was essential and the practice of concealment became standard.[70] This secrecy shows her determination to retain control, denying those monitoring her activities any chance to undermine her. Ward seems to have made use of a network of communications involving the Jesuits, as suggested for example in a letter from Perugia to Wigmore, in January 1624. She speaks of money delivered to her 'by the Father Fusola' and asks Wigmore to use

> your carefull dispatch, which ys the safe and speedy delivery of the inclosed: yt ys to one of the Societie ther in Naples, a man of unknown santity; and it coms from a seculer priest, a great servant of God, and friend of ours.[71]

She began to use the coded names which proliferate in the secret correspondence she wrote in the letters sent after her arrest in 1631. The most extreme example of concealment were the so-called Lemon Juice Letters written in invisible ink when she was in prison.

Disobedience: The Lemon Juice Letters

Despite the encouragement and support Ward had received from Maximillian I, Elector of Bavaria, and his wife Elizabeth, who had given her the Paradeiserhaus in Munich to be run as a school, the campaign against her succeeded; she was condemned as a heretic in the Papal Bull *Pastoralis Romani Pontificis* in January 1631, and imprisoned in the Angerkloster, a convent of Poor Clares, by order of the Inquisition. Kept in close confinement in a small cell, she was forbidden to communicate with any of her followers. Now Ward began an outright act of disobedience to male authority. In a letter to Mary Poyntz, who had been left in charge of the Paradeiserhaus, she wrote that at the request of Dean Jakob Golla, who was in charge of her imprisonment, all the women in her communities were to 'observe I pray you [the orders given] with all

[69] Doc. 560 Dirmeier II, pp.97-98
[70] Doc. 769 Dirmeier II, pp.315-316
[71] Doc. 515 Dirmeier II, pp.44-45

promptitude.'[72] One of those orders commanded that Ward must not write or receive any letters from her women. At the time that Ward wrote this letter at Golla's request she was already sending and receiving letters to Elizabeth Cotton and Mary Poyntz, using lemon juice as invisible ink on the wrappings around the food packages they were allowed to pass on to her. Akkerman discusses how common the use of invisible ink made from 'citrus fruits, milk, vinegar, vegetable juice or urine' was throughout the period.[73] As Akkerman explains in an extensive footnote, this secret method of communication was used by the recusant community to which Ward belonged, including the Gunpowder Plotters, some of whom were relatives of Ward. They 'found a way to deliver entire sheets written in orange juice by using 'blank' sheets as protective wrapping for reading glasses, for instance, thus deflecting suspicion from the otherwise suspiciously empty page.'[74]

There are about thirty of the lemon juice letters, though many are incomplete fragments. They give details of the unpleasant cell in which Ward was confined with one companion, Anne Turner, a lay sister who acted as her nurse. Ward describes her poor state of health and gives instructions to her women as to how they should proceed to work for her release and clear her name of the charge of heresy. She had been told that her condemnation as a heretic had come from Pope Urban VIII himself, but she persisted in the belief that she had received her mission directly from God. Ward's defiance of the absolute worldly authority of the patriarchal system embodied in the Holy Father in Rome stemmed from her conviction that God the Father in heaven outranked even the Pope. Lemons, candles, and paper wrapping were the material objects which gave her a voice and enabled her to defy male authority. Ward's digression from the binary paradigm was reinforced by the adoption of male code names for some of her closest companions in these dangerous secret letters. She continued this practice with increased intensity after her release in April 1631.

[72] Doc.1138. Dirmeier III, p.144
[73] Akkerman, *Invisible Agents,* p.149
[74] Akkerman, *Invisible Agents,* fn.49 pp.150-151

Deceiving the Jerusalems

The lemon juice letters were secretly preserved by Ward's followers, although much of her earlier correspondence, written before her imprisonment, has been lost, presumably destroyed by the papal authorities. From the time of her imprisonment, she and her women knew the danger they faced and exercised as much caution as they could, whilst outwardly conforming to the restrictions imposed on them. They had previously referred to their opponents within the Jesuit Order as 'thos Jerusal[em]',[75] but now from her prison Ward began to call Elizabeth Cotton 'James' and Mary Poyntz 'Peter'; the Electress Elizabeth became 'Besse 'or 'Madame' and the Elector 'Bill' or 'Billsgate'; the Abbess of the Angerkloster was 'Margery' and Winefrid Wigmore became Ward's 'Partner'. After her release, and her eventual return to Rome, Ward continued to use code names, although with some changes, so that her letters become increasingly hard to understand. There is a series of letters from Ward in Rome to Mary Poyntz in Munich, in which she builds a rambling but continuing narrative, using codes to discuss her plans; she refers to herself in the third person as 'Fillice' who needs money ('lossings') or 'she must dye, a poor woemen, and cannot sett up one shop…' by which Ward meant a community.[76]

Ward wants to set up a 'loom', and in other letters she refers to herself as 'ould Margeritt', expresses her constant concern for 'her sonn Nedd' (Mary Poyntz), and writes of Margeritt's 'resolution to begin to set upp her loom at Michelmass.'[77] Ward was disguising her disruptive and dangerous programme by creating a cover of it as a commercial project in which it would be acceptable and normal for a woman to pursue. Akkerman discusses the use of code words in covert correspondence, pointing out that in some of these letters 'it is apparent how gender could be altered to create an additional layer of protection.'[78] The genderplay, with her closest companions being ascribed masculine identities, can therefore be seen to work by creating the appearance of a standard heterosexual family structure as well as creating another level of 'disguise' to fool those whom she expects to be reading the letters. Whether it

[75] Doc.766. Dirmeier II, pp.312-313
[76] Doc 1376. Dirmeier III, pp.398-400
[77] Doc.1397. Dirmeier III, pp.418-420
[78] Akkerman, *Invisible Agents,* pp.143-146

helped conceal her plans and activities from those spying on them seems unlikely. By 1639 Ward had arrived back in London, but she was still writing in lemon juice and used the sending of embroidery to act as cover for a secret letter to an unknown member in Rome. This long letter, one of the very few from Ward to have survived from this last stage of her life, details her instructions to the recipient as to how to influence supporters in Rome and states that she is trying:

> by prayer, and privet negatiation that we may have Coman scools in the great Citty of London which will neiver be without miracle but all els wilbe to little purpose the ungratefull nature of thes people considered much might be sayd which hear I cannot say.[79]

Peters suggests convincingly that the letter of recommendation which Cardinal Barberini wrote in 1638 to Henrietta Maria was to open the way for Ward to seek support from the Queen for her plans for her Institute in England.[80] This shows that Ward was continuing to be engaged in clandestine activity, this time with the support of influential and powerful people. She could rely on papal approval for her disruptive work if she was outside Catholic countries. This was not the case earlier in her travels when she was being kept under surveillance by the papal authorities.

A letter from Cardinal Antonio Barberini to the Inquisitor in Siena, for example, states that she has permission to travel to the baths at San Casciano but is being watched and, if she departs from her route, she must be arrested.[81] This visit to San Casciano was one of the many which Ward made to health spas in Europe in part because of her continuing serious health problems. It seems likely that her worst illnesses were caused by gallstones and her concerns about health and bodily matters, both her own and that of her followers, occur very frequently in her letters and in the *English Vita*, beginning with her time in the Poor Clares Convent at St Omer. There was another aspect to these visits for spa treatments beyond the straightforward concern with Ward's illnesses; treatment at spas offered relief from her symptoms, but these visits also gave opportunities for making contacts who might support her.

[79] Doc.1518. Dirmeier III, pp.520-522
[80] Peters, *Mary Ward,* p.603
[81] Doc.1440. Dirmeier III, pp.457-458

Spas, Spies and Sickness

Early modern theories of sickness and the treatments given to suffers, such as purging and bleeding, are well known.[82] Another response to illness and suffering was belief in the need for prayer. In common with her contemporaries, Ward believed that prayer was essential and frequently follows a report of her own illness by asking her correspondent to pray for her. The curative property of relics is absent from her letters however, though a document in Latin, by an English priest who supported Ward in St Omer, states that she was cured of a serious illness in 1614 by having a part of the soutane of St Ignatius Loyola placed on her.[83] By contrast, when writing about this episode, the *Vita* speaks only of 'a dangerous and mortall sickness' for which she received 'the Holy Oyles.'[84] Although the curative powers of relics remained strong for many Catholics, both Catholics and Protestants who had the resources to travel increasingly visited thermal spas, which flourished as both treatment centres and leisure resorts.[85] A short pamphlet by a German, Albert Otto Faber, translated and published in England in 1663, describes the kind of curative properties claimed for particular spa waters:

> …it is a universal preserver of mens bodies…against all kinds of putrifaction, corruption and infection; more particularly, [it] has been found beneficial to many that wanted appetite and digestion. Also it has been found good in the stopping of the stomach, in Consumptions, in Agues, in Vomiting, Surfeit, Ulcers, Scurvy, Feavers, Worms, Cough, Spleen, Flux of blood, shortness of breath and stiches, great colds, Colick, fits of the Mother, Obstructions, Convulsion-fits……[86]

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[82] See Roy Porter (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Medicine* (Cambridge, 2006); Lucinda McCray Beier, *Sufferers and Healers: The experience of Illness in Seventeenth-Century England* (London,1987); Thomas Rutten, 'Early Modern Medicine', in Mark Jackson (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of the History of Medicine* (Oxford,2011) pp.60-81

[83] Doc. 106. Dirmeier, I p.218

[84] Kenworthy-Browne, *Mary Ward* p.18

[85] Olivia Weisser, *Ill Composed: Sickness, Gender, and Belief in Early Modern England* (London and New Haven, 2015) p.124; John K.Walton 'Health, Sociability, politics and culture. Spas in history, spas and history: an overview', *Journal of Tourism History,* 4:1 (April 2012) pp.1-14; Phyllis Hembry, *The English Spa 1560-1814: a social history* (London, 1990); Laurence W.B.Brockliss, 'The Development of the Spa in Seventeenth-Century France', in *Medical History Supplement,* 10 (1990) pp.23-47

[86] Faber, Albert Otto, 1612-1684. *A Relation of some Notable Cures Accounted Incurable as Followeth*. London: 1663.https://www.proquest.com/books/relation-some-notable-cures-accounted-incurable/docview/2240851947/se-2.

Another earlier publication from 1612, 'Translated out of the French into English by G.T' makes similar widespread claims. *A Briefe Discourse of the Hypostasis, or substance of the water of Spawe'* is of particular relevance because 'Spaw,' which was southeast of the city of Liege, was visited by Ward on several occasions.[87] As Ward grew older and was more troubled by various debilitating conditions, she developed much faith in the curative treatments available at spas. The spa trips also provided a good reason for suitably accompanied single women to travel.

The earlier part of this study has shown that freedom to travel around Europe was of major importance for Ward, and the pattern of her visits to spas often coincides with their proximity to the communities which she had established, or wished to establish, giving her the chance to travel and make useful contacts and connections; it also meant that she would be seen in semi-public spaces. She would have been aware of this and must have known that her presence would be noted and reported on by both Catholic and Protestant observers. Liesbeth Corens has explored the way in which the expatriate English Catholic community created a network of communications across national boundaries, and although Ward's frequent journeys are from an earlier period than Corens considers, they fit with her thesis.[88] The English authorities took particular interest in her early trips to Spa, as the activities of the English Catholics in the Low Countries were perceived as a potential threat.[89] Once she had moved further into Italy and Catholic Germany, the papal authorities were anxious to observe her movements and frequently to control them, whilst also acknowledging the therapeutic benefits of spa treatments. The available records show that her visits to Spa took place whilst she was establishing her communities in Liege in 1616, 1617 and 1619. Spa is about 30 miles from Liege and was therefore a convenient location for Ward to

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[87] *A Briefe Discourse of the Hypostasis, Or Substance of the Water of Spaw; Containing in Small Quantity Many Pots of that Minerall Water Verie Profitable for such Patients, as Cannot Repaire in Person to those Fountaines, as by Perusing this Discourse, it Will Plainly Appeare. Translated Out of French into English, by G.T. this Abouesaide Hypostasis, Or Substance of the Water of Spaw, is to be Sold by Doctor Hieronimus Seminus, Italian, Dwelling in S. Paules Alley, in Red-Crosse-Street* [De acidis fontibus sylvae Arduennae, praesertim eo qui in Spa visitur, libellus. De acidis fontibus sylvae Arduennae, praesertim eo qui in Spa visitur, libellus.].(London,1612) https://www.proquest.com/books/briefe-discourse-hypostasis-substance-water-spaw/docview/2240887977/se-2.

[88] Liesbeth Corens, *Confessional Mobility and English Catholics in Counter-Reformation Europe* (Oxford, 2019), passim.

[89] See Doc.150. Dirmeier I, pp.337-338 (Dudley Carlton to Secretary Ralph Winwood); Doc.155. I p.344 (Carlton to Winwood); Doc.161 I, pp.351-352 (William Trumbull to Winwood)

negotiate support for her project. This was the conclusion drawn by Dudley Carlton in his reports to the Secretary of State Ralph Winwood and in 1617 William Trumbull, the English Envoy, wrote to Ralph Winwood from Brussels for directions as to:

> whether your Lordship doe judge it convenyente that before my retourne into England I should (there being cause for it) passe through Leege, under coullor of going to Spa, to drincke the waters of those fountaynes; and in my waye attempte to gayne a man there for your Lordship who may have an eye over the actions of our Englishe Jesuitts and Mistress Warde their hande mayde, who (as I heard) is removed thether with her Expectatives.[90]

Being observed at Spa, and at other thermal treatment resorts, was placing Ward in the clear view of those keeping track of her activities but these visits also allowed her to have meetings with those who might help her. As a traveller writing in 1619 noted, there was a 'monastere de Filles Angloises dites Jesuitesses' at Liege and 'Nous en veismes aux eaux de Spa quelquesunes…'[91] Ward was determined that she and her followers should be free from isolation in enclosed communities. She knew that they were being highly visible and readily identifiable by their clothing. Other spas which she visited before her imprisonment in Munich included San Casciano in central Italy in 1624 and 1625,[92] and Eger in 1628.[93] All these locations placed her either relatively close to the locations of her communities, or en route to them, so that they operated as convenient meeting places. Corens has demonstrated that English Catholics in Continental Europe 'were constantly moving and communicating across their entire dispersed community.'[94] Ward's journeys to spas, places of pilgrimage and to her communities must be seen in that context.

[90] Doc. 161. Dirmeier I, pp.351-352
[91] Doc. 215. Dirmeier I, p.479
[92] Doc. 540. Dirmeier II, pp.68-70; Doc. 574 Dirmeier II, pp.111-113; Doc.575, Dirmeier II, p.113
[93] Doc. 810. Dirmeier II, pp.363-364; Doc. 814. Dirmeier II, pp.367-368; Doc. 817. Dirmeier II, pp.369-370.
[94] Corens, *Confessional Mobility,* p.7

‘Tell Mother Prefect I am her doktor’

As a result of her imprisonment in 1631 there is no doubt that Ward’s health had suffered. In February 1634 two Roman doctors examined her and wrote a medical report detailing her poor state of health. It is not known who commissioned this. Their findings are summarised by Dirmeier in her gloss:

> The two Roman physicians find three conditions that threaten the life of the forty-nine year old: 1 liver and kidney damage which causes severe pain and many stones, with the consequence of loss of appetite and vomiting; 2 fever, coughing and blood spitting, caused by tuberculosis which has led to severe weight loss; 3 poor digestion, which makes consumption of adequate food impossible. Added to this are a severe headache. For years, she had been given purgatives and a lot of medicine to help her, and she was also encouraged to drink thermal water; that did more harm than good. The sick woman is at the end of her strength and can only receive help through her local climate.[95]

Ward had clearly believed in the curative properties of spa treatments, and her own health problems made her sensitive to the illnesses of her followers. As well as giving news of her own health in her letters she took responsibility for the wellbeing of her ‘household’ and her letters frequently exhort the women to take good care of their health and diets; food was an important part of their lives. By this she did not mean the practice, common in some strict enclosed orders, of extreme fasting.

David Gentilcore discusses the effect of the strict abstinence and fasting practised by female and male religious, observing that ‘for nuns in particular, this kind of devotion through self-denial provided a source of power and agency in a male dominated world.’[96] Instead Ward, although sometimes mentioning the need for abstinence for herself in her meditations, seems to have wanted her communities to follow the Jesuit model, who had ‘their focus on teaching and missionizing …. …for this they needed to

[95] Doc.1425. Dirmeier III, p.448 (translated through Googletranslate)
[96] David Gentilcore, *Food and Health in Early Modern Europe: Diet, Medicine and Society 1450-1800* (Oxford, 2016), p.102

be healthy and well-nourished.'[97] Since her faith in the healing properties of spa waters was still strong she often urged her women to drink,[98] but she also frequently sought news of their health, even placing herself in the role of doctor: 'Tell Mother Prefect I am her doktor and so must be till god send her health and a little more leasure.'[99] Writing from Munich in 1627 to Winefrid Wigmore, who was in Naples, about Mary Ratcliffe's 'sicknes' she asks her 'Take you care of her health…..Noe more fasting etc; ask her what order I have given her about fasting, fire, and clothes, and lett me know yf all be not duly observed.'[100] A long letter from Barbara Babthorpe in Bratislava to Wigmore gives a list of the food she and her companions regularly ate there: 'Kraut, supp, beafe, sometimes a little chicken for Mother Rectrice, which she cut in 4 and gave to each a quarter.' Hearing this, the Archbishop Peter Pazmany, who was entertaining the group of women on this day, gave orders that they should 'have dilivered …for us a whole hogg, fatt and great.'[101]

Though probably exceptional, this letter indicates that, when the opportunity presented itself, they were happy to enjoy good food. It also shows that they were sometimes being entertained by wealthy elite people. Receiving gifts of food was one side of reciprocal gift giving, which was an important part of Ward's strategy in building support for her enterprise; it is an example of what Natalie Zemon Davis calls 'the gift mode'.[102]

'Some daily time for handy workes'

It is certain that some time was spent during the day in Ward's schools and communities on needlework and other craftwork, where working together in a group gave them an opportunity to share ideas and information, and sometimes just to gossip. There is little detail of this in the letters, but they indicate that the items made were gifted or perhaps sold, to foster support or provide a small income:

[97] Gentilcore, *Food and Health,* p.102
[98] See for example: Doc.1389. Dirmeier III, pp.411-412
[99] Doc.713. Dirmeier II, pp.253-254
[100] Doc. 674. Dirmeier II, pp.216-217
[101] Doc.782. Dirmeier II, pp.330-335
[102] Natalie Zemon Davis, *The Gift in Sixteenth-Century France* (Wisconsin, 2000)

> As the custome of those good Religious is, to have some time daily for handy workes, and such things as belong to their Habits, particularly certaine frize buttons, to button their Cloakes, and this all in silence: thus employed upon Saint Athanasius his day, and praying that these who should weare those buttons might never committ mortall sinne.[103]

This passage from the *English Vita,* which leads up to an account of another of Mary Ward's early revelations, demonstrates the way in which spirituality and material creativity were often interwoven in devout lives.

Illus. 5 Mary Ward and others sewing, Painted Life of Mary Ward No 9. In Augsburg IBVM (Alamy)

There is little evidence in Ward's letters of what was regarded as the spiritual significance of any objects were made or handled by Ward and her women; most of the material objects mentioned appear to be gifts intended for recipients who were being cultivated as friends or supporters. Needlework skills were of central importance to the lives of all early modern women, cutting across confessional and class divides. Recent scholarship has shown how this practical creativity gave women a 'voice' and agency which was otherwise denied to them. Work such as the production of elaborate embroidered book covers and the cutting and pasting of the Gidding Harmonies discussed elsewhere in this thesis, were often linked to expressions of

[103] Kenworthy-Browne, *Mary Ward,* p.13

spirituality, so that George Herbert, the Anglican divine and poet, could say that 'he most humbly blessed God that he had lived now to see women's scissors brought to so rare a use as to serve at God's altar.'[104] For recusant Catholics embroidered vestments 'constituted a devotional structure in themselves.'[105] Sophie Holroyd has studied the 'rich embrodered Churchstuffe' created by Helena Wintour, whose father was executed for his part in the Gunpowder Plot. She 'never married but lived a quiet life of prayer and charitable works,' and Holroyd's essay demonstrates how Wintour used her creation of priestly vestments 'to practice a form of Jesuit-led meditation on the Virgin Mary.'[106]

Work with textiles, at whatever level, was a task for both rich and poor secular women, but as Silvia Evangelisti observes, for female religious this work was part of the exhortation to nuns to 'pray and work.' They 'painted, sculpted, worked as miniaturists or engravers, and were involved in all kinds of art and craft works, bookmaking and decorating, needle and textile works, which provided income for their houses.'[107] This work had multiple functions for it was an opportunity for a woman to be creative, to engage with her spiritual beliefs and often also to generate income or influence for her community. In her study of the English Convents in France and the Low Countries at this period, Claire Walker discusses the practical need for the women to generate income and notes that 'some French Ursulines manufactured secular and religious furnishings with their needles; other orders produced sweets, preserves and herbal remedies.'[108] The Ursulines have been linked by scholars such as Elizabeth Rapley and Laurence Lux-Sterritt with the work of Mary Ward and her ambition for an active apostolate.[109] As Claire Walker notes, Continental communities made a common practice of taking in boarders and pupils; as Ward's communities developed they

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[104] Quoted in Lynette R.Muir and John A.White (eds), *Materials for the Life of Nicholas Ferrar* (Leeds, 1996) p.76

[105] Sophie Holroyd,' "Rich Embrodered Churchstuffe": The Vestments of Helena Wintour', in Ronald Corthell, Frances E.Dolan, Christopher Highley and Arthur F.Marotti (eds), *Catholic Culture in Early Modern England* (Notre Dame, 2007), pp. 73-116

[106] Holroyd, 'Rich Embrodered Churchstuffe', p.74

[107] Evangelisti, *Nuns,* p.162

[108] Claire Walker, *Gender and Politics in Early Modern Europe: English Convents in France and the Low Countries* (Basingstoke, 2003), p.76

[109] Elizabeth Rapley, *The Devotes,* pp.28-34; Laurence Lux-Sterritt, *Redefining Female Religious Life: French Ursulines and English Ladies in Seventeenth-Century Catholicism,* (Aldershot, 2005); for the Ursulines see Querciolo Mazzonis, *Spirituality, Gender and the Self in Renaissance Italy: Angela Merici and the Company of St Ursula (1474-1540)* (Washington, 2007)

increasingly relied on the income from teaching both local girls and the daughters of English Catholics. It was this aspect of Ward's work which particularly recommended her English Ladies to Maximillian of Bavaria because he was clear that the work of educating the young females in Munich was an invaluable service for the creation of public order, preparing Bavaria's girls for their domestic roles.[110]

The teaching side of the work was never Ward's main concern, but it provided a strong justification for developing her communities, though in the *Scholae Beatae Mariae* of 1612, her first plan for her Institute, which is divided into fifty-seven paragraphs, only one paragraph deals with the curriculum for the students.[111] As Peters remarks, although that paragraph sets out 'a summary of the subjects offered…there is no concrete evidence that in fact these were all taught.'[112] The plan says that the pupils will be instructed in the fine arts (ingenuas artes), singing (canendi), painting and drawing (acu et pencillo pingendi), sewing (suendi), spinning (nendi) and tapestry weaving (peristromata textendi).

Needlework was perceived as an appropriately productive and harmless pursuit and an opportunity for the women to be creative, to engage with their spiritual beliefs and often also to generate income or influence for their community. As Claire Canavan and Helen Smith argue: 'women's devotional needlework possessed a significant charge as a pervasive and effective technology for the conversion or confirmation of others.'[113] The extract from the *English Vita* at the beginning of this section states that the women were in a strict enclosed order and that the work was being done 'all in silence,' but there is every reason to believe that as the women sat in groups in Ward's communities they would have talked, exchanging both trivial news and gossip, and sometimes more significant information. Most of the women who followed Ward to the Continent shared her aspirations for a different kind of single life, living in supportive and active communities, and they would have shared their ideas and hopes whilst working, ideas which were disruptive and challenged the patriarchal order.

[110] Strasser, *State of Virginity,* p.150
[111] Doc.77. Dirmeier I, pp. 171-184; Peters, *Mary Ward,* pp.124-129, 164-165 for summary.
[112] Peters, *Mary Ward,* p.164
[113] Claire Canavan and Helen Smith, 'The Needle may convert more than the pen': women and the work of conversion in early modern England', in Simon Ditchfield and Helen Smith (eds), *Conversions: Gender and religious change in early modern Europe* (Manchester, 2017), pp.105-126

Ward herself spent her time and energy micromanaging the communities by letter when she was travelling between them, or laid up with her frequent illnesses, but her followers worked at practical tasks, along with their pupils, to produce items which could be sold to raise funds or secure influence and support for Ward's project.

Making and giving 'tokens'

As Ward continued her struggle for the survival of her communities, she took the opportunity whilst travelling to acquire materials which would be used in needlework. In 1630, on the way from Rome to Munich, 'she was forced [by plague] to goe about by Ven[ice] where the most curious sowing silkes are to be had, she d[id] not forget, they would be very beneficiall to our house i[n] Germany.'[114] Materials which were needed for the handiwork sometimes had to be transported from one area to another. In 1634 Ward wrote from Rome to Winefrid Bedingfield in Munich asking her to 'bestow upon me so much tiffinie as to make a ruff such as you sent Mrs Poyns but twice as much in quantity.'[115] Three months later the ruffs are again mentioned because Poyntz and Ward tell Bedingfield that 'Father E says he gives thankes for his ruff, it is so gay for his functions.'[116] These extracts about ruffs suggest several things: Ward and her followers were sourcing the materials needed for creating items; they were producing clothing which required a degree of skill to make; these items were then were given as gifts to foster friendships and influence. 'Tiffinie' or tiffany is either a kind of thin transparent silk or a transparent gauze muslin, also known as cobweb lawn. Silk was a rather expensive raw material at that time and Christof Jeggle suggests that in Munich the silk was likely to have come from Italy.[117] Since Ward was writing from Rome, it seems more plausible that the material referred to here is gauze muslin, which was likely to have been imported from India, and for whatever reason was more readily available to Bedingfield in Munich than to Ward in Rome. The manufacture of ruffs required the use of starch made from very fine selections of grain. Professor Jeggle writes that as a bulk item it would be costly to transport, so that in this case it probably came from

[114] Kenworthy-Browne, *Mary Ward,* p. 40
[115] Doc. 1430. Dirmeier III, pp.451-452
[116] Doc. 1438. Dirmeier III, p.456
[117] Christof Jeggle (pers. com.) 2020. Professor Jeggle kindly provided some useful information about trade in both silk and starch at this period; see Andrea Caracausi and Christof Jeggle (eds), *Commercial Networks and European Cities, 1400-1800* (London, 2014)

local sources. The Papal Court in Rome was a centre for elegant and extravagant clothing, and starch would have been in demand, being used for many aspects of tailoring, therefore it would not have been difficult to obtain. A ruff was worn by higher status wearers, so as was noted earlier, Ward's aim was to reach out to those who might offer the most influence in furthering her project. This is confirmed in the first letter above to mention ruffs, which gives more information about her gift making and giving strategies. Towards the end Ward writes to Bedingfield:

> I sent last weeke by a father that goes to Viena a pair of beads fainly strung, to the Emprise, with some fruts in wax; and some such tokens to other freinds; all of which how they are accepted you shall know but yt wilbe Whittsontyde ear they have them.[118]

Ward can be see using material things as gifts to create a positive impression in the minds of powerful people in the ruling elite, making her name familiar. Her strategy was to ensure that her aspirations for her communities of unenclosed single women would be supported and promoted to counterbalance the opposition of the Papal hierarchy.

The running of a school for Bavaria's Catholic girls was a kind of 'gift', and in exchange Maximillian gave continuing practical and financial support at the Paradeiserhaus; Ward's letters demonstrate the interrelationship between the making of the items and their use as gifts. In 1925 the French sociologist Marcel Mauss began work on a ground-breaking book *The Gift: The Form and Reason for Exchange in Archaic Societies*.[119] It opened a new area for cultural historians who began to consider the complex nature of what Natalie Zemon Davis called 'a "gift register" or a "gift mode."' In her work on gift-giving in early modern France Zemon Davis asked a central question: 'Who presented what to whom, when and why, and what did it mean?'[120] The gifts made in Ward's communities were often of little or no monetary or practical value and there was no obligation on the recipients to give back in return, but these gifts had a spiritual value, and as Zemon Davis says in exploring the 'conviction or

[118] Doc. 1430. Dirmeier III, pp.451-452
[119] Marcel Mauss, *The Gift: The Form and Reason for Exchange in Archaic Societies,* (English trans. with foreword by Mary Douglas) (London, 1990)
[120] Natalie Z.Davis, *The Gift in Sixteenth Century France* (Wisconsin, 2000), p.9

prescription' which kept gifts moving in sixteenth century France, 'Setting, phrases, and gestures allowed giver and recipient to understand that a gift relation had been established.'[121] The 'gift relation' had been established with a few powerful supporters such as Maximilian of Bavaria, but the grants made by the Pope of wine and bread to Ward's house in Rome in 1633 and 1634 are more difficult to explain.[122] It is most likely that the Pope was aware of the continuing support Ward was receiving from members of the Barberini family who were closely related to him, as well as Maximilian of Bavaria and other high ranking supporters, and Papal politics ensured that he followed a careful line here, although Ward's efforts to establish a new order had been firmly refused.

In the years before the end of her project, whilst still hopeful of success, Ward was aware of the use to be made of the 'gift mode.' Susan Rookwood was appointed by Ward to be the Superior of the new foundation in Naples, and in 1624 Ward wrote to her about the need to cultivate support there from various potential supporters, but at the beginning of the letter she writes: 'I am almost proud your Reagetser [bookmark] was so admired: I doubt if Mother Margarits sampler be so much looked upon; yt wilbe fitter for some little village then the great Citty or little kingdome of Naples.'[123] References to the material work of the women or their pupils are infrequent, and where it is mentioned, it is generally about the usefulness of these items as gifts to encourage support. In 1624 for example, Margaret Horde wrote from Rome to Winefrid Wigmore 'On Satterday last my hands were tied all the day with weaving of strings (for certain tokens which our Mother is making for your Signoras).'[124]

To interpret Ward's use of the teaching and products made by her women and the girls in the schools as gifts as exploitation, is to overlook the most important factor in her struggle for recognition, which was the real sense of agency and self-worth which she encouraged in her followers; she was enabling them to join in her struggle for singlewomen to be able to live active and fulfilling lives, free of direct male control. How important and inspirational this was for them is shown by the fact that, after her

[121] Davis, *The Gift,* p.14
[122] Doc.1391. Dirmeier III, pp.413-414; Doc.1433 III, p.453
[123] Doc. 506. Dirmeier II, pp.34-36
[124] Doc. 551. Dirmeier II, pp.87-88

death in England in 1645, a handful of women, who shared her aspirations, carried on in the face of opposition from both secular and papal authority.

Conclusion

For Catholic women in the early modern period the choice presented to them from childhood was always marriage, either to a human spouse or to Jesus, as a bride of Christ in enclosure, living therefore under the control of a man, either an earthly husband or a bishop. Ward chose rather to argue for an order of female religious, still to be regarded in one sense as brides of Christ, but to be free of that control. There is no doubt that Ward's parents wanted her to marry to increase the number of Catholic families in England. In the autobiographical fragment she wrote in 1618/1619 she suggested that, as well as concerns for her health, her parents sent her to live in the household of Lady Grace Babthorpe when she was about fifteen in the hope that

> some means of preferment should happen. Which they hoped I would be sooner drawn unto, living abrode then I had byn at home. (Though I refused not thos they offered fourth of anie desirs to be religious, nor other reason but becaus I could not affect them).

Ward clearly states that the reason she refused these three or four offers was not because of a calling to religion, but 'for the simple reason that she did not particularly like them.'[125] This suggestion is innocent enough but is perhaps unconvincing on its own, when her parents' enthusiasm and her strong feeling of duty towards them are considered. Another possibility for Ward's antipathy to any kind of heterosexual union is revealed in an undated autobiographical fragment most likely also to come from her years with Lady Babthorpe:

> First living some years in one howse whear some lived that I had suffitient caus to thinke affected me in such manner as was not lawfull, and yet neither removed my self from the place nor discovered the busines to such as in lyklyhood might have procured remedy without inconvenience. The preist that was confessor to us both …… inquired of

[125] Peters, *Mary Ward,* p.46. Peters discusses the identity of the suitors, pp.41-44.

> me once or twice very seariously yf ever that party showed anie such carrage towards me. I answered confidently that I knew noe such thinge by him, either towards my self or anie other which was false, for he used besyds uncoomly famaliaryty to an other young woeman in that howse.[126]

Ward goes on to excuse her failure to report this sexual abuse to the priest because she feared to commit the 'sinne of detraction', that is 'causing injury to another's good name by revealing behaviour which, though true, should not be made known.'[127] She was afraid of losing her confessor, who said he would leave the house if the man had behaved in that way. These excuses for her denial fit uncomfortably with our contemporary sensitivities about the sexual abuse of young girls but must be taken at face value to avoid anachronism. Whilst this thesis makes no pretence to any kind of psychological interpretation, it is possible to suggest that her experience of this abuse, the details of which we are not told, might well have given her a distrust of sexual relations, and played a part in her determination to remain unmarried. That determination, to stay single, be free of male control, and to pursue an active apostolate by working uncloistered, was shared by the women who became known as the 'Companions of Mary Ward.'[128]

These women had travelled about the continental mainland and England, sometimes with her and sometimes on their own, teaching girls where they could establish schools. They shared her information gathering and used needlework and craft skills to produce items which could be gifted to supporters. As presented by the *Vita*, and Ward's other biographers, they were a very devoted and loyal group and after her death in England in 1645, a handful of women who shared her vision attempted to carry on her programme, despite opposition from the papal hierarchy.

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[126] Kenworthy-Browne, *Mary Ward,* pp.111-112.
[127] Kenworthy-Browne, *Mary Ward,* fn.5 p.112
[128] See Gregory Kirkus, *The Companions of Mary Ward* (Strasbourg, 2007), passim; also Gregory Kirkus, *An I.B.V.M.Biographical Dictionary of the English Members and Major Benefactors (1667-2000)* (London, 2001)

Chapter 4 'The Gidding Virgin': Virginia Ferrar, sericulture and singlehood.

On Friday morning 8 January 1688 Virginia Ferrar wrote a short letter to Goodman Smith, a shoemaker in Kimbolton, reminding him of the 'shooes which were long ago spoken for myself and others if they be ready prey bring them this weeke or the beginning of next w[i] out faile for we extremely want them….'[1] Within six days she was dead.[2] On 11 February 1688 David Salmon, probably a notary, wrote to her brother John Ferrar II enclosing a copy of Virginia's nuncupative will.[3] It seems likely therefore that her death at the age of 60 was unexpected and sudden. Michael Lloyd Ferrar, a descendant, endorsed one of the letters sent to Virginia thus: 'The most prominent woman in the Ferrar family in her connection with Virginia and its Silk & Sassafras industry.'[4]

Unlike Mary Ward or Mary Astell, Virginia Ferrar has received little attention from historians until recently, and has never been the subject of a full-length study. This chapter explores the way a woman in the middle of the seventeenth century moved from an unconventional upbringing, through a period of creativity in her twenties, to a final period to become what has been described as 'a conventional spinster gentlewoman.'[5] The sources for this case-study are two-fold, consisting of information on Virginia Ferrar which appears in studies about Nicholas Ferrar, her uncle, and John Ferrar, her father, or about the community at Little Gidding founded by Nicholas and his mother; and, most importantly, the letters and documents held at Magdalene College, Cambridge in the collection known as *The Ferrar Papers*, which include a considerable number of letters written by and to Virginia, as well as copies of broadsheets detailing her work on the cultivation of silkworms.

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[1] Ferrar Papers 1507 (hereafter FP). This study uses the modern dating system in relation to all records.
[2] Date of death appearing on Memorial in St John's Church, Little Gidding.
[3] FP1517
[4] FP1152. Lieutenant-Colonel Michael Lloyd Ferrar (1876-1971) was a British army officer and civil servant who worked as a chief commissioner of the Penal Settlement at Port Blair on Andaman Islands and Nicobar Islands.
[5] David Ransome, 'Ferrar, John (c.1588-1657)', ODNB: https://doi-org.uea.idm.oclc.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/60958; see also Philip West, 'Little Gidding Community', ODNB: https://doi-org.uea.idm.oclc.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/68969; Nicholas W.S.Cranfield, 'Ferrar, Nicholas (1593-1637)', ODNB: https://doi-org.uea.idm.oclc.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/9356

After Nicholas's death in 1637 John Ferrar became head of the community at Little Gidding; his regime there appears to have been less demanding than that of his brother. Lynette Muir and John White have reconstructed John's account of his brother's *Life*, which Alan Maycock describes as 'quite simply a panegyric of Nicholas.'[6] They included a detailed account of the writing of Nicholas Ferrar's admirers from the seventeenth to the middle of the twentieth century.[7] Nicholas Ferrar's Anglican practices were taken as a shining example for members of the Church of England to follow, and the tone of much of this writing verges on hagiographic. Nicholas died when Virginia was about ten years old, so she probably had less experience of his strict rules for the community. The work which Nicholas instituted, on the biblical Harmonies and the bookbinding for which the family became famous, was carried on after his death and Virginia's involvement in this will be examined later. David Ransome and Joyce Ransome, who have specialised in the study of Nicholas and the Little Gidding Community, have a damning view of Virginia Ferrar's mother Bathsheba, and very little to say about Virginia herself. Alan Maycock's book gives the fullest details of Virginia Ferrar's experiments with silkworms when living with her father at Little Gidding and includes a chapter on her life after her father's death in 1657.

This chapter will redress the balance, arguing that Virginia Ferrar was a creative and skilful woman; showing that her activities and material circumstances, revealed through her correspondence and other documents, give insight into how some women, who remained unmarried, achieved autonomy and authority, despite the contemporary marginalisation of singlewomen. In order to explore what Virginia Ferrar achieved this study has drawn heavily on *The Ferrar Papers* in Magdalene College Library, Cambridge. Beginning first with her family background and upbringing in the community at Little Gidding, the second part of this chapter explores her activities in her twenties, which were the key period in her life. In the third part, her correspondence shows that after the death of her father her life conformed to that of

[6] Alan Maycock, *Chronicles of Little Gidding* (London,1954) p.98

[7] John Ferrar, *Materials for the Life of Nicholas Ferrar',* Lynette R. Muir and John A. White (eds), *Proceedings of the Leeds Philosophical and Literary Society, Literary and Historical Section* 24.4 (December, 1996) pp.263-428. This article was printed separately as *Materials for the Life of Nicholas Ferrar: A reconstruction of John Ferrar's account of his brother's life based on all the surviving copies,* Lynette Muir and John White (eds), (Leeds, 1996); For later accounts of Nicholas Ferrar see the ONDB article detailed above and Joyce Ransome, *The Web of Friendship: Nicholas Ferrar and Little Gidding* (Cambridge, 2011) passim.

many single women, looking after her own interests whilst preserving some independence from the influence of male relatives.

Growing up at Little Gidding

Nicholas Ferrar and Virginia's father John Ferrar had senior positions running the Virginia Company, but a power struggle for control of the Company reached a head in 1624, and at the same time John Ferrar's trading partner, Thomas Sheppard, faced potential bankruptcy and John became liable for his partner's debts. At this point, their widowed mother, Mary Ferrar Woodnoth acted to save the family by using her widow's jointure to buy the Little Gidding estate for £6000 from Thomas Sheppard. According to John, in a letter of 30 January 1626, 'she and her whole family hath repared [there] ever since the beginning of the last summer.'[8] Nicholas, and sometimes John, spent time in London sorting out their business affairs, and Mary ensured the day to day ordering of the Little Gidding household, exerting much influence; she was particularly concerned with the religious education of the younger generation, and was keen that the girls should avoid vanity, and dress plainly. Mary Ferrar Woodnoth died in 1634, when Virginia was seven, but Virginia would have been aware of her as a strong female leader in the house.

Virginia was born at Little Gidding on Christmas Eve and christened on Christmas Day 1627.[9] Her mother, Bathsheba, John's second wife, gets a bad press from the historians David and Joyce Ransome. She is 'fractious,'[10]and 'shrilly dissident,'[11]and both scholars emphasise how Bathsheba disliked the communal life established by Nicholas Ferrar and his mother at Little Gidding. Virginia's parents had married in 1615, long before the community had been thought of, and at a time when the Ferrars still had status and wealth as prosperous merchants in London. The dramatic change in family fortunes in 1624 altered the balance of family life. Nicholas, and to some extent his mother, determined the lifestyle of the new household, and it is argued by Joyce Ransome that Bathsheba 'resented the wifely duty that required her to follow her

[8] FP 587
[9] Lynette Muir and John White, *Materials for the Life of Nicholas Ferrar,* p.115
[10] Ransome, *The Web of Friendship* (Cambridge, 2011), p.14
[11]David Ransome, 'Ferrar, John (c.1588-1657)', ODNB: https://doi-org.uea.idm.oclc.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/9356

husband to Gidding.'[12] There was plainly significant marital stress between John and his wife, and in 1637 Bathsheba wrote to her brother Henry Owen about what she argued was her right to the family's house in London. She told him that 'the Olde woman,' that is Mary Ferrar, had told her sons 'that none of you doe meddell w[i]th my house at london upon noe termes for Saith She my daughter is the next woman after my disseise that must Inioye it.'[13] She goes on to complain in bitter terms that Nicholas has told her husband that a man may do whatever he likes with his wife's property. Perhaps the most interesting thing about this letter is that it was intercepted, and the existing document is a copy in John Ferrar's hand.

On an earlier occasion Bathsheba had argued with her husband against his decision to put their five- or six-year-old son into breeches, seeing Nicholas as behind this plan. In response, Nicholas composed a letter to be read to her in John's presence, setting out the Biblical injunction that wives should submit themselves to their husbands.[14] Clearly Bathsheba was a strong-minded woman, and it seems certain that, as a child, Virginia would have been aware of the tensions in her parent's marriage. To counteract that, she did have some positive examples of marriages which seemed to work well, for example that of her aunt Susannah and John Collet; they had at least fourteen children, with many of whom Virginia had strong family bonds which will be considered in more detail later in this chapter. Whilst it is impossible to say whether her mother's unhappiness negatively coloured her attitude, it is reasonable to assume that she was aware that the power dynamic in marriage could be unpleasant for a woman. There is no evidence that Bathsheba participated in any of the activities prescribed for the women in the community by her brother-in-law.

Education

Little Gidding was an unusual home for a girl to grow up in, although some of the activities which were the responsibility of the women, such as managing a large household and keeping accounts, were part of a conventional upbringing. In establishing the programme of education for the children and young people, Nicholas

[12] Ransome, *The Web of Friendship* p.56
[13] FP 1056
[14] FP 995

Ferrar arranged that the older boys were taught Latin; both the girls and the boys were taught reading, writing and arithmetic. The Ferrar collection contains many letters written by and addressed to women. James Daybell observes 'From the sixteenth century onwards women increasingly wrote their own correspondence.'[15] The letters written by Virginia Farrar throughout her life show that, whilst she wrote fluently, her handwriting in her letters remained untidy, with poorer spelling than other women in her family. As a result, when an important letter was to be sent, it was written out by her father. An example of this, which will be examined later, is the letter to Lady Berkeley sent in August 1650.[16] The question which arises from this is central to any argument about how much Virginia Ferrar's involvement with, and writing about, projects for the colony of Virginia, were in fact her own work.

Joyce Ransome has written about Nicholas Ferrar's plans for the education and upbringing of the children at Little Gidding.[17] Virginia may have been too young to be involved in the reading and storytelling activities which were prescribed for the older children, but she certainly took part in the most unusual activity which the girls and women engaged in, that is the creation of the Little Gidding Harmonies.

The Harmonies, 'the Nunns at Gidding' and Royalist sympathies

The Harmonies created at Little Gidding grew out of Nicholas Ferrar's programme of hourly readings of religious material for members of the household, including 'a gospel 'harmony' together with the psalter.'[18] Gospel harmonies integrated the four gospels into one narrative of the life and teachings of Christ; Nicholas began to create versions at Little Gidding, supervising the cutting up of English bibles and the pasting of chosen passages on pages which were to be bound together. There is scholarly consensus that this physical and artistic work was carried out by the women, chiefly the elder Collet daughters Mary and Anna, whose work showed great skill and artistry.[19] Whitney

[15] James Daybell (ed.), *Early Modern Women's Letter Writing, 1450-1700* (Basingstoke, 2001), p.4
[16] FP 1176
[17] Joyce Ransome, '"Courtesy" at Little Gidding,' *The Seventeenth Century* 30:4 (2015), pp.411-431
[18] Ransome, *The Web of Friendship* p.66
[19] Philip West, 'Little Gidding Community' ODNB: https://doi-org.uea.idm.oclc.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/68969; Joyce Ransome, *The Web of Friendship,* p.69; Whitney.A.Trettien, Cut/Copy/Paste: Composing Devotional at Little Gidding (Duke University unpublished PhD Thesis, 2015)

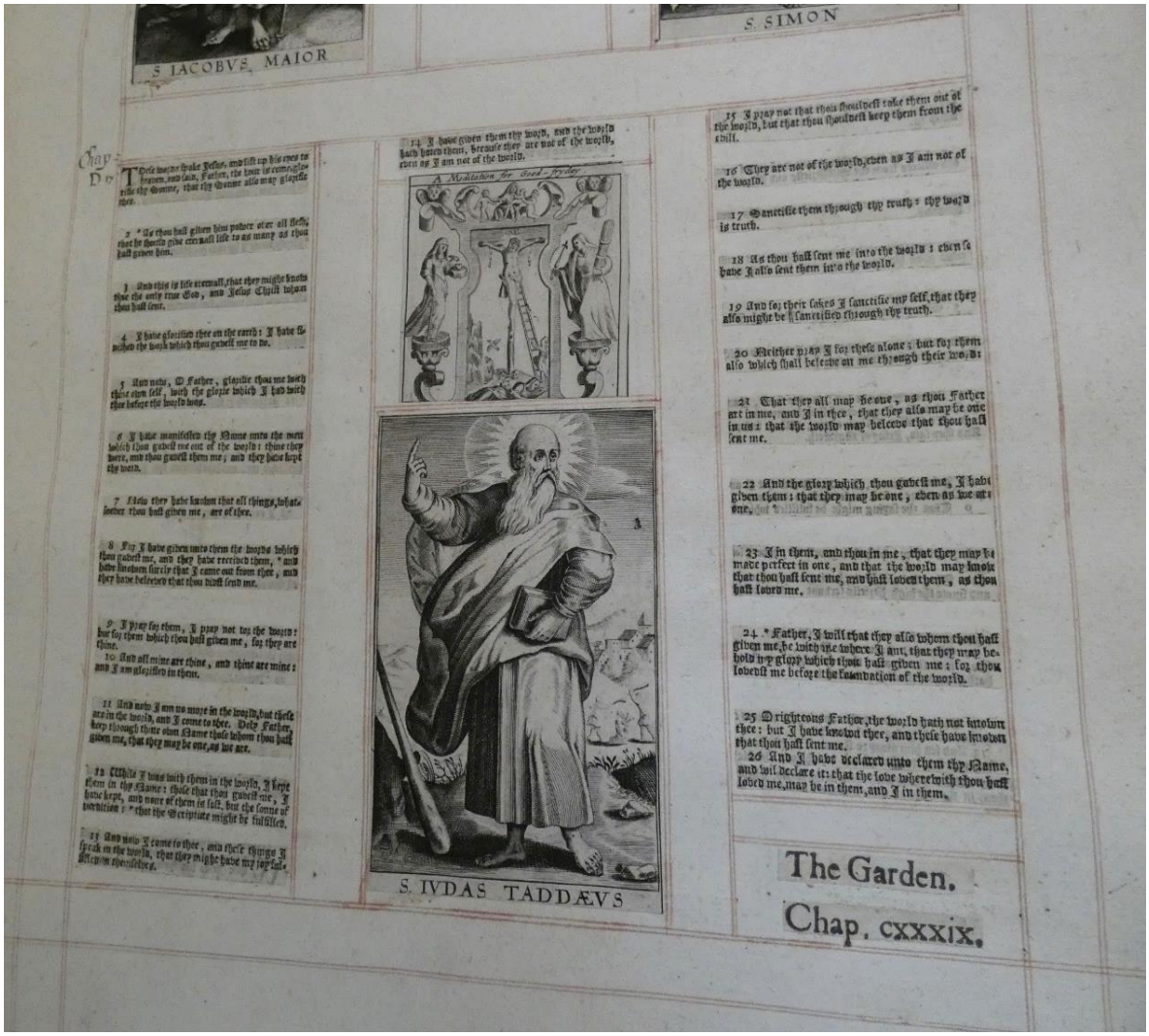
Trettien argues that the women may well have been involved more creatively than simply doing the 'women's handiwork'.

To produce finished volumes, Nicholas Ferrar 'entertained a Book-binders daughter of Cambridge, to learne of her the skill & Art of bookbinding & gilding.'[20] The finished works were highly prized, most notably by Charles I.[21] There are thirteen complete harmonies, of which nine are gospel harmonies. Most were produced when Virginia Ferrar was too young to have played an active part in their creation, but the exception is the so-called Ickworth Harmony, which contains the statement in John's hand, that this was made by 12-year-old Virginia Ferrar.[22] As a part of her material world, it merits special consideration.

Illus. 6 Ickworth Harmony: Detail of Title page. National Trust Ickworth. (photo credit Ann Symonds) (by permission National Trust Ickworth)

Close examination of the Ickworth Harmony shows clearly just how skilled and creative her work was, contradicting the belittling tone of David Ransom, who states that 'she merely pasted in the cuttings.'[23] The choice of verses to be pasted on the large sheets and the writing of headings and other guidance was John's work, but the precision with which sometimes very small extracts were cut out, lined up and pasted in sequence is impressive. The created text is in triple columns, with illustrations, which have also been cut out and added on many pages; very fine double lines of red ink create borders around the blocks of text and in some places follow round an illustration when it breaks through what would otherwise be the line of the border.

[20] B.Blackstone (ed.),*The Ferrar Papers* from '*A Life of Nicholas Ferrar*' (Cambridge, 1938), p.45
[21] For a full discussion of the Little Gidding Harmonies see Ransome, *The Web of Friendship,* pp.159-174
[22] Ransome, *The Web of Friendship* p.167 and fn. 30 p.245
[23] David Ransome, *'*Ferrar, John'



Illus. 7 Ickworth Harmony, detail of fine lines and pasting, National Trust Ickworth. (photo credit Ann Symonds) (by permission National Trust Ickworth)

These red lines are beautifully straight, even, and mathematically precise, and were drawn with a very fine pen. We know that when she was in her twenties Virginia Ferrar drafted maps of Virginia for her father, and the skill at drafting which she shows here, when only twelve, is very impressive. It must have taken very many days of painstaking work to create this book.

Illus. 8 Ickworth Harmony: Detail of fine lines, National Trust Ickworth (photo credit Ann Symonds) (by permission of National Trust Ickworth)

The completed pages of the harmony of the life and work of Jesus would then have been bound into the one volume by Mary Ferrar, no doubt with Virginia's help. The original binding was removed and the book rebound at the end of the nineteenth century, but happily three strips of silk from the original binding were retained and are kept in the case which protects the volume. The silk is very fine and is a beautiful dusky pink.

Illus. 9 Ickworth Harmony: Strips of silk from original binding, National Trust Ickworth (photo credit Ann Symonds) (by permission of National Trust Ickworth)

It is easy to see how young Virginia would have been attracted by the colour and soft delicacy of the fabric, and it may well be this that helped to generate her enthusiasm for sericulture some ten years later.

Whitney Anne Trettien suggests that the role of the women in making the Gidding Harmonies positioned:

> the making of the Harmonies as a kind of textile practice, as the product of women's scissors, [and] strategically allowed the community to negotiate the stigma associated with print production….Women especially risked violating the virtues of chastity and silence by 'speaking' through print' since ideological pressures worked against women entering into the public world of print.[24]

Trettien's argument raises two points: first, the emphasis in the Little Gidding community on the virtue of chastity; and secondly and paradoxically, the fact that in the publications on silk production of the 1650's Virginia's authorship was emphasised.

[24] Whitney Trettien, Cut/Copy/Paste, pp 56-57.

When Anna Collet (c.1602-1638/9) wanted to stay unmarried and embrace 'A Virgin's Estate' she was placed under a great deal of pressure from her parents John and Susanna, who were proposing that she should marry her cousin Arthur Woodnoth. She wrote to her parents in July 1631 to thank them for at last:

> freely to giue mee your leaues and Consents to that w[i]ch I soe much desired both of God and from you that is that I may spend my days in A Virgins Estate.[25]

Both Anna and her sister Mary (c.1600-1680) were devoutly religious, and marriage was simply not compatible with the lives they wished for. Anna used a telling phrase in September 1631 when she wrote to her uncle Nicholas confirming her wish to stay unmarried as she desired 'grace and strenght that I may spend y[e] remayner of my days w[i]th out greater incoumbrances of this world w[hi]ch doe of Nescessaty accompany a married Estate.'[26]

Marriage is identified by Anna as bringing restrictions and 'incoumbrances'. Once the Collet sisters' voluntary vows of celibacy became more widely known and praised by High Church Anglicans, Charles I's Puritan opponents were gifted a powerful weapon to boost their argument that Charles and Archbishop Laud were conspiring to re-introduce Roman Catholic practices. The Little Gidding community was 'described' in 1641 in a pamphlet naming it as *The Arminian Nunnery*.[27] The frontispiece of the pamphlet is illustrated with a crude woodcut of a woman in nun's habit, who is holding a rosary. Women who did not to conform to the Protestant pattern of marriage were not simply ignored but were seen to be dangerously undermining Protestant values.

As the country moved towards civil war, Virginia's father John was now head of the family. The family were loyal supporters of the King, and Virginia would have been aware of the anxiety caused by the developing crisis. Once fighting began, John

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[25] FP 802

[26] FP 809

[27] Anonymous *The Arminian Nunnery Or, a Briefe Description and Relation of the Late Erected Monasticall Place, Called the Arminian Nunnery at Little Gidding in Huntington-Shire. Humbly Recommended to the Wise Consideration of this Present Parliament. the Foundation is by a Company of Farrars at Gidding*. London: 1641. For a detailed examination of the way in which a description, written in 1634 by a visitor to the community, was re-worked in some detail to promote the image of near-Catholicism see Maycock, *Chronicles of Little Gidding* pp.39-57

decided to leave England for the Continent, taking Virginia, his son John, and Mary Collet his niece, with him. Bathsheba, Virginia's mother, did not go with them.[28] No correspondence in T*he Ferrar Papers* exists from this period of exile, but John and his family were back in England at Gidding in late 1645 or early 1646. Parliamentary forces were now assured of victory, and at this time 'attention was focused on peace rather than war' with efforts being made for a negotiated settlement for the restoration of the King.[29] The Ferrars and their wider family had avoided a high profile during this first conflict, and therefore must have concluded that it was safe to return and re-establish their community when Virginia was nearly twenty.

Choices in her twenties

At a period of national crisis, the correspondence we have indicates that the family managed to avoid the worst of upheavals. *The Ferrar Papers* contain a document with draft letters by Virginia, one to her father dated 20 June 1647, and another to her mother nine days later.[30] She is looking forward to John's return and hopes 'that wee may have your presents amungt us whoe are not our selefs tells you are with us.' The letter of 29 June to her mother, who had stayed in London, reassures her that 'wee are very well and in quiet as noe souldiers neere us.' Having asked Bathsheba to buy some clothing materials, she concludes by writing 'Deare mother I hope wee shall shortly have you att home with us for wee doe very much misse you.' It is not possible to say that Virginia was expressing a real emotional need for her mother to be with her, and it may simply have been what she thought her mother would want to hear, but the last part of the sentence does seem to have a note of genuine feeling. Her follow up letter to Bathsheba on the reverse of the sheet is undated, but she gives details of the material she would like bought for her, suggesting that her cousin will arrange for her London tailor to make 'the callimancte for my wainscot and petiecote…as[as] she hath the meseurr…..be pleased to give her the mony to pay for the making.' It is possible that she might have thought that this interest in materials and clothing might in some way bring her closer to her mother, but it is consistent with her later interest in dress.

[28]David Ransome, *'Ferrar, John'*
[29] Mark Kishlansky, *The Monarchy Transformed: Britain 1603-1714* (London, 1996), p.168
[30] FP1113

It certainly departs from the old strict rules of Mary Ferrar senior, concerning the importance of plain dress and appearance.

Another letter from 1647 to her 'Deare and Honored Aunt' also indicates an interest in dress and appearance. She thanks her for

> the erings you sent mee worth 3s and 6d and I gave you but 2s
> ….soe I am indeted to you 1 Shilling … which I have sent you in my
> letter with many thank for your paines in b[uying?] of them.[31]

It was characteristic of Virginia to write of the amount of money involved in these transactions, perhaps a sign of their merchant trader origins, or perhaps because, in a time of national upheaval and insecurity, keeping account of money spent and owed to those around you was important. But the gifts of 'small tokens,' and the requests for materials followed by payments, which appear so frequently in these letters, would have played a part in binding the correspondents together.

In her twenties Virginia Ferrar faced three major episodes in her life as a single woman. The first concerned a probable opportunity to marry, the second her growing participation in scientific experiments and economic debate, and the third was another chance to leave Little Gidding and become part of an elite household with enhanced status as a gentlewoman companion.

Marriage?

Virginia's unusual upbringing helps to explain why she departed from the conventional pattern of parental and social pressures to marry, but it seems likely that when she was nearly twenty five she was in fact presented with an opportunity to become a wife and mother. We cannot say with certainty that remaining unmarried was a positive choice, and David Ransome, who acknowledges that she was made a tentative proposal of marriage, suggests that the offer was never pursued because 'it may be that Virginia like her mother had not the art of pleasing.'[32] There is an entirely different probability, namely that Virginia herself did not want to 'pursue the offer' made by her

[31] FP1116
[32] David Ransome, '*Ferrar, John*'

cousin on her mother's side, Benjamin Woodnoth (d.1673), described in the probate record as 'Gentleman of London.'

His first wife, Elizabeth, who was also Virginia's cousin, died quite suddenly in November 1651 and Woodnoth was therefore left with a four-year old daughter. On 16 September 1652 he wrote to Virginia, addressing her not as 'Dearest Cousin' but as 'Lady' and saying that he kissed 'your hand with this papper as a tender of my love and service to you.' He writes in the conventional flowery terms of a would-be suitor, saying that 'all though my abilities are exceeding weake' and he is 'her unworthie kinsman' he wishes to 'be any instrument to serve you or to doe you ofes of love. 'He has 'mad bold to [pre]sent you with a small token as a tender of my respectes' as 'an acknowledgemente of my love.' There is no doubt that the tone and content of this letter go well beyond the conventional expressions of love between relatives.[33] If Virginia had accepted, she would have moved to London with her husband, been closer to her mother, and would be living in a household which offered more physical comfort than the accommodation at Little Gidding; but she would also be surrendering to the absolute control of her husband, and be unable to continue with the research she had been carrying out.

Further evidence in Woodnoth's later letters supports the suggestion that this proposal came to nothing because Virginia knew enough about her cousin's character to resist any pressure to marry him. Beginning in April 1655 Woodnoth and Virginia's father began to exchange letters concerning payments which Woodnoth claimed were owed to Elizabeth's estate.[34] John's replies contain meticulous accounts of the payments which he said had been made to Elizabeth from an annuity since 1649. Woodnoth was not satisfied with John's response, and the tone of his second letter shifts, addressing John simply as 'Sir,' not as would be expected, 'Honoured Sir.' It is unlikely that John was mistaken, for he was a good account keeper, having had considerable professional experience with the Virginia Company. There is no more correspondence between them in *The Ferrar Papers*, but Woodnoth was not giving up.

[33] FP1214
[34] FP1251,1252

When John died on 28 September 1657, he named Virginia as his executrix, and on 8 October Benjamin Woodnoth wrote to her and after expressing brief conventional condolences, he immediately went on to claim the money which he says John owed him.[35] The fact that this letter was sent to Virginia within a few days of her father's death shows him to be a man lacking sensitivity, and for whom money and his perceived rights took priority. He wrote on 22 October to John Ferrar II, Virginia's brother, asking him to pay up, as he hasn't had a reply from Virginia.[36] They quarrelled fiercely and the row was finally mediated by John's uncle, Nicholas Collet.[37] If Virginia knew her cousin's character, then choosing not to marry him in 1652 makes sense for a young woman who was already aware that marriage might not provide a fulfilling life for a woman; in any case, at this time, she was taken up with work with her father, which was earning her authority as an expert in sericulture.

Working with 'wormes' and maps

At the time of Woodward's overtures to her in 1652, Virginia Ferrar had been working for several years, experimenting with silkworm cultivation. We know this from several sources, including a letter from her father to Samuel Hartlib, with whom John had regular correspondence. Hartlib was at the centre of a network of international correspondents who were united across religious divides to consider practical scientific and economic matters.[38] The work Virginia had been undertaking was designed to explore the best and most profitable way in which silkworms could be cultivated in the colony of Virginia, and it involved her in detailed 'hands on' experiments, which she was carrying out at Little Gidding. From the description John Ferrar wrote, we can begin to understand the practical tasks she was engaged in. Hartlib had told him of an Irish gentlewoman's success in keeping silkworms on 'Lettis leaves.' John Ferrar responded in November 1653 that now Virginia:

> shall herselfe againe make a third trial in that she hath 2 yeares last past tried her selfe to haue keept some with lettiss leaues and soe

[35] FP1303
[36] FP1304
[37] Alan Maycock,*Chronicles,* pp.104-105
[38] M.Greengrass, 'Hartlib, Samuel (c.1600-1662)', ODNB: https://doi-org.uea.idm.oclc.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/12500

> did and they thrived as well as those as she keept with mulberys but still when the time of spininge came they would not spinn but then dyed and this put her out of harte to trye farther yeat I may tell you she perswaded a gentillwoman near her to keepe some with lettiss 25 days and then feed them with mulberry leaues; But now she resolves upon your Intimation of the Experiment made in Ireland to try a third time and to give you an Accompt of her success in Iune next if god permit.[39]

From this and other letters we know that she had worked at this project over several years and developed contacts in England and overseas with whom she exchanged ideas and information.[40]

In the spring, she worked with a gardener at Gidding to raise lettuce plants; when these were large enough, she placed the silkworms, which she had hatched from eggs she had obtained earlier, onto these lettuce plants, at the same time placing others on mulberry trees, which were being cultivated there; she was either doing this herself or directing the garden hands who were working for her. She must have enjoyed this outdoor work, repeating the experiments over several years. These practical activities would have been hardly possible if she had been married, with children and responsibility for running a household. Alan Maycock refers to a letter dated 1654 written to a Colonel Yeardley's wife, in which Virginia apparently spoke 'by experience of 20 years' knowledge.'[41] It seems unlikely that she had been keeping silkworms since she was a child of seven or eight; but it is possible that, during their exile on mainland Europe, she had been able to observe, and perhaps help, in continental silkworm production. Our main source of information for Virginia's work with silkworms comes from her father's accounts of her work, published by Samuel Hartlib in 1652 and 1655.

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[39]John Ferrar To Samuel Hartlib, 28 November 1653', Hartlib Papers Online, https://www.dhi.ac.uk/hartlib/view?docset=main&docname=39A_02_012&term0=transtext_ferrar#highlight (accessed 4 Oct. 2023)

[40] The fullest general account of the Ferrars involvement with sericulture is found in Maycock, *Chronicles* pp.80-86

[41] Maycock, *Chronicles* p.84

In these she is denied a direct voice and becomes 'the Lady.'[42] Her name and virgin status were emphasised in both publications and correspondence, and the motivation for, and effect of this, will be considered shortly. There was a growing movement during the Republic and Protectorate periods to encourage trade, and the Ferrars' longstanding interest in the colony of Virginia fitted with this; the enthusiasts for trade also had a strong interest in promoting Protestant Christianity in the colony.

Sarah Irving-Stonebraker has explored the link between the Ferrars' practical and economic interests in the colony with 'their theological vision of the restoration of humanity's empire over nature.'[43] Religious zeal was fundamental to Nicholas Ferrar's ideas for the community, but Virginia's letters do not reveal her as motivated by this, though there are references to promoting Christianity in some of John's correspondence.[44] Virginia Ferrar's interests centred on the practicalities of silkworm cultivation, and on this she exchanged information and some relevant items with several colonists.[45] The question of the correct food for silkworms was a key one for those who wished to promote the industry, and there is some evidence that Virginia had been observing the best food sources for the creatures for a long period. In the first of the pamphlets published by Hartlib, John Ferrar writes that she is an authority on the subject: 'she having been many a year a Mistris of Silkworms.'[46] Whilst he may be exaggerating her experience, this suggests that she was working with silkworms earlier than 1651, and her letter to Colonel Yeardley's wife mentioned above supports this. By the middle of the century there was a strongly renewed interest in the silk industry in Britain and Europe.[47] Linda Levy Peck observes that 'Virginia Ferrar's work

[42] *A Rare and New Discovery of A speedy, and easie means, found out by a young Lady in England, she having made full proofe thereof in May, Anno 1652 printed for Richard Wodenothe in Leaden hall street* (1652); and
*The Reformed Virginian Silk-Worm, or a Rare and New Discovery of a speedy way, and easie means, found out by a young Lady in England, she having made full proof thereof in May, Anno 1652 London, Printed by John Streater, for Giles Calvert at the West end of Pauls, (*1655)
[43]Sarah Irving-Stonebraker, 'From Little Gidding to Virginia: the seventeenth century Ferrar family in the Atlantic colonial context,' *The Seventeenth Century*, 33:2 (2018) pp.183-194
[44] See for example FP1186
[45] See for example FP1153; FP1190; FP1202; FP1203; FP1205; FP1230
[46] *A Rare and new Discovery of a speedy way and easie means* (1652), p.3 of part 2
[47] For a full discussion of the cultural, political and economic aspects of the silk industry see: Linda Levey Peck, *Consuming Splendor: Society and Culture in Seventeenth-Century England* (Cambridge, 2005), pp.1, 74, 85-111; the interest in silk production was promoted in the colony by acts of the Virginia assembly at this time and is briefly mentioned by Nelson Klose 'Sericulture in the United States' *Agricultural History*, 37:4 (1963), pp.225-234

reflects the interest of Stuart women in botanical studies.'[48] John Ferrar says at the beginning of the letter to Hartlib, quoted above, that his daughter 'is a lover of raritys in these kinds' and her interests went further than producing silk.

A Broadside printed for 'Richard Woodenoth at the Star under St.Peters Church in Cornhill' in 1650 promotes the *'wonderful and admirable Vertue of the Sassafras-Tree in Virginia and the most excellent Cures to be effected by the Tobaccos Green leaf and Juyce.'*[49] The author is given as Virginia Ferrar. A second publication in the Magdalene College collection is entitled *Virginias Health and Wealth proposed by Virginia in England to Virginia in America 1650*.[50] David Ransome, who has worked extensively for many years on the Ferrar family papers, states that the Sassafrass broadsheet is in John Ferrar's 'clotted prose'.[51] Whilst acknowledging the practical work in horticulture and with silkworms which Virginia carried out, Ransome suggests that her interests were at the instigation of her father, and this work was done to please him. Considering the significant amount of time and effort she must have put into these experiments, it is argued here that Virginia Ferrar's interest was self- generated, although her father supported and encouraged her. There is a marginal note by John Ferrar, on a handwritten document attributed to him, entitled 'The History of the Silkeworme' providing further evidence of the time and effort which Virginia put into her silkworm studies:

> And let me add a strange yeat true story. VF one [indecipherable] day last 1653 Spyed by Chance 3 or 4 silk worme bottom [indecipherable] on an Appel tree and wondering at it Called Mary to see theme And she looking up higher spyed more of them and so lookinge upon & other trees by it she discovred them above.[52]

Apparently as early as 1650, Virginia received a letter and verses sent by a planter, John Pickering, praising her work on silkworms, addressing his verses 'To the honoured

[48] Levy Peck, *Consuming Splendor*. p.105
[49] FP1183
[50] The description of this book in the digital archive states that it was originally of eight pages and now has sixteen, inconsistently numbered, and that there is 'reason to believe that the true author is John Ferrar himself.' This note is likely to be by David Ransome.
[51] David Ransome, *'Ferrar, John (c.1588-1657)'* ODNB
[52] FP1187

Lady Mrs Virginia Ferrar on her new discovery of the Silk-trade in this part of the world by Silk wormes keept on trees.'[53] In his letter, Pickering refers to books which she sent last year, so her correspondence can be dated to at least as early as 1649, though the dates here may be incorrect. A broadsheet which Alan Maycock says is amongst the Magdalene papers, and of which five hundred printed copies were sent out to the colony in 1654, is addressed: 'To All the Ingenious Virginia Gentle-men Planters that are upon the most happy design of a Silk Trade there.'[54]

These different publications all claim that what distinguishes Virginia Ferrar's work is her 'discovery' that the Virginia silkworm will feed and thrive on other trees and shrubs than mulberry trees; and secondly, that the silkworms do not need to be housed in specially built elaborate 'chambers' but can be left outside to grow in the trees provided they are made safe from the birds which will otherwise eat them. The information about the housing shows that not only was Virginia working outside with the creatures, but must have also created space in the house, or in outbuildings, for the standard 'chambers' for her experiments or she would not have been able to make this comparison.

Whilst the enthusiastic claims for these suggestions came to nothing, and sericulture in Virginia never replaced tobacco growing, the letters and complimentary verses dedicated to her show that she achieved fame, recognition and praise for her work, forming connections through her letters, and the replies she received show a genuine respect for her by men and women. Among her correspondents whose letters are at Magdalene College, are Edward Johnson of Mulberry Island, who wrote to both daughter and father;[55] Michael Upchurch[56]and William Sharman.[57] Her female correspondents included Mary Ward, her niece whom she knew as Little Mall.[58] There is also a verse celebration from 'your humble Servant Abigaill Clement.'[59] This last

[53] FP1190. Clearly there is uncertainty about the date of this letter, and this is indicated by the question mark against the date in the catalogue.
[54] Maycock, *Chronicles* pp.81-82. This printed document does not appear in the digital archives, but a note on the recto side of FP1236 says that this document is 'Ruff & Riming verses of the Natrall Silke Worme 1653 And also papers of it in prose w[hi]ch were afterward printed 500 and sent to Virginia 1654.'
[55] FP1202
[56] FP1203
[57] FP1205
[58] FP1200
[59] FP1194

document is notable for the use it makes of gendered images with classical references. Virginia herself is 'Virgin Sweet' and 'Virgine Rare'. The use of gendered language in sericulture publications is discussed by Alison Bigelow, who explores the way that the ascribed gender of silkworms changed from female to male in other contemporary treatises.[60]

'Rare spinster': 'If now a Virgin's counsel you will take'

Another writer, identified as Joseph Beaumont, whose document is also dated 1650, wrote 'Upon the Silkworm' which he personifies and identifies as 'Rare Spinster.'[61] This description is almost certainly a play on what was known of Virginia Ferrar's unmarried state. A printed poem, again dated as possibly from 1650, refers to her directly as 'The gidding Virgin'.[62] The dating of these documents is problematic. If correct, it means that either the existing printed leaflets, published by Hartlib, had been preceded by manuscript versions which had already circulated in the colony, or that there were earlier print versions, none of which have been found. The emphasis on both her name, and her virgin state is present throughout all these documents. Whilst we cannot say with any certainty how the continual play in the texts on her name and on her virginity evolved, it certainly created a special kind of authority for the work, both by locating her as a distinctively named individual, and giving her identity a kind of unique status as a chaste and pure woman.

The letter written to Lady Berkeley, wife of the Governor of the colony, dated 20 August 1650 provides a very clear example of this clever promotion, and the date suggests that the Ferrars were seizing the opportunity to make an impression on the Governor's new wife.[63] The purpose is to persuade the lady to get her husband to mount an expedition westward, which would discover 'a short and speedy safe way to the East Indies.' This false idea of the geography of the North American continent is repeated in the maps of Virginia included *in A Rare and New Discovery of a speedy and*

[60] Alison M.Bigelow, 'Gendered language and the Science of Colonial Silk', *Early American Literature,* 49:2 (2014), pp.271-325
[61] FP1191
[62] FP1192
[63] FP1176. An entry on Sir William Berkeley in the *Encyclopaedia Virginia* says that he married in 1650, but the identity of his wife has never been determined. The Handlist for the Ferrar Collection is in error ascribing this to Lady Frances Berkeley, who did not marry Sir William until 1671/2.

easie means, found out by a young Lady in England, and was one of John Ferrar's hobby horses. In the opening section of this long letter, the theme of the writer's virgin status is presented:

> what I now doe to you as but parte of my duty most humbly offered by your most swete selfe as the fitter meanes I could find considering my Virgin Condition my most sincere and harty thankes for [Sir William's] soe benigne remembrance of his hande Maide….

The first section goes on to credit the discovery of the New World and the founding of the colony itself as the product of women's foresight, speaking first of Isabella of Spain, supporting with her own wealth Columbus's expedition, then going on to speak of Elizabeth I:

> And Our most Famous Queen Elizabeth willing in a kind to be an Imitator of her heroyicke Spiritt and of more happiness to her subiects gave order for planting that land which now you posses and became the Noble Godmother unto it giving it as she was a Virgine Queen the Happy and Glorious name of Virginia… you see this new world had his first findings out by the meanes of women and the parte you are in planted by the command of an other of that sexe.

Promoting the idea of the expedition to the west, the writer suggests that the discovery of the 'short and speedy safe way' to the East Indies will be hailed as 'the Lady Berkeley's glorious discovery.' Then Virginia as the writer is once again brought to the forefront:

> Madame I am Virginia had I binn Virginius not my poore simpell lines should have thus presented them selves unto you but my person should have attended your noble commands upon this Discovery.

The identity of Virginia Ferrar as virgin author is emphasised in several lines as she sets out her relatives: *'*my worthy Grandfather…. My much honoured Unkell My Deare Father… My ever much honoured Grandmother'…and signs with her characteristic signature as: 'Your most humble and devoted Handmaide Virginia Ferrar'.

It is not possible to say how much any these texts were authored by Virginia Ferrar herself. Alan Maycock, writing over half a century ago, says that John Ferrar was the author of the letters which 'were drafted by John in his daughter's name …and signed by her for dispatch to the person concerned' and that 'Virginia would have been incapable of writing the kind of reports that were needed.' His explanation is that John was happy 'that she …who had done all the work …should have all the credit.'[64] It is argued here that this intelligent and confident woman played an active part in the drafting. Throughout all this literature the emphasis on Virginia, both on her name and her virgin status, created what today might be called a 'unique selling point', overcoming any disregard for her work, as a woman engaged in experiments and advancing practical schemes for economic advantage. Previous historians, like Maycock and especially David and Joyce Ransome, have consistently underwritten or even denied Viginia Ferrar's role in these projects.

The broad belief that women were incapable of rational thought was not necessarily shared by the people in Hartlib's intellectual circle. For a wider audience, by identifying Virginia Ferrar's work as that of a chaste virgin, the documents allowed her experiments to be published and her expertise to be promoted. As Keith Thomas says,

> 'The overwhelming concern [in this period] was to safeguard female chastity…Discretion and modesty were the qualities to be inculcated…..and all women were urged to be bashful, shamefast and unassertive in their demeanour.'[65]

Virginia Ferrar's authority is mediated through the voice of 'The Lady' and narrated at second hand by a male, her father. This gives her a kind of sanctity, which worked even for a Protestant audience, and prevented her work being dismissed. The promotion of Virginia's virgin status evolved out of the circumstances in which father and daughter were working, and Maycock is right when he says 'John wished that she should have all the credit' for her work. This certainly fits with a cultural shift which began at this mid-point in the century, with the publication of books attributed to women on medical science and applied chemistry, together with the contributions of women to the

[64] Maycock, *Chronicles*. p.79
[65] Keith Thomas, *In Pursuit of Civility: Manners and Civilisation in Early Modern England* (London, 2018), pp.47-48

'Hartlib Circle,' and the interests of Stuart women in botanical studies, noted by Linda Levy Peck.[66]

That she worked closely with her father from at least 1649 is shown in a draft letter she wrote to Su Chidley, her cousin, in November, to thank her for some syrup Su had sent because she had been unwell. She apologises for the delay in thanking Su because

> 'my deare Father hath soe imployed mee about virginia and the mappes of virginia that the obligation before mee all most put mee in a quandary were I was but recalling my fancie and taking a litle respite.'[67]

And in another letter, in December to Ann Mapletoft, we have a picture of Virginia who says that she is writing on 'Monday night from my fathers Chamber by the fier side.'[68] This was the depths of winter, she had been unwell, and his enthusiasm for his Virginia work may well have caused him to place some pressure on her. We can guess that drafting maps by candlelight indoors in winter was not as pleasurable as working outdoors in the spring and summer, but the fact that she is credited with drawing a map of Virginia shows that she had talents as a draftswoman and was a credible mapmaker as well.

The interrelationship of the Ferrars' work on maps and sericulture was the subject of an article by Janice Neri and Danielle Skeehan in 2012, detailing marginal annotations in a copy of a 1635 edition of Gerhard Mercator's *Atlas; or A geographicke description of the world,* found in the John Carter Brown Library.[69] The authors suggest that

> the annotations seem to be composed as a series of written conversations between Virginia Ferrar and her father John Ferrar over the course of several years [so that] conversations that began in the margins of Mercator's atlas generated a wider circle of

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[66] See also Lynette Hunter, 'Sisters of the Royal Society: The Circle of Katherine Jones, Lady Ranelagh', and Frances Harris, 'Living in the Neighbourhood of Science: Mary Evelyn, Margaret Cavendish and the Greshamites' in Lynette Hunter and Sarah Hutton (eds), *Women, Science and Medicine 1500-1700*: *Mothers and Sisters of the Royal Society* (Stroud, 1997), pp.178-217

[67] FP1145

[68] FP1148

[69] Janice Neri and Danielle Skeehan, 'The Mystery of the Silkworm: Conversations in the Reading Room and Beyond' *I Found It at the JCB, The John Carter Brown Library* (August 2012) https://www.brown.edu/Facilities/John_Carter_Brown_Library/exhibitions/foundjcb/pages/2012august.html

> correspondence that stretched from Huntingdonshire to London and across the Atlantic..[these conversations] remind us that books are material objects, as well as conveyors of information.

Unsurprisingly, David Ransome challenges Neri and Sheehan's suggestion of a positive role for Virginia in these marginalia, by arguing that John 'credited her with activities and interests that were more strictly his own.' Using his knowledge of the Ferrars' handwriting, he minimises her role, attributing the work to John, and takes the opportunity once again to include a hostile passage about Bathsheba Ferrar, Virginia's mother.[70] Virginia's handwriting was always untidy, so it is plausible that John wrote the marginalia for her.

The frequency and intimate nature of her correspondence with her woman relatives shown throughout the existing letters reveals another side to her character: an interest in the 'female' world of gentility, which is quite distinct from her work as a mapmaker and expert with silkworms. This important and more conventional aspect of her life is shown in the last significant development which occurred in her twenties, the offer of employment away from Little Gidding by 'Lady Lenthrop.'

A Lady's Gentlewoman?

In a draft letter to her Aunt Susannah Collet, with a previously suggested date of 1649, Virginia writes of two subjects which show the need to amend the date to 1655.[71] First she refers to

> my Deare Ann Mapletoft safe delivery of a daughter and of her increasing in health and strethg with her sweet babe which I bless god shee continew in and makes a very good Nurs.

She then goes on to write at length of the offer she has been made by 'Lady Lenthrop.'The first problem with the 1649 date is that Virginia's cousin and dear friend Ann Mapletoft was almost certainly not married in 1649. Ann or Anna lived at Cumberlow Green in North Hertfordshire with Virginia's Aunt Margaret Legatt (nee

[70]David Ransome, 'They.Found.It.At.The.JCB.' *I Found It at the JCB, The John Carter Brown Library* (July 2014) https://www.brown.edu/Facilities/John_Carter_Brown_Library/exhibitions/foundjcb/pages/2014july.html

[71] FP1150

Collet), though Ann and her brother John had been brought up at Little Gidding. She was the daughter of Su and Joshua Mapletoft. Her father had died in 1635, and her mother Su had remarried James Chidley. Ann was born in about 1624, so was close in age to her second cousin Virginia, and exchanged many affectionate letters with her. In a letter to Virginia dated May/June 1650 for example, she writes of Virginia's 'most true constant Lines euery weeke……dearest friend.'[72]

The fact that Virginia refers, in the letter to her aunt Susannah, to Ann Mapletoft's safe delivery might at first suggest that her cousin had produced a child whilst unmarried. This is so unlikely that instead the answer must be that Virginia was so used to referring to Ann by her maiden name that she simply slipped here in her letter to Susannah Collet. Whilst there is no direct evidence of the date of Ann's marriage, details from other letters point to 1653 as the most likely date. On 2 July that year Virginia wrote to her as follows:

> If I may bee soe happy as to have it granted mee & I suppose thou guesest what it is by this time that is to see thee come along with thy good frind hither …….how glad I should bee to see thee and to tell thee how welcome thou shouldst bee to me ……thou shalt be most hartly wellcome wellcome to thy beloved as any frind in the world [73]

The letter was addressed to Ann Mapletoft, so the safest conclusion is that Ann was engaged, and the invitation was to the couple who were soon to be married. On 2 July 1653 in a letter to Virginia, Jane Collet referred to 'fforty shilling left by Cossen Mapletoft for Cosen Alsop'.[74] Undated drafts from Virginia possibly to Jane Collet and Margaret Legatt include a reference to 'Cousin Ann' with no surname mentioned.[75] The final evidence of Cousin Ann's marriage comes in a series of letters beginning in 1657.

On 26 April 1657 a letter was sent to John and Bathsheba Ferrar at Little Gidding. It was drafted by Su Chidley, Ann's mother, but signed by Ann herself. The contents give

[72] FP1168. Fuller information on Ann Mapletoft is found in Maycock, *Chronicles* pp.106-107
[73] FP1225
[74] FP1229
[75] FP1258

us a picture of a young mother in some distress who has almost certainly been widowed:

> Most deare & honoured unkell & Antt, I understand by my worthy unkels that you both are willing to be stow your Charity one my poore Chile & to take y[e] care & trubell to bringe her up This is so greate a favour as I want words to expres my thankes to god & you for it but I will ever acknowledge my selfe bound to prey daly to god to reward you an to …… in this world & eternally in y[e] world to come I shall god willing ……. to you as soon as you will please to give me leave having no further to trouble you with but the tender of my humble duty to you both prainge for your longe lives & health I take leave & ever remain your most obliged
>
> Neece & servant Ann Alsop[76]

The child is presumably the daughter whose birth Virginia reported in 1655.[77] Locating the probable date of Ann Mapletoft's marriage and the subsequent birth of her daughter provides evidence for a date of 1655 for the letter in which Virginia writes of the offer she has received of a position with 'Lady Lenthrop'. David Ransome argues for this date in a note on the Handlist, based on details of the Leventhorpes whom he identifies as the 'Lenthrops'. Thomas, the 4th Baronet, married Mary Bedell on 2 January 1655. The new Lady Leventhorpe is therefore almost certainly the woman who was offering the position as 'gentellwoman' to Virginia Ferrar.

The bulk of the draft letter written to her 'Deare and Honoured Aunt' soon after 25 March is given in full because her tone and the detail she gives show the excitement and anxiety which Virginia was feeling:

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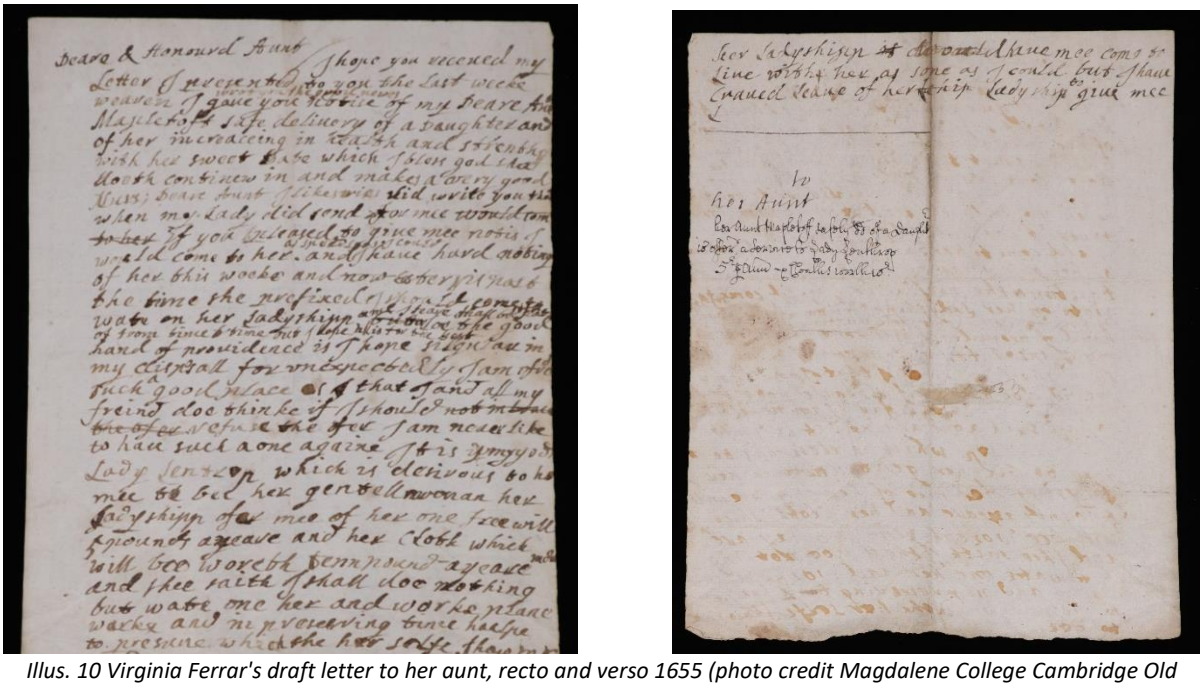
[76] FP1275

[77] The child is referred to in subsequent letters as 'Little Peg', perhaps short for 'Margaret', a family name. In late May 1657, Nicholas Collet in London writing to John Ferrar at Little Gidding mentions 'the Coate for Cosen Alsops Childe.' The cover accompanying this refers to the letter being accompanied by a 'Bundle in Brown Paper', presumably the small girl's coat (FP1281). In Spring 1658, Virginia wrote to Ann Alsop, reassuring her that 'Pegge hath lost her Ague quit and is very well I thanke god.' (FP1308). On 2 July 1658, Judith Mapletoft wrote to her sister-in-law Ann Alsop, who was then at Little Gidding. Included on that letter is a note by Ann Alsop listing money set out 'since my dearest went.' This note is almost unreadable as a digital image and the 'dearest' may be a reference to Little Pegge, or Ann may be referring to her dead husband. (FP1319)

Deare Aunt I likewise did write you that when my Lady did send for mee [~~would com to her~~] If you pleased to give me notis I would come to her \as speed as I poss could/and I have hard noting of her this weeke and now Easter wil past the time she prefixed I should come to wate on her Ladyship \and I feare shalbe just of [……] since b'time but I hope all is for the best/ hand of providence is I hope [?singular] in my disposal for unexpectedly I am ofr'd such a good place as that I and all my friend do thinke if I should ~~not imbrace the ofer~~ refuse the ofer I am never likely to have such a one againe of [?to] is……y[e] my god Lady Lenthrop which is desirous to ha mee bee her gentellwoman her Ladyshippe ofer mee of her one freewill 5 pound[es] a yeare and her cloth which will be worth tenn pound a yeare \moe/ and shee saith I shall doe nothing but wate on her and worke plane worke and in preserving time haalpe to preserve which she herself show mee to doe

(On the reverse)

her Ladyship ~~is~~ disposed have mee come to live with her as sone as I could but I have craved leave of her Ladyship \to/ give mee…..[78]



Illus. 10 Virginia Ferrar's draft letter to her aunt, recto and verso 1655 (photo credit Magdalene College Cambridge Old Library) (by permisson Magdalene College Old Library)

[78] FP1150

The insertions and deletions at the point where she voices her concern at not having heard from 'her Ladyshippe,' together with the reference to 'the hand of providence,' show Virginia Ferrar's feelings of anxiety in this letter to her aunt. She replaced 'should not imbrace the ofer,' putting instead 'refuse the ofer.' She seems both muddled and upset at this point and may well have been regretting her request to have time to consider the offer. The enthusiasm with which she writes of the benefits she would receive suggest that she wanted the position, but the fact that she asked for time before answering may have been because she felt a loyalty to her father, who was showing signs of old age; perhaps Virginia Ferrar's request for some time to consider was not pleasing to the elite woman, and another was then offered the coveted position; there is no more information on this anywhere else, and as David Ransome states 'there is no record of Virginia's accepting the offer.'[79]

Virginia Ferrar was now twenty-eight years old. The offer of marriage to Benjamin Woodnoth had come to nothing. We have no record of any other suggestions of marriage, and we know that for the last seven or eight years at least she had been developing an acknowledged expertise in breeding silkworms and in processing silk, as well as other projects to do with the colony of Virginia. She had been working closely with her father in publishing her conclusions, as well as engaging in correspondence with men and women in Virginia. But as has been mentioned earlier, at the same time there is plenty of evidence of her writing to, and visiting with, her female relatives. Amongst the expressions of love and good wishes, her letters also demonstrate a lively interest in fashionable dress, items of which were often purchased for her.[80] This aspect of her character ties in with the evident excitement she felt at the prospect of becoming gentlewoman to Lady Leventhorpe. As has been indicated earlier in this thesis, a single woman could make a respectable and profitable life as a gentlewoman in an elite household. Why did this major change in her way of life not happen? Whilst

[79] Ransome,'Ferrar, John (c.1588-1657)'

[80] For example on 1 November 1647 Virginia wrote to her Deare and Honored Aunt thanking her for 'the erings you sent me worth 3s and 6d …' (FP1116); on 23 April 1650 Su Chidley wrote to her that she has sent her 'trimminges for your hatt…' (FP1164); on 25 November Virginia wrote to Anna Mapletoft at Cumberlow Green thanking her for buying for her and sending on 'shoose I never had a payer in my life that fitted mee better then these doe…' (FP1181). In a letter which David Ransome dates to 1648 Virginia sent Jane Collet (nee Smith) ten shillings with a request that she buys 'an elle and a quater of the best sarsnet' for her (FP1258). Reference was made earlier in this chapter to her letter to her mother in June 1647 in which she asked Bathsheba to buy 'callimancte for my wascot and petiocote…' (FP1113)

the older generation of Ferrars had prized above all devotion to religious worship, a strict lifestyle and condemnation of worldly values, the letters in the Ferrar collection show that the younger generation were more inclined to the comfortable life which was available to women and men who had some means. Virginia was initially keen to go to the Leventhorpes, but her concern about leaving her father and sense of her responsibility and love for him probably resulted in her not leaving Little Gidding.

In his will John made her his executrix.[81] His son John Ferrar II inherited the estate, but the choice of Virginia as his executrix may well be because his son had refused John's request to make his home at Little Gidding in the Spring of 1657 and was living with his wife Ann's family in Lincolnshire. He was certainly aware of his son's more worldly outlook, writing to him in 1655, expressing at length the wish that when he inherited the estate he would remember the importance of following his father's practise of giving one twentieth of his income 'to some Charitable and pious vses.'[82] Maycock suggests that John was fully aware of Virginia's 'shrewd business sense,' and that he trusted her judgement.[83]

When she returned to Little Gidding, after exile in mainland Europe, Virginia Ferrar was about to enter her twenties. For a young woman of her age, adulthood would normally bring marriage and children, and it is not possible to say conclusively that she did not want this kind of life. What we can say is that the example of her Collet cousins, Ann and Mary, in abjuring marriage was before her, and that her family's continuing involvement with the plantations in Virginia and Barbados lead to intellectual and practical activity for her, which was encouraged by her father. Through this work there is no doubt that she achieved admiration, and recognition for her expertise, and was able to demonstrate authority in a way not usually available to married women, who inevitably experienced the 'greater incoumbrances of this world.'

At the same time, we can see that she had other interests and emotional ties which were much more usual. On the death of her father, she inherited a small house of her own on the estate and a small property in the Bermudas. Her robust dealings with this,

[81] FP1303. This letter shows that she was appointed as John's executrix. Unfortunately, John Ferrar's will cannot be traced, so details of his bequests must be inferred from other evidence in the letters.
[82] FP1257
[83] Maycock, *Chronicles* p.76

which will be considered in detail in the next section, show that she had achieved a degree of self-confidence and assertiveness in her twenties. There are no more letters to or from planters, and the last thirty years of her life appear largely to have revolved around friends and family. David Ransome maintains that she became 'a conventional spinster gentlewoman.'[84]

The Last Thirty Years

She was certainly a spinster, and a gentlewoman, as we currently understand those terms, but was she 'conventional'? The relevant modern dictionary definition of the term is 'behaviour which is accepted or upheld by society at large.'[85] 'What behaviour did Virginia Ferrar's contemporaries expect of lifelong unmarried women?' In conduct literature and other moral commentaries, the expectation was that *all* women were either married or widowed, and this was the 'conventional behaviour' which society upheld. Ransome's description has patronising overtones. What is clear is that her life changed significantly after 1657, and close reading of the correspondence at the time of John's illness and death gives clues as to some changes which were already underway. In this section, the immediate circumstances around the time of John's death will be considered; then the evidence of her business dealings, which supports Maycock's suggestion that she was a shrewd business woman, determined to look after her own financial interests; and finally the picture which emerges of the last half of her life, when she was enjoying the freedom and opportunities she now had for travelling to and staying in London, and visiting family and friends.

'My Deere, yours to my Joye received with the tidings of your Continual health…..' Thus John Ferrar wrote in the second half of September 1657 to Virginia. John was dying and this letter was written when Virginia was away from Little Gidding staying at 'Mr Childes house in Ougell' (presumed to be Oundle) which is relatively close to Steeple Gidding, being about eight miles away.[86] It is not possible to say why she was there, though she was also away from Gidding in August, possibly also at Oundle, when John wrote in a letter, scribed for him, giving details of his intestinal illness, the full

[84] David Ransome, 'Ferrar, John (c. 1588-1657)'
[85] *The Compact Edition of the Oxford English Dictionary* vol. 1 p.545
[86] FP1297

details of which make unpleasant reading.[87] It seems that John's illness continued until the end of September, when he died, and since the letters speak of other sickness within the house and the wider area, perhaps Virginia was staying away to avoid this.

One document, which seems certain to be from this immediate period, contains three separate letters.[88] The first is from Virginia to her father, for she writes that she has sent him a treatment which he asked for from the apothecary; later in that letter she says that she is sending him two candlesticks. The second letter, on the reverse, is from John to Virginia at 'Mr Childes house Ougall' in which he says he has received the candlesticks. It seems that Virginia used this letter from John for a draft reply which makes clear that she is not staying with a family member or a friend but was paying for board and lodgings; this would consist of a furnished room or rooms in a respectable house, together with the provision of meals and some service from a maidservant. As well as including other family news in her reply to John, she says:

> Sir I must beseech you to send me more mony for I suppose you expected I cared me [more] than I did in trew I took 20 pounds out of the bag but I payed my sister 8 pounds out of that…. besides my Borde which I pay for at every weekes end.[89]

There is a further indication of the role which Virginia had been playing in running the household at Little Gidding in the letter referred to at the beginning of this section. John sent her details of all the sick people around, but later he asked, 'Did you know where the Best Blanketts are bought at Ougell we cannot find them where is the Pillow to that Bedd were there none found.' He mentions very briefly that 'your Mother hath her Ague though but Gently,' so Bathsheba was at Little Gidding at this time.[90] He includes much other news about both family members and people they knew. David Ransome has suggested that this is the last letter which John wrote to Virginia, but it seems unlikely that he would be able to write such a 'newsy' letter if he was near his death. It is more credible that the shorter letter referred to above, in which he says that he has received the candlesticks which she sent, is his last letter.

[87] FP1292
[88] FP1298
[89] FP1298
[90] FP1297

We do not know if Virginia made the relatively short journey back to Little Gidding from Oundle before John died, to be with her father on his death bed, though she would have been able to return to Little Gidding well within a day if word had reached her. There is no direct evidence to say how she felt when he died, but we do know that John had been a constant figure in her life; she had worked closely with him on the Virginia projects, and so it is likely that she would have felt his loss very much. By 5 October Virginia's brother John Ferrar II and his wife Ann were at Little Gidding.[91] Susannah Collet, Virginia's aunt, who had been ill throughout this time, died on 9 October.[92] She had been a close relative to Virginia throughout her life and, even without direct evidence, it seems certain that Virginia would also grieve for her. At the same time as these bereavements, Benjamin Woodnoth sent the letter discussed above demanding money from her.[93] On 22 October Woodnoth wrote to John Ferrar II saying that he had not had a reply to his demand from Virginia, which is hardly surprising in the circumstances.[94] A further close relative, Susannah Chidley, Susannah Collet's daughter and Ann Alsop/Mapletoft's mother, died on 31 October. During this time Virginia's mother Bathsheba was at Little Gidding. It is very likely that this was a time of emotional stress for Virginia, who had never been close to her mother. A letter from John Ferrar II to his wife Ann indicates how demanding Bathsheba was being. As he explained it: 'Shee had told my sister, shee must lay her wits together and provide her man and horse against Munday, for an houre longer shee would not stay.'[95]

Once her brother had gone, taking Bathsheba with him, the emotional pressure would have eased, though Virginia still had the loss of her father, her aunt, and her cousin to cope with. She had been appointed her father's executrix and there was business to be done. She received a short letter from a man called Edward Palmer of Leicester, dated 2 November, explaining that he had intended 'to have brought your money with me' when he was to have 'waited upon [your brother] at Giddinge'. The writer requests that Virginia 'bee pleased to send my bond.'[96] The letter may have been sent to her in

[91] FP1302
[92] See John Ferrar's letter to Virginia of September when he writes of 'my Sister Collett a grate looseness' FP1297
[93] FP1214, 1303
[94] FP1304
[95] FP1306
[96] FP1305

her role as executrix, but in a further letter to Edward Palmer, dated May 4 1659, she writes of 'the monys due from you & Mr Antill.'[97] This certainly suggests that, in common with the singlewomen studied by Amy Froide, Virginia was personally involved in financial dealings.[98] Other evidence of her continuing financial dealings is found in the reference to a debt of £28 owed to her by her cousin William Leggat in May 1665,[99] and a request to her for a loan of £4 made by Richard Knight, a tenant at Little Gidding, in August 1660.[100] The evidence supports Maycock's suggestion that she was a shrewd business woman, determined to look after her own financial interests.

Her active role in her finances is also evidenced by a letter she received on 5 April 1658. It was a brief letter from Peter Mapletoft, in which he detailed sums of money from himself, his brother John and 'sister Legatt,' which he was sending to her. At the bottom she summarised this as a form of receipt, showing that she was carrying out her role as executrix.[101] It is not possible to say how much she worked with her brother at this time in settling the estate, nor is the relationship between the siblings clear, as there are almost no existing letters between them; this suggests that they were not close. John Ferrar II had inherited the estate of Little Gidding and Maycock characterises Virginia's brother as 'just a decent, ordinary man who let his estates down badly by neglect and improvidence.'[102] At some point Virginia must have moved from the manor house to a small house of her own on the estate, which she refers to in a draft letter to her cousin William Legatt from March 1660.[103]

She had also inherited property in the Bermudas, and from August 1658 onwards she was engaged in correspondence with her cousin Nicholas Collet concerning her wish to sell this small estate. Maycock considers that he acted as 'her business adviser during these years.'[104] The fact that she was discussing her business interests with Nicholas, who lived in London, and not with her brother, who was nearby, shows that she did not rely on her brother in these matters, and is further proof that they were not close.

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[97] FP1334
[98] Amy M.Froide, *Never Married: Singlewomen in Early Modern England* (Oxford, 2005), pp.128-141
[99] FP1369
[100] FP1380
[101] FP1314
[102] Maycock, *Chronicles* p.104
[103] FP1335
[104] Maycock, *Chronicles*. p.102

In dealing with the sale of her Bermuda property she showed an independence of mind and a determination to look after her own interests. In a letter of October or November 1658, Nicholas gave Virginia information about the current value of tobacco, and agreed that 'you have case to sell your land,' phrasing which suggests that the idea of selling came from Virginia herself and not from Nicholas, as Maycock says.[105] In that letter he also wrote that she must make haste 'if you intend a letter to your tenant,' showing that she was acting directly in negotiations. Further correspondence shows that Nicholas was acting as an informal intermediary between Virginia and her tenant, and she had 'willed him to propose' that the tenant pay her £25.[106] On 21 February 1659 the tenant, Nathaniel Waterman, wrote directly to Virginia, addressing her as 'Landlady', asking for time to pay as £25 was 'a great matter for a poore man to pay all at one time.'[107] Nicholas continued to suggest that 'yo[ur] Charity will move you' as the tenant was 'very honest though a poore man,' and tried to persuade her to drop the price to £20.[108] In the end, Nicholas made up the difference between what Waterman paid in money and tobacco to the £25 which Virginia was determined to receive.[109] It might be said that this episode shows Virginia in an unflattering light, but it can also be seen as evidence that, as a singlewoman, she was determined to look after her own interests. As a postscript to this, a letter by Nicholas to Virginia, dated August 1659, indicated some interference in the sale by Virginia's brother John, who seemed to be making some kind of claim to the land himself, suggesting again that the relationship between brother and sister was probably not a good one.[110] In these circumstances it is not surprising that she was determined to ensure her own financial security and independence. She used that independence to enjoy occasional visits to family members, especially to those in London.

[105] FP1323; Maycock, *Chronicles* p.102
[106] FP1330
[107] FP1326
[108] FP1330
[109] Maycock, *Chronicles* pp 103-104
[110] FP1332

Visiting London and Shopping

London was a growing centre for shopping, and exchange of ideas, and Virginia's interest in clothing was noted earlier. Bathsheba had returned to London, and Mary Collet, Virginia's aunt, had moved from Little Gidding to live in her brother Thomas's house in Highgate, where she remained until her death in 1680.[111] There is no evidence in Virginia's letters of any activities other than shopping which she enjoyed on these visits; the pious upbringing she had received at Little Gidding is unlikely to have encouraged her to seek out the more worldly entertainments available after the Restoration. It is also clear that the Ferrar family, though Royalists and loyal High Church Anglicans, had steered clear of any active involvement in the secular or religious politics of the Protectorate or the Restoration periods. Their correspondence shows that they achieved and maintained comfortable and modestly respectable lives. Exchanges with the network of family members, particularly women, make up the bulk of Virginia's correspondence after 1660, with news of family members, and occasional requests for items to be sent from Gidding to London or vice versa. In August 1677 for example, she requested her sister-in-law to send up several pounds of butter from Little Gidding 'in the wooden kit' together with money from her brother, which is to be wrapped in a clean cloth and placed inside the butter; this may be as a precaution against robbery en route.[112]

She seems to have kept in close contact with Ann Alsop who was no longer living at Little Gidding but in Lincolnshire, possibly in Stamford. The two women exchanged visits from time to time.[113] In May 1664 she was in London, staying with Nicholas Collet and his wife Jane, who lived at the sign of the White Hind in Lombard Street, and she stayed with them again in July 1664.[114] It is most likely that she made her visits to London by the public stagecoach on the York to London route, picking it up in Huntingdon. The journey would take two days, with an overnight stop at an inn in

[111] Maycock, *Chronicles* p.102
[112] FP1410
[113] FP1348, 1350, 1372
[114] FP1366, 1368

Biggleswade.[115] The journeys would have been uncomfortable since she would have been sharing a crowded space with strangers. She may have travelled with a maid, who would probably have been seated outside the enclosed carriage, which was reserved for the more genteel passengers. The visits continued intermittently and in October 1678, when she was again staying with Nicholas and his wife, she wrote to her sister-in-law Ann Ferrar that she was minded to stay there for the winter.[116] She also spent time in 1673 and again in 1674 at Clapham with Elizabeth Kestian and Mary Legatt who were running a private school.[117] She had been making a practice of staying in London for longer periods; she wrote in August 1677 that she had been in Clapham for a fortnight and intended to stay there for some time.[118] Clapham was a country suburb of London then and Virginia reports that the pupils paid £20 per year and were taught singing, dancing, writing and French. To justify her stay, and to occupy herself, she was probably helping with some teaching. The letters we have from this period show just how integral to her life this network of family and friends was, and how she still enjoyed buying material and clothes.[119]

The need for support from a family network, particularly for women on their own, is movingly illustrated by a letter Virginia received in August 1670, from her aunt Elizabeth Ferrar, the widow of Richard Ferrar. In this begging letter addressed to her 'Good neecs' she says:

> I am bound to intreatt you in this my great necesty to let me have forty shilinge or what your charity will bestowe to helpe mee to redeme my goods my landlord hath seased on……..I have no clothes to kepe mee warme[120]

There is no evidence to show whether Virginia sent money to her aunt, but this is further proof that Virginia was known to be a woman with independent means. She had the money to repay debts that she incurred on her visits, as is seen from a draft

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[115] Dorian Gerhold, *Carrriers and Coachmasters: Trade and Travel before the Turnpike* (Chichester, 2005), p.129; see also Emily Cockayne, *Hubbub: Filth, Noise & Stench in England 1600-1770* (London, 2007), pp.179-180

[116] FP1418

[117] FP1398; see Maycock, *Chronicles,* pp.107-108 for an account of this enterprise by Elizabeth Kestian and Mary Legatt.

[118] FP1410

[119] See for example FP1410, 1435

[120] FP1383

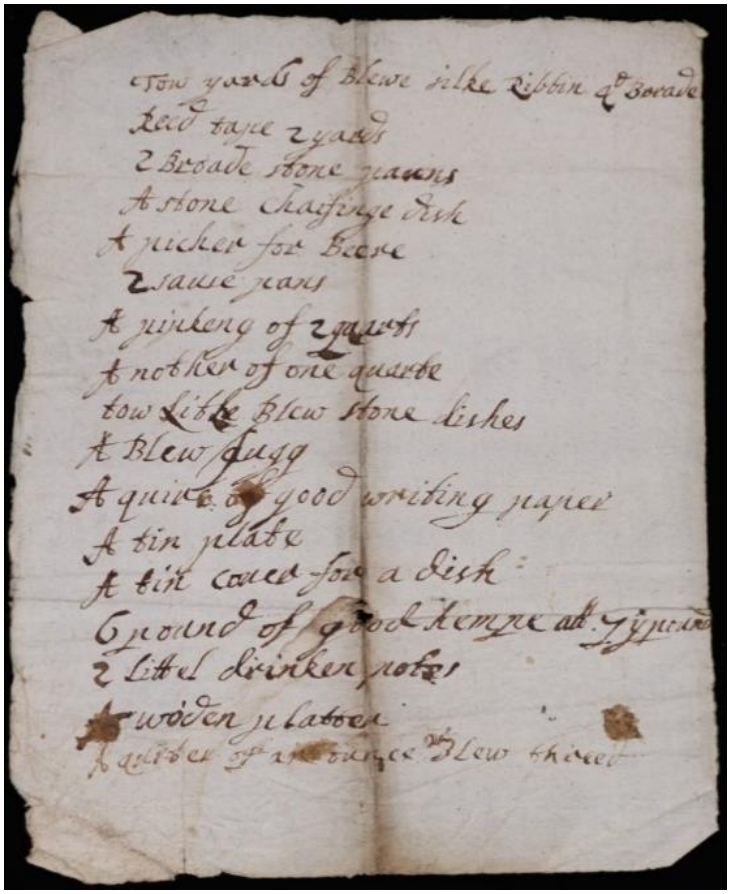
letter from 1679 to Martha Collet and Mary Farrar Collet, repaying the four pounds she had borrowed when staying with them at Highgate. Compared with the 40 shillings which her aunt Elizabeth had begged from her, the ease with which Virginia had borrowed and then repaid four pounds to her other aunts clearly shows that she and others in her family were financially secure.[121] The same document shows how, in her fifties, the memory of her father was still very dear to her, as she asked:

> would you please to give me my Deare Fathers picture to have in my chamber the remembrance of him is deare to me as my life, and the sight of him most precious.

She was moving into older age, and the close relationship she had experienced with her father perhaps occupied more of her thoughts. Her mother had died in London in 1659. It is unlikely that Virginia had ever been able to enjoy a comfortable, close relationship with her whilst she was growing up at Little Gidding, and she may have been closer to her cousin Mary Collet Farrer who was 26 years older and who died at the end of 1680 at a time when Virginia herself had been unwell.[122]

There is almost no evidence in the Ferrar Papers of how she spent the last seven years of her life. At the end of November 1687 she was in communication with a John Watson of Steeple Gidding about some pewter, brass and iron items which she was wanting to sell, which might indicate that she felt she was in need of money.[123] This possibility is strengthened by two letters from a Nathaniel Smart dated January 1688, the first discussing how much he is willing to pay for her 'chamber furniture' and the second saying he has reduced his offer from twenty pounds to sixteen pounds.[124] These letters appear to fit together with a document which is oddly placed with documents from the 1620's near the beginning of the Collection.[125]

[121] FP1431
[122] FP1441
[123] FP1497
[124] FP1508, 1509
[125] FP666.



Illus. 11 List of household items in Virginia Ferrar's hand 1688. (photo credit Magdelene College Cambridge Old Library)

This document, in Virginia Ferrar's very recognisable rough hand, is a list of household items, and is dated 1688 in the handlist. It raises intriguing questions: Why would Virginia be producing this inventory at this time? Do the items listed belong to her or to someone else? Does it relate to her apparent wish to sell some of her property then and why was she wishing to raise money? What the list does is give us a vivid picture of the material world in which Virginia Ferrar lived. The list is mostly of kitchen household utensils, but the materials at the beginning and the 'quire of good writing paper' stand out from the rest, together with the 'Tow yards of Blewe silke Ribbin & Bercade'.

They are items which we can readily conclude might belong to Virginia herself, and they are embedded in the middle of other things, suggesting that all the property belonged to her. The most obvious conclusion was that they are the items she was offering to Nathaniel Smart for sale, but the reason why she would do this eludes us.

We have the letter to another tradesman, Goodman Smith the shoemaker, at Kimbolton from 8 January 1688 in which she demands 'the shooes which were long agoe spoken for namely for myself and others,' which clearly suggest that she was not expecting to die soon.[126] In fact it seems she died very soon after this because the date on her memorial tablet gives 14 January 1688 as the date of her death. David Salmon's letter of 11 February to John Farrar II, enclosing her nuncupative will, also suggests her sudden death and, without further evidence, we cannot know what Virginia Ferrar died of. There are seven letter covers addressed to Virginia Ferrar, apparently from female relatives or friends, all of which are given the date of January 1688.[127] The absence of any of the letters themselves may be too much of a coincidence, suggesting that they were all removed by someone who wished to keep them. That could have been Virginia herself, if these were loving letters from women who were important to her.

Conclusion

Virginia Ferrar's life can be seen as falling in two halves, the first half before and the second half after her father's death. His death certainly marked a major change in her life; but there are also significant continuities. Her extant letters from 1646 onwards, though they are written in the style of the period, show her strong bond with her female relatives. As has also been noted above, they also sometimes contain references to purchases of material and dresses. This interest in fashion locates her in the increasingly prosperous world of women and men of her class, and in that aspect of her life she conforms to social expectations.

Prior to her father's death we have her experiments in sericulture, and her collaboration with her father in the Virginia projects. These activities gave her recognition, enhancing her self-worth and independence. It is impossible to say that, if given the chance, she might have chosen to be married to a man other than Benjamin Woodnoth. By the time she was thirty she was certainly beyond the normal age of marriage for a woman of her class; but since she had money and property it seems reasonable to assume that, if she had been keen to have a husband, a suitable older

[126] FP1507
[127] FP1510-1516

man, perhaps a widower, could have been found for her by her extensive family network. Alternatively, this thesis argues that her work in her twenties on the Virginia project and on sericulture, together with her unconventional upbringing at Little Gidding, and the example of her unmarried aunts, might well have led her to aspire to self-determination and a life independent of the control of a husband.

Chapter 5 Mary Astell: 'Quite Contrary' – A single woman of contradictions?

Mary Astell (1666-1731) was born into a gentry family, whose wealth and status were declining by the time Astell reached adulthood. She believed in the importance of 'proper order' and hierarchy but was drawn into support for rebellion; she argued for the freedom of women to pursue education and independence from marriage, but said that when married, women should be obedient to their husbands, however oppressive they were; her politics were firmly Tory yet modern scholarship has identified her as 'the First Feminist'; she extolled the virtues of modest living, yet her letters indicate that she often enjoyed her experiences of the rich lifestyle of her wealthy friends; she was modest and retiring in her mode of life, yet entered into very public controversy with her publications; though she was famous in her lifetime as 'the Celebrated Mrs Astell,' she was largely forgotten after her death. Astell was influenced by the ideas of the French philosopher Malebranche. He believed that the material world was only an imperfect copy of the mind of God; but Astell knew that she needed money and other material things like a 'room of her own' to pursue her career as a writer, and she was keen to explore the developing scientific studies of that material world.

This chapter will consider her material world, exploring the strategies she employed to live as a single woman in late seventeenth and early eighteenth-century England. We have some letters, books and her publications but no portraits, will or probate inventory of her possessions, and few descriptions or records of any houses in which she lived. One or two anecdotes about Astell give us glimpses of her private life.[1]

The brief account of Astell's life by George Ballard in his *Memoirs of Several Ladies of Great Britain, who have been Celebrated for their Writings or Skill in the Learned Languages, Arts and Sciences* (1752) was her first biography, written when knowledge of her work and her reputation had diminished.[2] Ballard emphasised her devout Anglican faith and her modesty, and included one or two details of her daily life; he

[1] Bodleian: MS Ballard 43, fol.31 (Letter from Elizabeth Elstob to George Ballard 24 December 1736)
[2] George Ballard was largely self-educated, becoming an enthusiastic antiquarian; he was admitted to read at the Bodleian Library in 1747 and as a clerk at Magdalen College, Oxford in 1750. See David Vaisy 'Ballard, George (1705/6-1755)', ODNB: https://doi-org.uea.idm.oclc.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/1235 (accessed 11/11/22)

recounts having been told by 'a relation of hers' that, if she saw an unwanted visitor coming, she would 'look out at the window and tell them …"Mrs. Astell is not at home,"' suggesting that Astell had lodgings on an upper floor.[3] He details her death from breast cancer; Elizabeth Elstob, a friend of Astell's in Chelsea, told him that Astell had tried to encourage some 'Learned Ladies of her Aquaintance to contribute their assistance towards Compiling a Book of Natural Philosophy.'[4] Ballard attributed the strong feelings Astell expressed in *Some Reflections on Marriage* to 'her disappointment in a marriage contract with an eminent clergyman.'[5] After Ballard, Astell's life and writing disappeared even further from public consciousness until Florence Smith made Astell the subject of her PhD dissertation at Columbia University in 1916. When this was published in 1966 it prompted a new interest in Astell.[6]

Ruth Perry's *The Celebrated Mary Astell: An Early English Feminist* (1986) is the most comprehensive and scholarly book on Astell to date. Perry gives a detailed account of Astell's life, using every archival source then available, writing extensively about Astell's philosophy and beliefs.[7] Prior to the publication of her book, Perry wrote on Astell's determined celibacy, describing it as 'a component of sexual disaffection, a rejection of physiological womanhood, and a satiric dismissal of men as a class,' which she argued was part of her feminism.[8] Since Perry's book was published almost all scholarly interest has focused on Astell's writing and ideas, exploring her philosophical and political theories, religious beliefs and theories on women's education.[9]

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[3] George Ballard *Memoirs of Several Ladies of Great Britain who have been Celebrated for their Writings or Skill in the Learned Languages, Arts and Sciences* (ed) Ruth Perry (Detroit, 1985) pp.384-385; see also Leonie Hannan 'Collaborative Scholarship on the Margins: An Epistolary Network 'in *Women's Writing*, 21:3 (2014) pp. 290-315

[4] Bodleian: MS Ballard 74:328

[5] Ballard, *Memoirs of Several Ladies* p.385

[6] Florence Smith, *Mary Astell* (New York, 1966)

[7] Ruth Perry, *The Celebrated Mary Astell: An Early English Feminist* (London, 1986)

[8] Ruth Perry, 'The Veil of Chastity: Mary Astell's feminism', in Paul Gabriel-Bouche (ed.) *Sexuality in eighteenth-century Britain* (Manchester, 1982) pp.141-158

[9] Bridget Hill, 'A Refuge from Men: The Idea of a Protestant Nunnery', *Past & Present,* 117 (Nov.1987) pp.107-130; Alessa Johns, 'Mary Astell's"Excited Needles": Theorising Feminist Utopia in Seventeenth-Century England', *Utopian Studies,* 7:1 (1996), pp. 60-74; William Kolbrener, 'Gendering the Modern: Mary Astell's Feminist Historiography', *The Eighteenth Century,* 44:1 (2003) pp.1-24; Patricia Springborg, *Mary Astell: Theorist of Freedom from Domination* (Cambridge, 2005); William Kolbrener and Michal Michelson (eds), *Mary Astell: Reason, Gender, Faith* (Aldershot, 2007); Kamille Stone Stanton, 'Affliction, The Sincerest Friend', *Prose Studies*, 29:1 (2007) pp.104-114; Sarah Apetrei, '"Call No Man Master Upon Earth": Mary Astell's Tory Feminism and an Unknown Correspondence', *Eighteenth-Century Studies,* 41:4 (2008) pp. 507-523; Johanna Devereaux, '"Affecting the Shade": Attribution, Authorship, and

This chapter focuses on Astell's material world and her lived experiences and is a new contribution towards our understanding of a complex woman. Looking first at Astell's finances and how she managed to live as a singlewoman, it will then demonstrate the way she used books as a scholarly woman, as well as giving us insight into her evolving self-identity. Finally, her activities as a Jacobite supporter and her involvement with the Duchess of Ormonde, wife of the exiled Jacobite plotter, are explored in new depth and detail.

Mary Astell's Finances

Before she left Newcastle in 1688 it seems likely that Mary Astell would have been making plans for her move to London for some time; first she needed money for travel and living expenses. In the absence of any direct evidence, reasonable assumptions are made here about how she acquired that money. Secondly the various ways in which Astell could support herself as a writer and campaigner are explored, including her participation in the Financial Revolution, the new capitalism which was distinct from the kind of investments practised by her father.[10] Finally this section looks at the direct help she received from wealthy supporters.

Astell's father's death led to declining fortunes for his family and his widow received charity from his guild, the Newcastle Hostmen.[11] Perry suggests that even if Astell had

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Anonymity in "An Essay in Defence of the Female Sex" ',*Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature,* 27:1 (Spring 2008) pp.17-37; Jacqueline Broad, 'Mary Astell on Virtuous Friendship', *Parergon,* 26:2 (2009) pp.65-86; Johanna Devereaux, 'A Paradise Within? Mary Astell, Sarah Scott and the Limits of Utopia', *Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies,* 32:1 (2009) pp.53-67; Jacqueline Broad, 'Mary Astell's Machiavellian Moment? Politics and Feminism in *'Moderation Truly Stated'* ' in Jo Wallwork and Paul Salzman (eds), *Early Modern Englishwomen Testing Ideas* (Farnham, 2011) pp.9-24; Michal Michelson,' 'that you may [be] …as wise as Angels': the Religious Foundations of Mary Astell's '*Proposal for the Ladies*, *Parts I and II',* in *Early Modern Englishwomen Testing Ideas* ibid. pp.25-40; Melinda S. Zook, *Protestantism, Politics, and Women in Britain, 1660-1714* (Basingstoke, 2013) pp.189-195; Andreas Blank, 'Mary Astell on Flattery and Self-Esteem', *The Monist,* 98 (2015) pp.53-63; Alice Sowaal and Penny A.Weiss (eds), *Feminist Interpretations of Mary Astell* (Pennsylvania, 2016); William Kolbrener, 'Slander, Conversation and the Making of the Christian Public Sphere in Mary Astell's *A Serious Proposal to the Ladies and The Christian Religion as Profess'd by a Daughter of the Church of England'* in Sarah Apetrei and Helen Smith (eds), *Religion and Women in Britain c.1660-1760* (Oxford, 2016) pp.117-128

[10] Perry, *Mary Astell* pp.335-338 for a transcript of the *Inventory of Peter Astell's Worldly Goods, Newcastle, 1678* showing that Astell's father had part shares in four ships and 'One eight part of Mr John Emmersons Buss[iness]'

[11] Perry, *Mary Astell* pp.57-58. The Hostmen had a monopoly on the sale of coal from the area. As coal came to dominate the domestic market for fuel in the sixteenth century the members and their employees became increasingly powerful and influential in local and national politics, but by the second half of the seventeenth century their power was waning as new mines were opened outside the area

wanted to marry, 'she did not have a sufficient dowry for an alliance with a gentleman of her own social standing.'[12] Her strong intelligence, and her wish to be free to pursue her ambitions as a writer came together. She wanted to remain single, but she had to travel and establish herself in London as a writer and contributor to public discourse to attract financial support. She needed money to attract money.

Starting out

There is no evidence as to whether Astell was given money by her family before she set out, though Perry suggests that she perhaps had £100 of her father's legacy.[13] We have no record of his nuncupative will, but this would have been an unusually generous legacy when he had a son, a widow, and an unmarried sister to consider. It is more likely that she would have received a smaller amount and would have pieced together savings from small gifts from others like her mother's birth family the Erringtons. It is likely that Astell had been planning to move to London for some time.

Another possibility is suggested by records for the Court of Chancery. In 1686, 'Mary Astell (alias Mary Astall) widow of Newcastle upon Tyne, Northumberland' was the plaintiff in a claim against two defendants for payment of a debt owed to her deceased husband.[14] Chancery records show that this claim was still ongoing in 1689, because William Richardson was denying liability for the debt which was now detailed as £350.[15] It is therefore possible that Astell's journey to London in 1688/89 might have been partly motivated by a desire to follow up this debt. Astell was confident enough to pursue the claim, and if it succeeded it would provide her with a significant capital sum, even when shared with her mother.

Astell's journey to London would probably have been by stagecoach at a cost of between 2.3 to 3.1 pence per mile.[16] The distance to London from Newcastle down the

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and new entrepreneurs found ways to avoid the Hostmen's monopoly–see Perry, *Mary Astell* pp.29-32. Astell invested in a new mining enterprise, the Mine Adventurers which will be considered later.

[12] Perry, *Mary Astell* p.42

[13] Perry, *Mary Astell* p.62

[14] TNA, C6/365/24

[15] TNA, C6/365/58

[16] Dorian Gerhold, *Carriers and Coachmasters: Trade and Travel before the Turnpikes* (Chichester, 2005) p.97; the distance from Newcastle to London is calculated at 212 miles using John Ogilby's *Britannia;* John Ogilby*, Britannia, Volume the First, Or, an Illustration of the Kingdom of England and Dominion of Wales by a Geographical and Historical Description of the Principal Roads Thereof, Actually Admeasured*

Great North Road was 212 miles so it would have cost her about £2-12d, but she was probably accompanied by a maidservant, with additional travel costs. An announcement in the *Newcastle Courant* of October 1712 for the Edinburgh-London Express states the whole journey will be accomplished in thirteen days, so Astell would have had to travel for about ten days in 1688.[17] Travelling by public coach meant travelling with strangers. John Cresset, an opponent of stagecoaches, described it thus:

> What conveniency is it to be stuft up in a coach with strangers, old sickly diseased people crying children…crowded with their bundles and boxes, and almost poysoned sometimes with there nasty sents.[18]

Overnight stops involved more expense and unpredictable conditions, though on the Great North Road the inns were likely to be of a reasonable standard. The journey was a necessary expense, but it is also possible that Astell made the journey by sea; this has not been considered before. From Newcastle many ships travelled to London with cargoes of coal as well as other goods. An entry in the Newcastle Common Council Book for 28 June 1665 makes clear that passengers also travelled to and from the port.[19] Astell's family had links with the shipping business through her father's membership of the Hostmen and his shares in four ships, so it is possible that Astell made the journey by sea rather than stagecoach, which might well have been cheaper and possibly quicker.

Where next?

Perry speculates that Astell could have been met in London by the 'family friends who had residences in London – the Pitts, the Bowes….'[20] The suggestion that the Pitts and the Bowes were 'family friends' of the Astells is challenged here. These very

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and Delineated in a Century of Whole-Sheet Copper-Sculps : Accomodated with the Ichnography of the several Cities and Capital Towns, and Compleated by an Accurate Account of the More Remarkable Passages of Antiquity : Together with a Novel Discourse of the Present State by John Ogilby London: 1675.
https://www-proquest-com.uea.idm.oclc.org/books/mr-ogilby-s-design-carrying-on-his-britannia/docview/2240886207/se-2?accountid=10637

[17] Perry quotes the *Newcastle Courant* announcement in *Mary Astell* pp.480-481 fn.17

[18] TNA:SP 29/319, No. 200 quoted in Gerhold, *Carriers and Coachmasters* p.98; see also Emily Cockayne, *Hubbub: Filth, Noise & Stench in England 1600-1770* (London, 2007) pp.179-180

[19] Tyne & Wear Archives: Transcript of "The Common Council Book 20th October 1656 to 24thSeptember 1722, 87v"

[20] Perry, *Mary Astell* p.62

prosperous elite families had connections with the mining industries in the north east: George Pitt (1625-94), had acquired a colliery in county Durham in the early 1660's.[21] Sir William Bowes (1657-1707) had extensive family estates in the north-east.[22] Whilst it is likely that the Bowes and the Pitts knew of Peter Astell as a member of the Newcastle Hostmen, the Astells were Newcastle gentry only and it is unlikely that they had any close social links with these wealthy elite people; their involvement in Astell's arrival in London is doubtful. If Astell was travelling to London to stay initially with 'friends' then their identity is unknown. If she made the journey without knowing anyone in the city, that is a tribute to her courage and determination. Without further evidence we can assume that Astell's own savings were all she had with her, and these probably amounted to less than £100.

Ballard writes that 'she left Newcastle and went to London, to Chelsea, where she spent the remaining part of her life.'[23] Vanessa Harding points out that the population of London had grown to 'over 500,000 in 1700, thanks largely to migration from provincial England, as well as the rest of the British Isles and continental Europe. Most of the migrants were young people.'[24] Perhaps before she left Newcastle Astell had information about the most suitable place for her to live; if not, then it was extraordinarily fortunate that she hit on the 'village' west of London, located on the Thames. Joanne McEwan and Pamela Sharpe have examined how 'genteel' men and women used lodgings in this period: 'Genteel status can be associated with two factors: wealth and reputation.'[25] They stress 'the importance of reputation and social credit both for those seeking lodgings and those offering rooms….considerations linked

[21] M.W.Helms and John P.Ferris, 'Pitt, George(1625-1694) of Strathfieldsaye, Hants, and Duke Street Westminster', HOPO: hhtps://www.historyofparliamnetonline.org/volume/1660-1690/member/pitt-george-1625-94 (accessed 12/11/22)

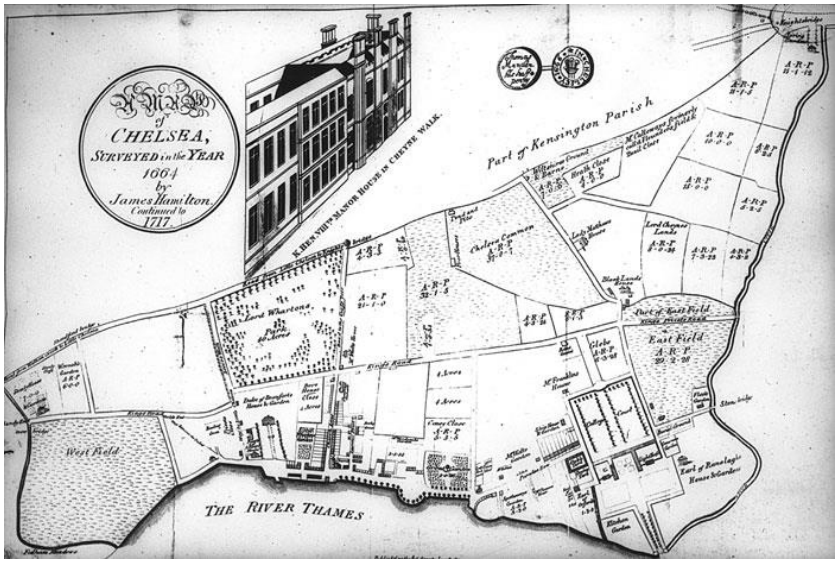
[22] Gillian Hampson and Geoffrey Jagger, 'Bowes, William (1657-1707) of Streatlam Castel, Co. Durham' HOPO: hhtps://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1690-171/member/bowes-sir-william-1657-1707 (accessed 12/11/22)

[23] Ballard, *Memoirs of Several Ladies* p.382

[24] Vanessa Harding, 'Families and Housing in Seventeenth-Century London', *Parergon*, 24:2 (2007) pp.115-138,

[25] Joanne McEwan and Pamela Sharpe,' "It Buys me Freedom": Genteel Lodgings in Late-Seventeenth- and Eighteenth-Century London', *Parergon*, 24:2 (2007) pp.139-161.This quote from p.142

with choice, such as networking and sociability, influenced decisions about when, where and indeed whether to lodge.'[26]



Illus. 12 James Hamiliton's Map of Chelsea surveyed in 1664 redrawn in 1717, Royal Brough of Kensington and Chelsea. (Google Image)

We do not know how or where Astell found her first lodgings in Chelsea. Craig Mulgrew has demonstrated the importance of reputation in dealings between individuals in this period.[27] She may well have carried with her a letter of introduction from her parish priest for a vicar in London. John Bowack writing in 1705 described Chelsea thus:

> The Sweetness of its Air, and Pleasant Situation, has of late Years drawn several Eminent Persons to reside and Build here, and fill'd it with many Worthy Families of Gentry, Citizens and others, also the Schools with a great Number of Boarders, especially Young Ladies…..'tis now become a Large Beautiful and Populous Town….where a Man may perfectly enjoy the Pleasures of Country and City together, and when he Pleases in less than an Hours time either by Water, Coach, or otherwise, be at the Court, Exchange, or

[26] McEwan and Sharpe, 'Genteel Lodgings' p.139

[27] Craig Muldrew, *The Economy of Obligation: The Culture of Credit and Social Relations in Early Modern England* (Basingstoke, 1998). Although Mulgrew is concerned with examining the operations of the market in personal and trade transactions, and the development of an increasingly complex economic system, his observations about the importance of 'trust' in interpersonal relations has relevance to Astell's circumstances when she arrived in London.

> in the midst of his Business. The Walk to Town is very even and very Pleasant.[28]

McEwan and Sharpe give the cost of James Boswell's lodgings in Downing Street, Westminster in 1762, as £22 per year, including the choice of dining with his landlord and wife whenever he pleased.[29] Astell's lodgings in Chelsea several decades before this cost less, being further out than Westminster. For widows or spinsters with a degree of financial independence, and who had a house in the City or surrounding areas, renting lodgings was a common source of income.[30] Astell must have found 'respectable rooms,' the cost of which included not only rent, but payments for services such as the provision of 'dyett, [and] washing clothes.'[31] Astell needed this kind of material support in order to pursue her ambition to engage with the debates of the time and attract financial support. The additional services of household maids provided a good degree of independence for the lodger.[32]

Writing for a living?

Astell's small savings allowed her to survive in lodgings for a short time, but in 1688 she wrote a cleverly worded appeal to Archbishop Sancroft, stating that she had been:

> brought to very great necessaty threw some very unfortunate circumstances y[t] I have Laine under for some time I have pawned all my cloaths & now am brought to my Last Shift yt is to desire y[e] charity of y[r] grace & some others of y[e] bishops, my Lord I am a gentlewoman & not able to get a liflyhood[33]

It seems that Sancroft was the first of the supporters she acquired after arriving in London. In 1689 Astell sent him a handwritten and handstitched collection of her religious poems, in gratitude for what she said was his previous support. As she

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[28]John Bowack, *The Antiquities of Middlesex; Being a Collection of the several Church Monuments in that County: also An Historical Account of each Church and Parish; with The Seats, Villages and Names of the most Eminent Inhabitants, etc. Part I Beginning with Chelsea and Kensington* (London 1705) Gale ECCO Print Edition p.13

[29] McEwan and Sharpe, 'Genteel Lodgings' p. 148

[30] Peter Earle, *A City Full of People: Men and Women of London 1650-1750* (London, 1994) p.154

[31] Earle, *A City Full of People* p.154

[32] McEwan and Sharpe, 'Genteel Lodgings' p.151

[33] Bodleian: MS Rawl.Letters 59:89

introduces this gift, she describes it as 'another offering'; we do not know what her first 'offering' was, but it seems that she had more than one meeting with Sancroft.[34] This handmade book is discussed later, but it strongly suggests that she aspired to become a published author. Aphra Behn is generally acknowledged to be the first woman to make a living from her writing, but as a new writer, Astell would not have received a living wage from her first publications, nor would she have been able to obtain subscriptions because she was unknown. Without any existing financial records from her printer and publisher, there is no evidence of her income during her first years in London, but she managed somehow to eke out a living until the publication of her first book.

The financial support she received from a small group of wealthy women after her first work, *A Serious Proposal To the Ladies, For the Advancement of their true and greatest Interest. By a Lover of Her Sex* (1694), is discussed in detail later. Sarah Prescott places Astell's work in the context of London literary circles, detailing her wealthy friends in Chelsea, who 'show the importance of networks of friendship and patronage within London itself.' Prescott suggests that '[s]he also had direct contact with her booksellers as well as a more straightforward experience of patronage [from Archbishop Sancroft].'[35] The politics and religious beliefs of Rich Wilkin, (or Richard Wilkins) her printer and publisher, were a very good match for Astell; he was clearly happy to publish her work and gave her money for it. There is no evidence of Astell's other financial benefactors until Lady Betty Hastings began making recorded payments to her in 1714, though there is now new evidence that, however she acquired it, Astell had some capital to invest by 1700.

'Profitable to every person who shall be concern'd therein': the Financial Revolution

Historians have recently examined the nature and patterns of investor activity during this period, with the development of public credit.[36] In the last quarter of the

[34] Bodleian: MS. Rawl.poet 154. ff 50r-97v
[35]Sarah Prescott, *Women, Authorship, and Literary Culture, 1690-1740* (Basingstoke, 2003) pp.24-26
[36] Ann M.Carlos, Erin Fletcher and Larry Neal 'Share portfolios in the early years of financial capitalism: London, 1690-1730', *Economic History Review,* 68:2 (2015) pp.574-599; Ann M.Carlos, Jennifer Key and Jill L.Dupree 'Learning and the creation of stock-market institutions: evidence from the Hudson's Bay

seventeenth century, with the huge expansion of public and private financial markets, the stock market 'flourished…helped by well-defined ownership rights in shares, ease of purchase and sale, and transparency in pricing promulgated by the rise of the financial press.' As Carlos, Fletcher and Neal state, the purchase of shares was impersonal, anonymous and gender neutral.[37] The involvement of women investors in the Financial Revolution of this period has been studied by Amy Froide, who states that 'these new investment opportunities were most beneficial to women who had to support themselves, specifically middling and genteel spinsters and widows.'[38]

Astell's investments are evidenced from as early as 1700 and may have begun earlier. She purchased shares in the so-called 'Mine Adventure', proposed by Sir Humphrey Mackworth, as her name appears in the list of 'Mine Adventurers' published in 1700. Mackworth's scheme, first published in 1698, promised the Mine-Adventure as 'An Undertaking, Advantagious for the Publick Good, Charitable to the Poor, and Profitable to every Person who shall be concern'd therein.'[39] The details of the scheme show that Astell would have bought £5 shares, though there is no evidence of how much she invested. Froide states that of the listed subscribers '211, or 28.8 percent were women. This was a comparatively high rate of female subscription for a joint-stock company, only equalled by women's investments in certain government loans.'[40] Mackworth's scheme proved to be fraudulent, though we do not know if Astell suffered a loss.[41]

Froide argues that the new state lotteries 'appealed to unmarried and older female investors because they were low-risk and offered secure returns, often in the form of

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and Royal African Companies, 1670-1700', *Journal of Economic History*, 58:2 (1998) pp.318-344; for an older study see Peter George Muir Dickson *The Financial Revolution in England: A Study in the Development of Public Credit 1688-1756* (London, 1967).

[37] Carlos, Fletcher and Neal 'Share portfolios' p.576

[38] Amy Froide, *Silent Partners: Women as Public Investors during Britain's Financial Revolution 1690-1750* (Oxford, 2016) p.4

[39] *Sir Humphrey Mackworth A New Abstract of the Mine-Adventure: Or, an Undertaking, Advantagious for the Publick Good, Charitable to the Poor, and Profitable to Every Person Who Shall be Concern'd Therein*. (London: 1698) EEBO: https://www.proquest.com/books/new-abstract-mine-adventure-undertaking/docview/2240936067/se-2.

[40] Froide, *Silent Partners* p.66

[41] Stuart Handley, 'Mackworth, Sir Humphrey (1657-1715)',HOPO: https://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1690-1715/member/mackworth-sir-humphrey-1657-1727 (accessed 7/02/23)

annuities.'[42] Women could access information about both private and state lotteries in the English press, and '[o]btaining and buying lottery tickets was quite straightforward for women' who could purchase tickets from a lottery office.[43] Thirty-seven per cent of lottery participants were women. There is no evidence that Astell purchased any lottery tickets, but the 'Million Adventure', promoted by the government, would have been attractive to her. Players who paid £10 per ticket were guaranteed an annuity of £1 for 16 years, plus the possibility of additional prizes ranging from £10 to £1,000.[44] Astell's enthusiasm for investment in the financial revolution is shown in most detail by her later involvement in the South Sea Bubble.

The 'Bubble'and the Bank

The wealth produced by colonial expansion and trade was increasing by the beginning of the eighteenth century and the South Sea Company, in which Astell invested, traded in slaves.[45] The exploitation of subject peoples is rightly deplored in twenty-first century discourses on empire and colonisation but the focus here is on Astell's money and financial resources as a crucial element of her material world. Economic historians have explored the way in which investment in early finance capitalism operated for women, with financial assets held in their own name.[46] In their examination of women speculators in the Royal African company during the South Sea bubble period Carlos, Maguire and Neal argue that 'the market provided another avenue for financial gain and independence for women but also that the ways women behaved with respect to this particular security speaks more generally to the financial acumen of women as a group.'[47] Astell was naturally attracted to this market, undeterred by criticism of it as a gambling facility, and eventually opened an account with Hoare's Bank. Anne Laurence uses Hoare's Bank ledgers to explore their activity, demonstrating that

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[42] Froide, *Silent Partners* p.31
[43] Froide, *Silent Partners* p.33
[44] Froide, *Silent Partners* p.32
[45] Anne Laurence 'Women investors, 'that nasty south sea affair' and the rage to speculate in early eighteenth-century England' *Accounting, Business & Financial History,* 16:2 (2006) p.246
[46] Ann M.Carlos, Karen Maguire & Larry Neal, 'Financial acumen, women speculators, and the Royal African company during the South Sea bubble', *Accounting, Business & Financial History,* 16:2 (2006) pp.219-243; Anne. Laurence 'Women investors' pp.245-264; Anne Laurence, 'Lady Betty Hastings, Her Half-sisters, and the South Sea Bubble: family fortunes and strategies', *Women's History Review,* 15:4 (2006) pp.33-540.; for a more general study see Carlos, Fletcher & Neal, 'Share portfolios'; Froide *Silent Partners* passim.
[47] Carlos, Maguire and Neal, 'Financial Acumen' p. 221

'overwhelmingly Hoare's Bank customers preferred investing in the South Sea Company to the other monied companies.'[48] In another article Laurence demonstrates how Lady Betty Hastings 'was a major investor, [in the South Sea company] taking a fairly conservative position as regards risk.'[49] Astell had known and admired Lady Betty since at least 1709, and would have taken her advice on investments.

In letters to Lady Ann Coventry about South Sea investments, beginning in February 1720, Astell refers to the general enthusiasm for the company: 'Every body here who has a Pound, takes care not to bury it in a Napkin. The Great as well as y[e] Rich turn Stock-jobbers….'[50] By March 1720 she was regretting that the newly rich 'stock-jobbers' who have 'got y[e] Cash out of y[e] Citizens hands' were failing to pass it on to 'such as want.' Despite her apparent disapproval she is plainly fascinated by the South Sea business: 'This new way of Multiplying Gold & Silver takes up every bodys thoughts & Conversation. Last night South Sea was 320, & they say it will soon be 1000 or 1500.'[51] By 12 August she had literally bought into the craze for South Sea stocks: 'I know not how Prosperity might not turn my head, as it doth most other Peoples, but GOD be thanked I am not like to come w[th]in y[e] danger, £1000 or 1500 being y[e] most I am like to make w[ch] at a time y[e] Printers, Upholsterers, & c. make their 100,000 will appear but in a sorry figure.'[52]

Astell had opened an account at Hoare's Bank by 23 September 1720 and on 11 January 1722/3 it records a payment: 'By 6 mo[nths] on 100 S[outh] Sea Bonds 'to Xmas last £2-10-0.'[53] She went on occasionally buying South Sea Bonds and receiving interest on them until 9 October 1725. Astell's account shows that she was conservative enough to hold on after the 'bubble' burst, receiving payments for several years after. Perhaps she was advised in this by Lady Betty. Astell's account also gives details of payments in cash, which she received from unspecified sources. These payments may be the financial support which she had from her circle of wealthy

[48] Laurence, 'Women Investors' p.249
[49] Laurence, 'Lady Betty Hastings' p.536
[50] Perry, *Mary Astell* p.390 (Letter to Lady Ann Coventry 25 Feb 1720)
[51] Perry, *Mary Astell* p. 391 (Letter to Lady Ann Coventry 26 March 1720)
[52] Perry, Mary Astell p. 393 (Letter to Lady Ann Coventry 12 Aug 1720)
[53] The details of both Astell's account, and that of Lady Betty Hastings, at Hoare's have been kindly furnished by Mrs Pamela Hunter, the Bank's Archivist.

women friends; it is likely that they had been supporting her from the time that her earliest work was published, over twenty years before.

'Great men' and wealthy women

When she arrived in London Astell set about pursuing her studies and writing, though there is the gap of four or five years before Rich Wilkin published *'A Serious Proposal to the Ladies'*, her first book. Evidence from a book newly discovered in Magdalene College Library shows that she was in Salisbury in July 1692.[54] In this small second-hand volume Astell wrote on the upper endpaper recording the price she paid for this book and the place of purchase as'Sarum'; on the lower endpaper she wrote a list in pounds, shillings and pence totalling £160. We do not know the date she wrote it, but if written at the time of purchase it suggests that she may have had more money than the relatively small sum she came to London with in 1688 or 1689. Astell might have received money from her brother Peter who was working as a successful lawyer in Newcastle, despite her complaint to Sancroft in 1688 that 'even my Kinsfolk had failed, and my familiar Friends had forgotten me.'[55] This visit to Salisbury is not a coincidence for Astell must have travelled there to meet the man whose work she admired, John Norris. She was in Salisbury again on 17 December 1695 purchasing two volumes of the 1688 edition of Malebranche's *De la recherche de la verite.*[56] These visits show that Astell was keen to pursue her studies and was prepared to travel at whatever cost to do so. George Ballard wrote of the clerical and scholarly men who expressed admiration for her intellect and her religious arguments.[57] Whilst these 'great men' might have admired her it is most unlikely that they would have supported her financially; that was down to the women who became Astell's patrons and supporters.

The first of these was Lady Catherine Jones (1672-1740) to whom she dedicated the *Letters concerning the Love of God* (1695), her second book.[58] Lady Catherine lived

[54] *Treason's masterpiece or A conference held at Whitehall between Oliver the late usurper and a committee of the then pretended Parliament etc.* Astell's copy with this list is in Magdalene College Old Library (H.8.14)
[55] Perry, *Mary Astell* p.401 (Letter to Archbishop Sancroft 1689)
[56] Astell's copies of this two-volume edition of this key work by the French philosopher are in Magdalene College Old Library (B.8.29) and (B.8.30)
[57] Ballard, *Memoirs of Several Ladies* pp.386-387
[58] Norris, John, (1657-1711) *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*

with her father, the Earl of Ranelagh, and Astell probably first met her at St Luke's Church in Chelsea, where they both frequently worshipped.[59] Astell experienced a strong attraction to her. Alan Bray argues that a monument in Westminster Abbey to a Mrs Mary Kendall suggests that Kendall's relationship with Lady Catherine was of a sexual nature.[60] Whatever the truth of that it seems clear that Astell transformed her feelings into a lifelong friendship with Lady Catherine. Most significantly from the point of view of this study, Catherine Jones supported Astell and gave her a secure home from 1726 until her death in 1731, giving her rooms in her house on Jew's Row.[61]

The other women who supported Astell both financially and practically were Lady Ann Coventry, Lady Elizabeth Hastings and Elizabeth Hutcheson, all pious and devout wealthy women. Lady Betty Hastings and Lady Catherine Jones never married; Lady Ann Coventry was a widow for fifty-two years. These women were patrons of the Charity School for Girls which was 'Astell's project from idea to execution.'[62] The Chelsea school, for the daughters of Chelsea Hospital veterans, absorbed much of Astell's time and energy from its beginning in 1709. Concern for women's education, and the support of these wealthy women, probably resulted in financial security for Astell; Perry suggests that she was likely to have been hired as schoolmistress.[63]

By 1712 Astell was living in her own house, at the bottom of Paradise Row; Chelsea tax records show payment in her name assessed at £10 so it was not a large dwelling, but genteel enough to satisfy Astell, and may well have been a perquisite of her work for the Charity school.[64] Lady Betty Hasting's account at Hoare's bank shows payments to Astell from April 1714 until 1730. SPCK records show annual earnings for school mistresses could be up to £25.[65] Astell must have been receiving money from other sources before opening her account at Hoare's Bank; she was also enjoying a social life. In 1714, for example she asked her old Chelsea acquaintance Francis Atterbury,

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Exclusive of all Other Loves, is further Cleared and Justified / Published by J. Norris (London, 1695) EEBO:https://www.proquest.com/books/letters-concerning-love-god-between-author/docview/2240883103/se-.

[59] Perry, *Mary Astell* p.245
[60] Alan Bray, *The Friend* (London, 2003) pp.226-230
[61] Perry, *Mary Astell* p.315
[62] Perry, *Mary Astell* p.233
[63] Perry, *Mary Astell* p.283
[64] Perry, *Mary Astell* p.283-284
[65] Perry, *Mary Astell* p.237

the new Bishop of Rochester, for tickets for herself and two friends to hear the music in Rochester's cathedral.[66] In 1720 she wrote to Sir Hans Sloane thanking him for allowing her 'in the company of some honor[able] Ladys' to see 'y[r] valuable collection'.[67] The fullest picture of the social life she enjoyed with her Chelsea women friends is demonstrated by her letters to Lady Ann Coventry from 1714.[68] Her social life with these elite women was first triggered by her writing, and whatever she may have written to Sancroft about her destitute state in 1688, she was developing her skills as a serious thinker through her use of books which is considered next.

Books: borrowing and buying

Books were central to Astell's plans as a lifelong singlewoman. The books she bought, or was able to study, provided her with learning and stimulated her ideas, which she then transformed into her published work. This section first considers her use of bookshops and book sales, then how she used a handmade book to gain support from Archbishop Sancroft. A selection of the inscriptions, marginalia, and other writing by Astell within books now known to have belonged to her are examined, as these have given a new insight into her evolving self-identity; then by studying a selection of her writing in these volumes we can see how she used them in a practical way to develop her work and identity as a scholar. They were an essential part of Astell's material world.

As Margaret Willes shows, despite the devastation caused by the Great Fire, the printing, publishing, and book trade was vibrant around St Paul's Cathedral and nearby in the City of London when Astell moved to London.[69] Perry's suggestion that the very conservative Archbishop Sancroft 'may have considered writing her best hope of survival as a single woman' is not convincing.[70] This thesis argues that it is more likely that Astell would have made her way to the bookshops in St Paul's Churchyard, and examined the various publications for sale, recognising from his stock that Richard

[66] TNA: SP35/40/182
[67] BL: Sloane Ms 4045 f.336,337
[68] Perry, *Mary Astell* Appendix C, pp.366-399
[69] Margaret Willes, *In the Shadow of St Paul's Cathedral: The Churchyard that Shaped London* (London, 2022) pp.150-173.
[70] Perry, *Mary Astell* p.68

Wilkin shared her political and religious views. Engaging him in conversation she then persuaded him that her work would appeal to his buyers. He was taking a risk, but Astell's name became known, and her writing career began.

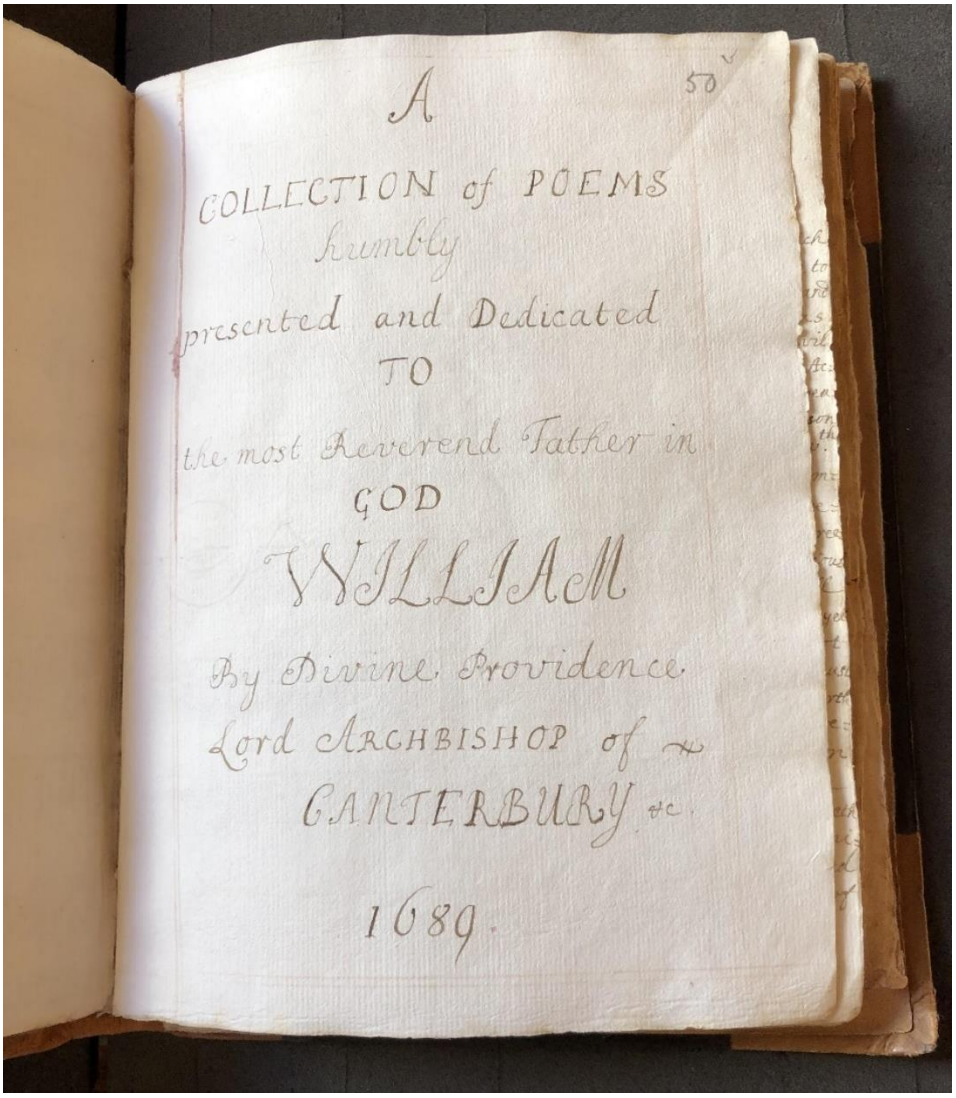
Samuel Pepys' *Diary* records visits to booksellers in St Paul's Churchyard. Pepys could afford to purchase books, but his *Diary* shows that he also used bookshops in ways which would have suited Astell. On 28 November 1663 he wrote: 'to Pauls churchyard and there looked upon the second part of *Hudibras*; which I buy not but borrow to read, to see if it be as good as the first.'[71] Pepys had a favoured relationship with Joshua Kirton his main bookseller. In a similar way, Astell had a good business relationship with Wilkin, who is also likely to have lent her books. Pepys spent hours browsing in Kirton's shop and Astell would have done the same at Wilkin's since she was excluded from learned libraries.[72] She had to travel several miles from Chelsea to the City; she probably went by Thames ferryboat, often used by Pepys as the quickest and easiest way to travel.

As the books in the recently discovered Astell collection at Magdalene College Cambridge show, she sometimes bought books, though her purchases were usually second-hand. James Raven says that '[t]he market in second-hand books proved increasingly active and well organised, with the Churchyard and Row an obvious focus for trade….especially after the establishment of Christopher Bateman's shop in 1698.'[73] Raven describes how, by the end of the seventeenth century, second-hand book auctions became more common and increased in size and frequency, providing another way for Astell to buy affordable books.[74]

[71] *Samuel Pepys: The Shorter Pepys* (ed.) Robert Latham (London, 1987) p.327
[72] *Shorter Pepys* p.349
[73]James Raven, *The Business of Books: Booksellers and the English Book Trade 1450-1850* (London, 2007) p.106
[74] Raven, *Books* p. 106

Illus. 13 Engraving by Simon Nicholls of book sale c.1700 (Google images)

This engraving by Simon Nicolls from about 1700 shows that women could sometimes attend these auctions, though many took place in coffee houses; the engraving shows an outdoor scene with two ladies in the background. Astell would have attended where books of interest to her were being auctioned, bidding to purchase within her means. The books in the Magdalene collection show her consciousness of prices paid, as well as how she used books as tools to succeed as a scholar. When considered as material objects, books reveal more about how these 'grossly material things' helped her. One 'book' in particular shows how astute Astell was in gaining supporters.

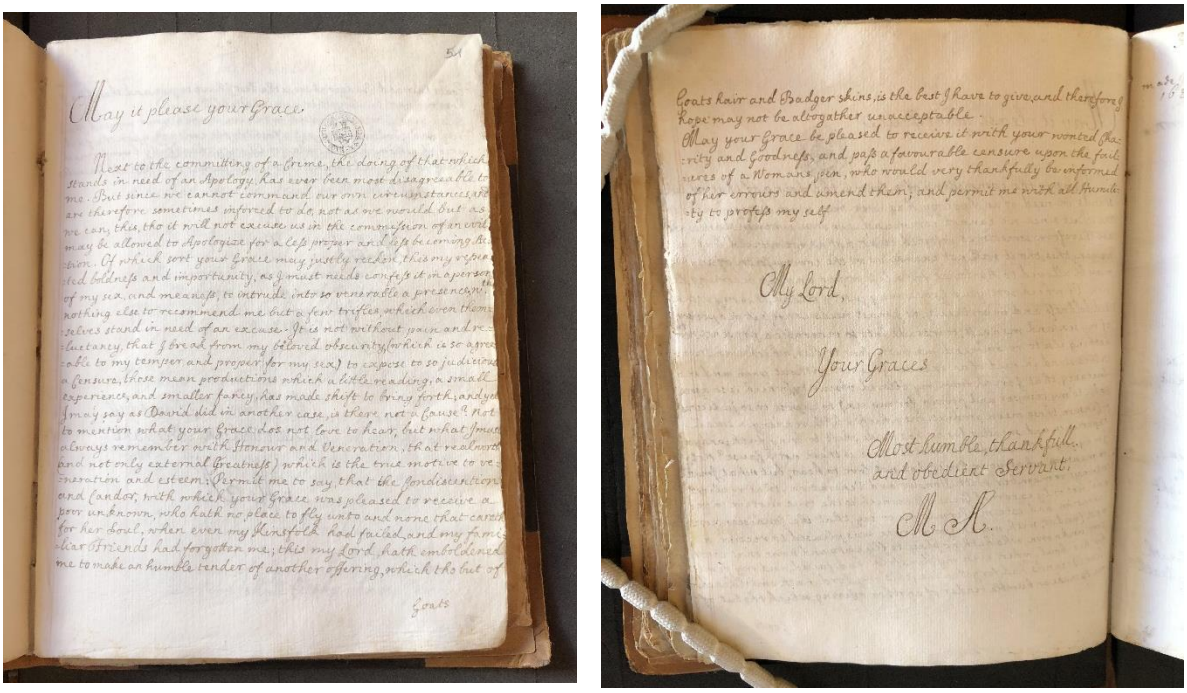


Illus. 14 Title page of Mary Astell's handmade book to Archbishop Sancroft 1689 (Bodleian Library Oxford) (author’s photo)

In 1688, she was granted an audience with Archbishop Sancroft, who almost certainly helped her with gifts of money and with contacts.[75] In gratitude in 1689, she sent him a handwritten and handstitched collection of her religious poems.[76] In the opening dedication she describes this as ‘an humble tender of another offering, which tho but of Goats hair and Badger skins, is the best I have to give, and therefore I hope may not be altogether unacceptable’.

[75] Perry, *Mary Astell* p.68
[76] Bodleian: MS.Rawl poet 154:51 ff 50r-97r

Her description of this handmade book shows Astell utilising the skills common to women, both practically and emotionally. Unfortunately, we do not know what her first 'offering' to Sancroft was, but it would have been a suitably modest gift from a woman; perhaps it was a piece of embroidery, or a poem she had written praising Sancroft. The reference to goats' hair and badger skins is from Exodus 25:4,5 and Exodus 35:6,7 detailing God's commands to Moses for items to be offered for sacrifice.



Illus. 15 Mary Astell's dedicatory letter to Sancroft in handmade book, recto and verso 1689 (Bodeleian Library Oxford) (author's photo)

Astell almost certainly did not use badger skin.[77] The significance of this allusion is noted for the first time in this thesis. It was a bold move, since by implication she was placing herself in the role of a supplicant and Sancroft as God! In sending a collection of manuscript poems in a handmade binding, she was using a physical item of the kind approved as suitable work for a woman, thereby undermining any suggestion that she might be a threat to the normal values of patriarchal society, and flattering Sancroft as the patriarch who could help her. This handwritten collection also suggests that before she began to engage with religious and philosophical arguments, she may well have wanted to publish religious poetry. Some of her earliest inscriptions of ownership in the newly discovered Magdalene collection support that suggestion.

[77] William Smith, *Smith's Bible Dictionary* (1901) The references to 'badger skins' in the Authorised Version are said to be a mistranslation of the Hebrew word 'tachash' for a blue or black animal skin. Badgers are not found in the Middle East. The specialists at the Bodleian Library do not consider that this material would have been used by Astell as binding. (pers com.)

The newly discovered Mary Astell Collection

In an undated letter probably from 1688 written to Sancroft, Astell had claimed to 'have pawned all my cloaths & now am brought to my Last Shift'.[78] The newly discovered volumes at Magdalene College, together with volumes already known in the Northampton Records Office, prove that whilst she may have pawned items of clothing, she kept some books. Three of Astell's books in the Northamptonshire Records Office from the King's Cliffe public library are inscribed as coming to her from her uncle Ralph, and so predate her move to London. She probably had other books with her when she travelled, so however badly she needed money she had kept them. In the Old Library of Magdalene College, Cambridge, forty-seven books and pamphlets which belonged to Astell have recently been located by Catherine Sutherland, Special Collections Librarian at Magdalene College; they are discussed by her in a recent article.[79] This discovery opens the way for new scholarship. Most scholars are likely to focus on what they reveal of Astell's ideas and the development of her arguments as a philosopher, scientist, and political theorist. This study breaks new ground by close examination of the books as material objects and explores what they can reveal of her ambitions and strategies as a single woman. By studying fifteen of the forty-seven books and pamphlets which she owned, it has been possible to draw some conclusions about Astell's relationship with these books as material objects. She used some of these texts to stimulate and inform her arguments in her own writing as well as her engagements with some learned men.

'Ex Libris Phylia' and other inscriptions

In a double volume of theology printed in 1667 Mary Astell inscribed the following in ink: 'Ma E libris Phylia her book 1679'. She was thirteen, and this was the year when her uncle Ralph Astell died, so it is likely that this book had belonged to him. She probably acquired more of his books on his death, including William Cave's *Primitive*

[78] Bodleian: MS Rawlinson Letters 59:89

[79] Catherine Sutherland, 'Books owned by Mary Astell in the Old Library of Magdalene College Cambridge.' *The Library*, 24:3 (September 2023). This section draws on Sutherland's work. I am very grateful for her generosity in sharing this before publication.

Christianity which has the inscription 'e libris Phyliae 1679.'[80] Catherine Sutherland discusses Astell's use of this pseudonym, observing that these 'inscriptions are certainly embedded within the oeuvre of 'poetic' female pseudonyms inspired by classical literature.' At thirteen Astell seems to have been inspired by the idea of being a poet but did not need anonymity because these were personal inscriptions in books she owned. She never used the name Phylia in any of her published work, and it is clear she was moving on from this identity; she wrote over the pseudonym 'Phylia' in a book which she bought in 1690.[81] Her copy of *An essay towards a natural history of the earth: and terrestrial bodies* by John Woodward, 'Professor of Physick in Gresham College and Fellow of the Royal Society' which she almost certainly acquired as a new book, demonstrates this change.[82] On the upper endpaper she wrote in large bold letters 'MA Mar. 4. 1694/5'. She was keen to engage with current theological and geological arguments about the earth, and her boldly written initials show that, by then, she had moved from aspiring to be a poet to engaging with contemporary scientific ideas in her own name.

Her inscriptions of ownership with the dates of acquisition, prices paid and occasionally the places of her purchase, give more information about her circumstances. For example, there are the two books which she bought in Salisbury, discussed earlier. The earliest in date of acquisition is marked on the upper endpaper 'Sarum Ex Libris Phylia Julis 28. 1692 pret xd.' *Treason's master-piece* reflects Astell's concern at this time with the question of kingship. It is a small book with no room for marginalia and no notes on the end papers, and it cost a relatively small sum, but at this time Astell would have been careful of her expenses.[83] Astell had exchanged correspondence with John Norris, the Cambridge Platonist, which was subsequently published as *Letters Concerning the Love of God*. He had taken up a living near

[80] Astell's use of this inscription is discussed in detail by Catherine Sutherland in her article. This volume of William Cave's *Primitive Christianity* is one of several of Astell's books already known about in the Northampton Records Office.
[81] *A vindication of the authority, constitution, and laws of the church and state of Scotland by Gilbert Burnet, Professor of Theology in Glasgow* Magdalene College Old Library (H.5.20)
[82] *An Essay towards a Natural History of the Earth: and Terrestrial Bodies by John Woodward, Professor of Physick in Gresham College and Fellow of the Royal Society* Magdalene College Old Library (H.16.39)
[83] *Treason's masterpiece or A conference held at Whitehall between Oliver the late usurper and a committee of the then pretended Parliament etc* Magdalene College Old Library (H.8.14)

Salisbury early in 1692.[84] Although the date in this volume pre-dates her first previously known correspondence with him, it strongly suggests that Astell was already aware of Norris's work and was bold enough to attempt to visit him in the summer of 1692. Her interest in the philosophy of the Cambridge Platonists was probably stimulated by her uncle Ralph, who had studied with them at Cambridge.[85]

The fact that she travelled to Salisbury from London shows her determination to become involved in current philosophical debates; this paid off because the book of their correspondence which Norris published helped to establish her as a contemporary thinker. Norris encouraged her to study the French philosopher Nicolas Malebrance and the second purchase she made in Salisbury three years later was a double volume of a key text by Malebranche, inscribed 'Sarum 2 Vol: pret [3s?] Decem. 17 1695' so she bought these second-hand books now bound in one volume, when visiting Norris again, having taken his advice and learned French.[86] She travelled to Salisbury from London at least twice, staying for an unknown period and travelling by coach from Chelsea, a journey of over eighty miles, which took three or four days and involved overnight stops at inns; she was determined to learn and to participate in contemporary debates. Evidence from the books she acquired proves that she was determined to demonstrate that women could be equal in scholarship with men.

Working texts for a female scholar

The inscriptions in the other volumes examined show that she bought second-hand books, even when she was aware of a newer edition; for example, she owned a copy of Sancroft's *Modern Policies, taken from Machiavel, Borgia, and other choice authors by an eyewitness*, printed in 1655. She must have acquired this after 1690 because she wrote on the upper endpaper: 'By Dr. Wm. Sandcroft since A. Bp. Of Cant.' and 'Reprinted 1690.'[87] Frances Maguire and Helen Smith observe that '[w]riting in books

[84] Richard Acworth, 'Norris, John (1657-1712)'ODNB https://doi-org.uea.idm.oclc.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/7763 (accessed 25/08/21)
[85] Perry, *Mary Astell* pp. 49-51; see also Mark Goldie 'Cambridge Platonists (act 1630's-1680)'ODNB https://doi-org.uea.idm.oclc.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/94274 (accessed 17/08/21)
[86] *De la Recherche de la Verite, ou l'on traitte de la nature del'esprit de l'homme & de l'usage qu'il en doit faire pour eviter l'erreur dans les sciences par Nicholas Malebranche* (1688) Magdalene College Old Library (B.8.29/30)
[87] *Modern Policies, taken from Machiavel, Borgia, and other choice Authors by an Eyewitness, by William Sancroft* (1655) Magdalene College Old Library (G.1077)

offers rich evidence not only (indeed not always) of how people read but of how books functioned as material artifacts, domestic records and spaces for thought.'[88] Astell's books are clear evidence of that; she used many of the books as texts on which she could work, noting her responses in the margins, inserting paginations or creating indices. She was fluent in French and there are sixteen books in French in the Magdalene collection, including seven by Malebranche and four by Descartes; they contain Astell's notes on endpapers and in margins, often in French. These books also show that her interest in the new approach to material sciences took her beyond the study of philosophical and political ideas. Her interest in mathematics lead to her spending approximately six months between September 1697 and February 1698 in Greenwich, studying the mathematics relevant to astronomy with John Flamsteed, or perhaps with his scholarly wife Margaret.[89] In her copy of the 1681 edition of Descartes *Les Principes de la Philosophie* which she inscribes 'July 9 1695 pret xs' she wrote extensive notes on the upper and lower endpapers and marginalia including mathematical calculations.[90]

The evidence of her journeys to Salisbury and Greenwich, her study of French and mathematics, and her purchases of second-hand books of philosophy, material science, political ideas and Christian teaching all demonstrate her determination to pursue life as a serious scholar; to carry out that aim she also needed practical items as well as the books. Helen Smith writes about the tools of women's writing, describing instructions for creating goose quill pens and making ink as well as the 'significant evidence [which] indicates that many women wrote on loose sheets.'[91] William Sherman says that 'by the end of the sixteenth century it had become increasingly common for readers to take their notes in loose-leaf or bound notebooks or erasable writing tablets,' and that these became more common by the middle of the

[88] Frances Maguire and Helen Smith, 'Material Texts' in Catherine Richardson, Tara Hamling and David Gaimster (eds), *The Routledge Handbook of Material Culture in Early Modern Europe* (Abingdon, 2017) p.209

[89] Rob Illiffe and Frances Willmoth, 'Astronomy and the Domestic Sphere: Margaret Flamsteed and Caroline Hershel as Assistant-Astronomers', in Lynette Hunter and Sarah Hutton (eds), *Women, Science and Medicine 1500-1700 Mothers and Sisters of the Royal Society* (Stroud, 1997) p.248. The authors refer to an entry in the Royal Greenwich Observatory Records RGO 1/15, f.165r-166v in Cambridge University Library

[90] *Les Principes de la Philosophie par Rene Descartes* Magdalene College Old Library (H.14.18)

[91] Helen Smith, 'Women and the Materials of Writing' in Patricia Pender and Rosalind Smith (eds), *Material Cultures of Early Modern Women's Writing* (Basingstoke, 2014) pp.14-35

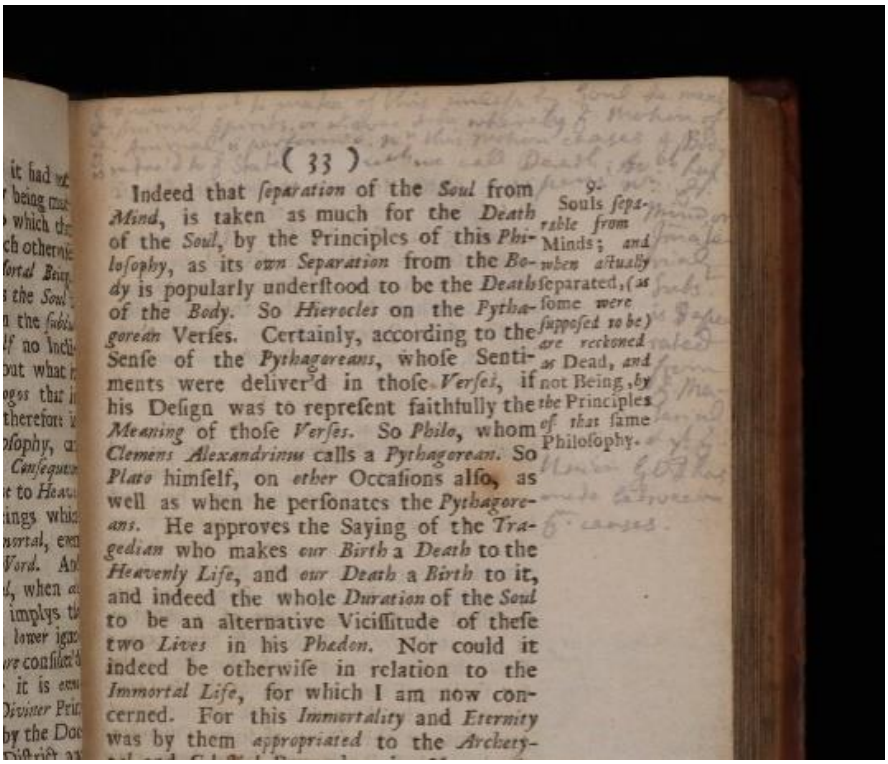
seventeenth century.[92] We do not know if Astell had any notebooks to write in, and no 'loose sheets' have survived, though her practice of writing to learned men indicates that she must have had some decent writing paper. The evidence here shows that she used the books themselves to make notes and raise questions or observations which she might later use in her own writing. Sometimes she wrote in pen and sometimes in pencil. Pencils were a relatively new device and the earliest wooden casings appeared at the beginning of the seventeenth century.[93] By the time Astell was using pencils they were readily available, and she was probably using a piece of bread rubbed into a small ball to amend or erase her notes; this gave her a cheap and practical method of using the book for her work and her thoughts. She referred to this practice when she sent a book to Lady Ann Coventry in December 1714, saying 'I have left y[e] Margin of y[e] Book w[th] out rubbing out w[t] I noted for my own use, hoping it won't be seen by any but Y[or] L[ap].'[94] She used ink when she was satisfied that her entry could be permanent.

James Raven says that printers, stationers, publishers, and booksellers worked in close proximity, sometimes from the same premises, from the sixteenth century onwards.[95] An inventory of the Holborn bookseller John Place compiled in 1704 revealed 'a large stock of reference and legal works and stationery.'[96] Astell would have bought her writing materials from Wilkin or an adjacent seller. Bookshops also provided her with a safe, semi-public space where she could continue her engagement with contemporary arguments about kingship, politics, and religion; as she became known she may have had discussions with other interested browsers. From 1700 onwards she gave Wilkin's shop as her correspondence address.[97] The distance from her home in Chelsea to St Pauls is well over four miles. Ballard had been told that 'before her death, she constantly walked from Chelsea to St Martin's [in the Field] every Sunday…purely to hear a celebrated preacher whom she much admired.'[98] St Pauls is over twice the

[92]William H. Sherman, *Used Books: Marking Readers in Renaissance England* (Pennsylvania, 2009) p.7
[93] Baird Shuman,'Invention of the 'Lead' Pencil', *Salem Press Encyclopedia*, (2020)
[94] Perry, *Mary Astell* p.371 (Letter to Lady Ann Coventry 10 Dec 1714)
[95]Raven, *Books* p.49
[96] Raven, ibid. p.113
[97] Perry, *Mary Astell* p.212
[98] Ballard, *Memoirs of Several Ladies* p.390

distance, so it is most likely Astell made use of ferries, a common way for Londoners to travel, for at least some of these journeys.

Astell's determination to challenge those thinkers with whom she disagreed can be seen in her copy of Henry Dodwell's *The scripture account of the eternal rewards or punishments of all that hear of the Gospel: without an immortality necessarily resulting from the nature of the souls themselves that are concerned in those rewards or punishments.*[99] She had written on the title page 'M.A. May 1708 The gift of ye learned Author.' She admired Henry Dodwell (1641-1711), a nonjuror, as a scholar and theologian.[100] Dodwell expressed ideas about unmarried women and Astell's copy shows how she used the book as a 'material thing,' writing in ink as she worked out her responses. Even though she was glad to have this gift, she did not hesitate to write very small pencil notes in the margins, questioning what Dodwell had written or making additional points.


(33)

Indeed that *separation* of the *Soul* from *Mind*, is taken as much for the *Death* of the *Soul*, by the Principles of this *Philosophy*, as its *own Separation* from the *Body* is popularly understood to be the *Death* of the *Body*. So *Hierocles* on the *Pythagorean* Verſes. Certainly, according to the Senſe of the *Pythagoreans*, whoſe Sentiments were deliver'd in thoſe *Verſes*, if his Deſign was to repreſent faithfully the *Meaning* of thoſe *Verſes*. So *Philo*, whom *Clemens Alexandrinus* calls a *Pythagorean*. So *Plato* himſelf, on *other* Occaſions alſo, as well as when he perſonates the *Pythagoreans*. He approves the Saying of the *Tragedian* who makes *our Birth* a *Death* to the *Heavenly Life*, and *our Death* a *Birth* to it, and indeed the whole *Duration* of the *Soul* to be an alternative Viciſſitude of theſe two *Lives* in his *Phædon*. Nor could it indeed be otherwiſe in relation to the *Immortal Life*, for which I am now concerned. For this *Immortality* and *Eternity* was by them *appropriated* to the *Archety-*

9. Souls ſeparable from Minds; and when actually ſeparated, (as ſome were ſuppoſed to be) are reckoned as Dead, and not Being, by the Principles of that ſame Philoſophy.

Illus. 16 Detail showing Astell's marginalia in Henry Dodwell's book. (photo credit Magdelene College Cambridge Old Library)

[99] *The scripture account of the eternal rewards or punishments of all that hear of the Gospel: without an immortality necessarily resulting from the nature of the souls themselves that are concerned in those rewards or punishments* Magdalene College Old Library (H.19.50)
[100] Theodor Harmsen, 'Dodwell, Henry (1641-1711),'ODNB https://doi-org.uea.idm.oclc.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/7763 (accessed 15/09/21)

Having made her notes and queries Astell almost certainly wrote to Dodwell with her questions, expecting to have a serious exchange of views with him, having previously written to him questioning a critical point in his book *A Case in View Considered* (1705). On that occasion he had replied to her praising her 'excellent and ingenious writings' signing himself 'A hearty honourer of your excellent Endowments.'[101] Astell may have noted the patronising tone of his praise, but she would be glad that he had responded.

Writing to learned men

Astell's exchanges with Dodwell were part of her strategy to prove that a woman's intellect could equal that of a man, even though she was denied access to formal education and the libraries of learned institutions. There is further evidence of her written exchanges with learned men when Francis Atterbury wrote to a male correspondent:

> Had she had as much good breeding as good sense, she would be perfect; but she has not the most decent manner of insinuating what she means; which I wonder at, because a civil turn of words is what her sex is always mistress of.[102]

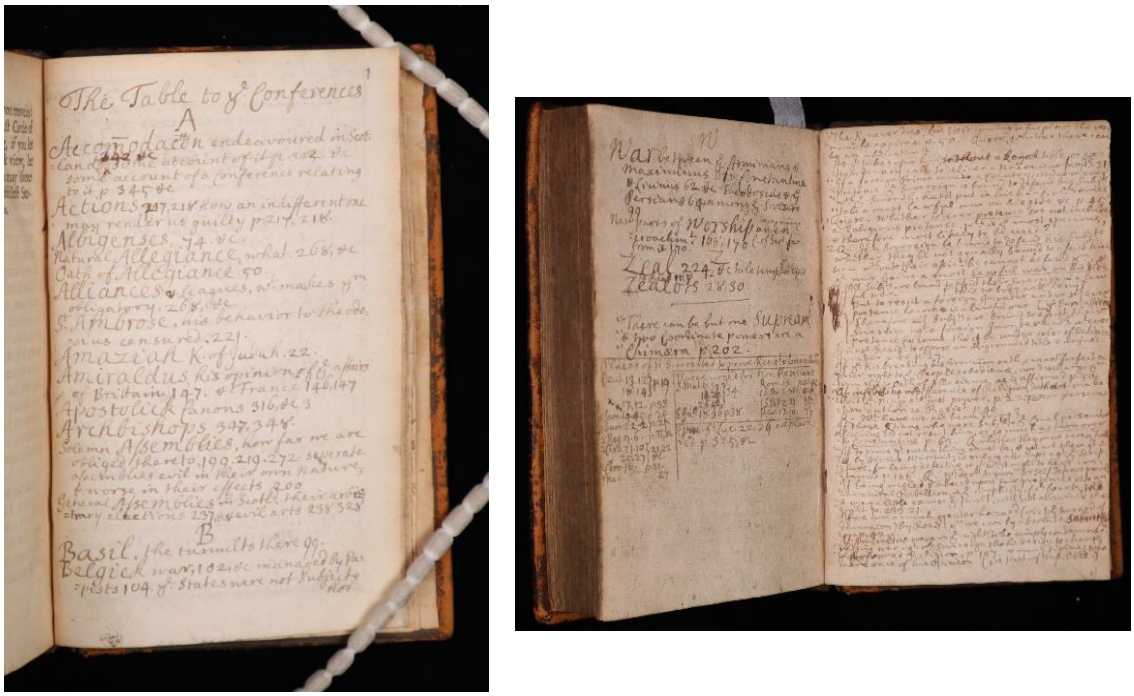
This was written after he had given Astell a copy of a sermon he had delivered and she then wrote to him, 'attacking me home'; his discomfort is evident. Her marginalia and detailed comments in some of the Magdalene books together with the evidence of her correspondence with John Norris, Henry Dodwell and Francis Atterbury strongly suggest that she did not simply use her reading to inform her own writing but engaged with these men by writing to them.

Astell marked her copy of a book by John Woodward, 'Professor of Physick and Fellow of the Royal Society' 'MA Mar. 4 1694/5' in large bold letters, so she had either purchased it as a new book or possibly had been given it by Wilkin. On the lower endpaper and lower pastedown she wrote pencil notes posing questions about Woodward's assertions. She was engaging with material science at this date and would have written to Woodward to challenge his arguments. It is not

[101] BLO:MS Rawl.D 198:101-114; Perry, *Mary Astell* p.211
[102] Quoted in Ballard, *Memoirs of Several Ladies*. p.387

surprising that we do not have much surviving correspondence between Astell and other learned men whose work she questioned, for they are most likely to have thrown away her letters.

We get further insight into her material circumstances from another book in the Magdalene collection, showing how hard Astell worked when she needed a thorough breakdown of a volume. She created 'A table to y[e] conferences' on the lower endpapers of a book by Gilbert Burnet *A vindication of the authority, constitution and laws of the church and state of Scotland,* (1673) to help her utilise the contents of this book.[103].



Illus. 17 Astell's 'Table to the Conferences' in Gilbert Burnet's 'A Vindication of the authority, constitution and laws of the Church and State of Scotland' 1673. (photo credit: Magdelene College Old Library, Cambridge)

To create this, she needed time and a quiet space to work as well as pieces of paper, probably scraps, to co-ordinate the entries. Wasting nothing, she would have reused scraps of paper which had been wrappings for food and other household goods. Exploring women's letter writing and intellectual endeavour within the domestic environment, Leonie Hannan points out that for Mary Evelyn, the wife of John Evelyn, as for most married women, there was a conflict between her roles in life: 'For Evelyn, the demands of household management and the rearing of children never sat entirely

[103] Magdalene College Old Library (H.5.20)

at ease with her ambitions to lead a life of learning.'[104] Without the resources of a wealthy woman Astell's intellectual projects would have been impossible if she had been married. Her choice to remain unmarried gave her the most important things she needed for her work: quiet space in lodgings and time. She became recognised as a contributor to contemporary discourse and her published attacks on occasional conformity and her defence of conservative Anglicanism resulted in praise from conservative Churchmen and High Tories.

Astell was happy to use their influence when it suited her. On 7th August 1714, for example, she wrote to Atterbury, who was the new Bishop of Rochester, asking for tickets for herself and two friends to hear the music in Rochester's cathedral on Thursday 12th August.[105] The Atterburys were close neighbours in Chelsea, with whom she occasionally dined, being described by a correspondent to Atterbury as that 'female friend and witty companion of your wife's.'[106] As this examination of Astell's books has shown, corresponding with learned men was crucial to her aim of being acknowledged as a serious scholar, but as important to her was the practical and financial support of her circle of close female friends, which was considered above. She desired to be useful and close to these women and that desire, together with her long-held support for the Stuart monarchy, drew her in to potentially dangerous activities in support of the Jacobites.

Astell and the Jacobites

On 27 October 1719 Mary Astell wrote to Lady Ann Coventry, acknowledging receipt of her:

> obliging Letter w[ch] I received yesterday, & hasten, in obedience to Yo[r] Comands to let you know y[t] I am still in Town, & perhaps shall be so all y[e] Winter, there being 20 Miles from Tunbridge to Burwash, w[ch] now y[e] season for y[e] Waters is done, I can't get

[104] Leonie Hannan, 'Making Space: English women, letter-writing, and the life of the mind, c.1650-1750', *Women's History Review,* 21:4 (2012), pp.589-604
[105] TNA: SP35/40/182
[106] Perry, *Mary Astell* p.216 quoting a letter from Lord Stanhope to Atterbury from *The Memoirs and Correspondence of Francis Atterbury, Bishop of Rochester Vols 1and 2* (London, 1869) vol.1 p.170

> over but on Horseback or in a Wagon: And shou'd be very sorry not to have y[e] Pleasure of seeing yo[r] L[ap] before I go, since y[e] difficulty of y[e] Journey, besides all other Reasons, will keep me from thinking of a Return to Town.[107]

This letter may simply be a pleasant piece of chat, which incidentally gives us an insight into a problem of travelling in the winter to a small village in east Sussex, but it may also be a clue to Astell's activities as a Jacobite supporter. Why did she travel to Burwash for a period of months, and was it as the opening line above suggest, at the 'command' of Lady Ann Coventry? What were the 'other Reasons' which would keep her there? Ruth Perry first raised the possibility that Astell was assisting the Duchess of Ormonde, wife of the exiled Jacobite James Butler, by acting as a go-between for correspondence.[108] This thesis expands the possibilities suggested by Perry, adducing new evidence and concluding that Astell did indeed move from being a believer in passive obedience and non-violent action to active involvement, assisting with communications in the Jacobite cause. First the indications in Astell's letters to Lady Ann Coventry will be examined in the context of the Jacobite plots at this period and the network of people with whom Astell was involved will be set out; then reasons for Astell's visit to Burwash will be considered, as her visit there suggests that she was supporting Jacobite activities. This section will conclude by noting how Astell became the subject of scrutiny by Walpole's agents and her response to that.

'A good Cause and a Good Conscience'

Astell arrived in London in the turbulent period when James's reign was ending. She did not play any part in those political upheavals, but her family had always been Royalist supporters of the Stuarts and she never agreed with William replacing James II.[109] In her study of women spies in the mid-seventeenth century, Nadine Akkerman argues that the perception of women as incapable of rational thought meant that 'as

[107] Perry, *Mary Astell* pp387-388
[108] Perry, *Mary Astell* pp.172-180.
[109] Astell's uncle Ralph wrote a long poem celebrating the Restoration: *Vota non bella New Castle's heartie gratulation to her sacred soveraign King Charles the Second on Hisnow [sic] glorious restauration to his birth-right-power* EEBO: https://www.proquest.com/books/vota-non-bella-new-castles-heartie-gratulation/docview/2240868736/se-2?accountid=10637

women they were automatically above suspicion.'[110] As we saw with Mary Ward, this lack of belief in women's potential to pass on subversive information, though widespread, did not always mean that they avoided scrutiny, but women often found ways to assist those who were communicating secret information. Akkerman shows the importance of women in networks of communication for '[t]he written word, primarily in the form of the letter, was the only means through which even the semblance of private, long-distance communication could be had.'[111] By the period of Jacobite conspiracies women were no longer so easily overlooked, and Astell herself became aware that she was being watched by Walpole's agents.

The key to understanding how Astell became a minor agent assisting the Jacobites lies in her relationship with Lady Anne Coventry (1673-1763) and her sister Mary, Duchess of Ormonde (1664-1733). The collection of letters from Astell to Lady Anne Coventry which Perry transcribed from the Beaufort MSS, begin in 1714, but Astell had known her from at least 1709, when Lady Anne became one of the main patrons of Astell's Chelsea Charity School for Girls.[112] Mary, Duchess of Ormonde was the second daughter of the first Duke of Beaufort and had married James Butler, the second Duke of Ormonde in 1685.[113] After Ormonde left England in 1715, having been impeached for high treason as a Jacobite plotter, his Duchess remained in England staying in Beaufort House until she moved to Ormonde House in Paradise Row Chelsea after 1720.[114] Lady Ann lived much of the time at her country house at Snitterfield in Warwickshire, but visited her sister Mary in Chelsea occasionally. Astell's letters to Lady Ann from 1714 often refer to visiting or wishing to visit her when she was staying with her sister.

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[110] Nadine Akkerman, *Invisible Agents: Women and Espionage in Seventeenth-Century Britain* (Oxford, 2018) p.4

[111] Akkerman, *Invisible Agents* p.12

[112] Emma Major, 'Coventry [nee Somerset], Anne, countess of Coventry (1673-1763)' ODNB https://doi-org.uea.idm.oclc.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/6474 (accessed 22/02/22)

[113] Mary's father, Henry Somerset, the first Duke of Beaufort had purchased the mansion in Chelsea which was renamed as Beaufort House after Somerset was created the first Duke of Beaufort by Charles II in December 1682, see Molly McClain, 'Somerset, Henry first duke of Beaufort (1629-1700)' ONDB https://doi-org.uea.idm.oclc.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/26009 (last accessed 20/02/22)

[114] Reginald Blount, *Paradise Row, or a Broken Piece of Old Chelsea* (1906) (re-print: London 2018) pp.98-101

The difficulty of corresponding securely is clear in a series of letters from the Duchess of Ormonde to Jonathan Swift who, though sympathetic to the Ormondes, was never involved with Jacobite plotting. In a letter to Swift dated October 1715 the Duchess writes of the difficulty of corresponding with her husband who is now in exile.[115] There are other references in her letters to Swift about the interception of her post, the most direct of which occurs in her letter of 1723 saying that:

> as yr three last never came to hand, I think it very happy that you have kept yr liberty thus long, for I can't account for my not receiving them, any other way, than that they were stopt in the post office, & interpreted, as most innocent things are, to mean something very distant from the intention of the writer or actor….[116]

The British government were monitoring her post, so the help of a third party who could convey information without so great a risk of interception was very valuable. Whilst the Duchess herself was bound to be watched, there was much less likelihood that Astell would be subject to surveyance.[117]

Frank O'Gorman has observed: 'The links between Jacobitism and Toryism were particularly strong between 1714 and 1722,' exactly the period when her letters to Lady Ann strongly suggest that Astell was assisting the Jacobite cause.[118] After his impeachment in 1715, Ormonde left for France.[119] In a letter to Lady Ann dated 29 August 1715 Astell wrote:

> 'I am glad to hear y[t] my Lady Duchess of Ormonde enjoys her Health. A good Cause & a Good Conscience & y[t] Nobleness of

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[115] *The Correspondence of Jonathan Swift Vol.2 1714-1723* (ed.) Harold Wiliams (Oxford Scholarship Online) p.189 https://www.oxfordscholarlyeditions.com/view/10.93/actrade/9780199670109.book.1/actrade-978199670109-div2-143 (accessed 23/06/22)

[116] *Correspondence of Jonathan Swift Vol.2* p.421

[117] For an examination of the Government's security service operations see: Joseph Hone, *The Paper Chase: The Printer, the Spymaster, and the Hunt for the Rebel Pamphleteers* (London, 2022)

[118] Frank O'Gorman, *The Long Eighteenth Century: British Political and Social History 1688-1832* (London, 2016) p.160

[119] Stuart Handley, 'Butler, second duke of Ormonde (1665-1745), army officer, politician, and Jacobite conspirator' ODNB: https://doi-org.uea.idm.oclc.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/4193 (accessed 21/06/22)

> Spirit w[ch] her Grace Inherits from so many Heroic Ancestors, render y[e] Injur'd abundantly more Great & Happy than those who have y[e] Powere and Injustice to Injure y[m].[120]

In 1717 Astell's involvement with the Duchess became much closer. On 20 June she wrote that 'I had y[e] Honour of her Grace y[e] Duchess of Ormonds Company at my cell last week, and of dining w[th] her...' She then concludes:

> 'If yo[r] L[ap] has any Comands you will do me y[e] Justice to believe I shall receive y[m] as an Honor, & obey y[m] w[th] all y[t] Sincerity & Diligence y[t] becomes Yo[r] L[ap's] Most obedient & ever faithful humble Serv[t]'[121]

Whilst these may be read as the standard compliments, in the context of Astell's continuing close involvement with the Duchess, they strongly suggest an offer to do whatever she can to assist the 'good Cause.' By this date Astell's public recognition had faded and she had not published anything since 1709. The Duchess of Ormonde was not noted for intellectual interests, so it is reasonable to conclude that she was motivated by some other purpose in her engagement with Astell. The 'social' engagements continued. On 1 July 1717 Astell reported to Lady Ann that the previous Thursday the Duchess 'did me y[e] honor to carry me to Town after Dinner & bring me back again.' What was the purpose of this drive to 'Town'? It might have been to introduce Astell to a contact who was involved in passing information. In the same paragraph Astell makes what must be an allusion to a wished-for change of regime, because she 'shou'd rejoice exceedingly to see her Grace remove to Richmond [where the Ormonde's had a villa] or St James's', which is a reference to the royal court.[122]

On 7 June 1718 Astell writes again of dining 'at her Grace of Ormonde's who is very well & Courageous as ever.' The rest of this letter contains enigmatic references to 'a Speaking Dog', 'the Dog's Master', 'y[e] Grand Signior', and 'y[e] good Musselmen in

[120] Perry, *Mary Astell* p. 375 (Letter to Lady Ann Coventry 29 Aug 17215)
[121] Perry, *Mary Astell* p.378 (Letter to Lady Ann Coventry 20 June 1717)
[122] Perry, *Mary Astell* p.378 (Letter to Lady Ann Coventry 1 July 1717)

Town'. Then, in a passage where the reference to the Pretender must be reversed to mean George I, Astell says:

> The Pretender, (you understand me M[d]) grows more & more Contemptible, even among his own Party. He lives in his Borrow'd Palace, his Urbino as another Tiberius in Capra. As for our pious Protestant Court at Kensington, y[e] Gates are shut & double Guards are kept ag[t] the Wicked.[123]

Her use of coded language for various people involved in Jacobite plotting shows the extent of Astell's involvement. In a postscript to this letter she says: 'M[rs] M will have a packet this post.' 'Mrs M' is Lady Mary Greville, Lady Ann's niece. In the next letter to Lady Ann, dated 19 July, Astell refers to 'Latin verses, & several others w[ch] I hope yo[r] L[ap] received from M[rs] Mary to whom I send another by this Post.'[124] This letter also refers to Astell having had 'time enough to perfume y[e] Snuff w[ch] attends yo[r] L[ap's] Orders,' and in the next, Astell states that she has heard 'by Lady Betty Butler yesterday y[t] her Grace [the Duchess of Ormonde] is well & y[e] Snuff is sent according to yo[r] L[aps] orders. 'Perfumed snuff' may be code for some other communication. If nothing else, the frequent references in the letters of 1718 and 1719 to 'packets,' 'parcels' and other items being sent according to 'Yo[r] L[ap's] Order' indicate that Astell was very closely involved with the Duchess of Ormonde and her family. As we saw in the case study of Mary Ward, '[w]omen made good spies and intermediaries, in war and peace.'[125]

Astell's involvement as a go-between can be seen most clearly around the time of the failed invasion plans of 1719.[126] The British Government had been aware of the plan, but this did not bring an end to Jacobite plotting and propaganda. O'Gorman has argued that 'the Jacobite option' had a long-lasting appeal to many and was 'a reflection of the hundreds of songs, poems and stories that carried the Jacobite

[123] Perry, *Mary Astell* p.380 (Letter to Lady Ann Coventry 7 June 1718)
[124] Perry, *Mary Astell* p.381 Letter to Lady Ann Coventry 19 July 1718)
[125] Ann Hughes, *Gender and the English Revolution* (Abingdon, 2012) p.36
[126] For an account of this see W.K.Dickson (ed.), *The Jacobite Attempt of 1719: Letters of James Butler, Second Duke of Ormonde, Relating to Cardinal Alberoni's Project for the Invasion of Great Britain on Behalf of the Stuarts, and to the Landing of a Spanish Expedition in Scotland* (Publication of the Scottish History Society Vol. XIX, Edinburgh 1895) pp.xix-lix

message.'[127] In her study of an earlier period of Jacobite activity Rachel Weil explores the incursion of Jacobite material and communications along the coasts of Kent and Sussex: 'Customs officers were expected to guard the coasts, preventing the smuggling not only of goods but of Jacobites and Jacobite correspondence' but this was 'a weak link in England's defence against Jacobite infiltration.'[128] Some thirty years later the south coast would have been no more watertight against such infiltration. It may not be a coincidence that a 'Captain Kelly of Rye' on the Kent coast, which is relatively close to Burwash was investigated as an associate of George Kelly, the Jacobite agent, whose involvement in the so-called Atterbury plot will be considered later.[129] Astell gave up her house in Chelsea and moved down to Burwash in October 1719; her close involvement with the Duchess and her sister Lady Ann Coventry, and the nature of some of her correspondence at this time, suggests that there was more to this stay than simply a change of air for her health.

Why Burwash?

Burwash was an unusual place for Astell to stay in from November 1719 to the New Year 1720, for she relished the companionship of her friends and neighbours in Chelsea. Perry suggests that the trip was arranged for her to have a change of scene after a period of declining health.[130] It is argued in here that her stay in Sussex was to do with her support for the Ormondes. Paul Monod has explored the connections between the smuggling gangs which operated on the south coast, and Jacobite messengers and infiltrators: 'The Smuggling Acts of 1698, 1717, 1721, and 1745 were passed amid great anxiety over Jacobite activity in England.'[131]

Whilst there is no hard evidence of Astell acting as a Jacobite messenger, Burwash is less than twenty miles from Rye. It is clear from the arrest of Captain Kelly's servants at Rye, and the discovery of a cipher in George Kelly's handwriting in 1722, that Jacobite

[127] O'Gorman, *The Long Eighteenth Century* pp.159-160
[128] Rachel Weil, *A Plague of Informers: Conspiracy and Political Trust in William's England* (London, 2013) p.74
[129] TNA: SP 35/32/36; SP 35/37/11A
[130] Perry, *Mary Astell* p.305
[131]Paul.K.Monod, 'Dangerous Merchandise: Smuggling, Jacobitism and Commercial Culture in Southeast England, 1690-1760,' *Journal of British Studies,* 30:2 (April 1991), pp. 150-182, this from p.153

activity was happening in the area.[132] Burwash is part of the Ashburnham estates; the Ashburnhams were a mildly pro-Jacobite family and John Ashburnham married Lady Mary Butler, the daughter of the Duke and Duchess of Ormonde, in October 1710.[133] Lady Mary died in 1713 and by the time of Astell's stay in Burwash in 1719 John Ashburnham had remarried and was supporting the Whig administration. It is speculative but possible that other family members, or members of the household, remained loyal to the Butlers and provided a link in a chain of illicit communication. In her letter of 27 October 1719 which first mentions her proposed visit, Astell tells Lady Ann that she has made special arrangements for their correspondence as she anticipated it was likely to be intercepted:

> Mr Pitt [George Pitt] gives me leave to have Letters under his Cover as Member of Parl[]., if your L[ap] pleases to use this way, it will surely come safe……The same direction will be y[e] best when I go to Burwash in Sussex.[134]

George Pitt, a Tory with colliery interests in north Durham, would probably have known Astell through her Newcastle family.[135] There is only one letter from Astell to Lady Ann in the Beaufort archives written from Burwash and dated 8 January 1720. Acknowledging Lady Ann's letter of December, Astell explains her lack of response because 'nothing worth writing' has occurred since then.[136] It is not possible to say conclusively that Astell's stay was related to the Jacobite cause, but the unusual nature of her trip must raise it as a strong possibility. We cannot be certain where Astell stayed; two houses are likely: Bateman's, or Rampyndene, though the name of the owner of these properties, John Butler, is almost certainly coincidental.[137] John Butler

[132] TNA: SP 35/32/36; SP 35/37/11A
[133] Stuart Handley, 'Ashburnham, Hon. John (1687-1737)' HOPO https://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1690-1715/member/ashburnham-hon-john-1687-1737 (accessed 24/05/2022)
[134] Perry, *Mary Astell* p.388 (Letter to Lady Ann Coventry 27 Oct 1719)
[135] Stuart Handley, 'Pitt, George (1663-1735), of Strathfieldsays, Hants.' HOPO https://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1715-1754/member/pitt-george-1663-1735 (accessed 24/05/22)
[136] Perry, *Mary Astell* p.389 (Letter to Lady Ann Coventry 8 Jan 1720)
[137]Information from Sussex Family History Group database: 'The Weald of Kent, Surrey and Sussex': https://theweald.org/N10.asp?ID=4518

(1674-1722) had acquired a great deal of property in and around Burwash.[138] We do not know where Astell lodged, but John Butler was an aspiring and ambitious man, and is likely to have been happy to help a connection of the Duchess of Ormonde, even if he was not a Jacobite supporter. By the end of February 1720 Astell was back in Chelsea. As well as her excitement about her investments, she had resumed her efforts on behalf of the Charity School, writing to Sir Hans Sloane about his offer of land for the building of the school and thanking him for allowing a visit she had made to his collection 'in company of some honor[ble] Ladys.'[139]

By the end of November 1722 her support for the Jacobites once again becomes evident. Robert Walpole had returned to office as paymaster-general of the armed forces, and his political ally Charles Townshend had been appointed lord president of the council.[140] By April 1722 information about what became known as the Atterbury plot had been received and was linked with the activities of the minor plotter Christopher Layer although in fact they were quite separate. As Stephen Taylor states the 'Atterbury plot strengthened Walpole's position enormously.'[141]

The Bishop and the Norfolk Lawyer

Astell had frequently dined with the Atterburys when they were neighbours in Chelsea. In 1716 Atterbury was participating in fundraising efforts for the Jacobites, but ceased corresponding with them when it became clear that the government had his intercepted letters.[142] In 1720 Atterbury took part in early discussions with George Kelly, the Jacobite agent based in London.[143] In 1721 he agreed to proposals for an armed landing, later trying to withdraw his involvement when he realised that once again correspondence was being intercepted. He had already been marked out as a conspirator, was arrested, and in 1723 he was forced into exile.[144]

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[138] John Butler's will details the large number of the properties he devised on his two sons: TNA: PROB 11/592/22
[139] BL: Sloane Ms 4045 f.336-337
[140] Steven Taylor, 'Walpole, Robert, first earl of Orford (1676-1745)' ONDB: https://doi-org.uea.idm.oclc.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/28601 (accessed 21/09/22)
[141] Taylor, *Walpole* p.13
[142] David Hayton, 'Atterbury, Francis (1663-1732), bishop of Rochester, politician, and Jacobite conspirator' ODNB: https://doi-org.uea.idm.oclc.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/871 pp.1-12 (accessed 26/07/21)
[143] Hayton, *Atterbury* p.8
[144] Hayton, *Atterbury* pp.8-9

Amongst others arrested at this time was a Norfolk lawyer, Christopher Layer, who was convicted and sentenced for treason, although 'his fantasies ...were entirely unconnected with the plans of the Atterbury circle.'[145] Before he was arrested Layer had arranged for the christening of his daughter in a china shop in Chelsea. The Duchess of Ormonde stood as a proxy for Queen Clementina.[146] Layer's trial was high profile, and in November 1722 Astell wrote to Lady Ann Coventry pouring scorn on the proceedings.[147] Layer was convicted and executed on 17 May 1723. Astell's interest in Layer's trial and her scepticism about its conduct show how strongly she remained attached to the Duchess and to the Jacobite cause.

George Kelly alias 'James Johnson'

Another conspirator apprehended at this time was George Kelly, who operated under the alias 'James Johnson'.[148] Kelly was arrested on or about 20 May 1722. He was never brought to trial but was linked with the Atterbury Plot and detained for fourteen years in the Tower of London. The investigation was coordinated by Charles Townshend (1674-1738).[149] The state papers concerning examinations of Kelly are numerous.[150] They are summarised in a document dated 2 February 1723,[151]and include multiple references to a Mrs Jane Barnes who lived in Chelsea or Bury Street, St James's or Pall Mall, and with whom Kelly had lodged.[152] He was also reported to have lodged with a Mrs Kilburn of Ryder Street, St James's during this period.[153] The Duchess of Ormonde, Lady Ann Coventry and Mary Astell herself were only on the fringes of the Jacobite communications network so probably knew nothing about Kelly's arrest and detention.

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[145] Taylor, *Walpole* p.12
[146] Roger Turner, 'Layer, Christopher (1683-1723), lawyer and Jacobite conspirator' ODNB: https://doi-org.uea.idm.oclc.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/16221 (accessed 24/08/22)
[147] Perry, *Mary Astell* p.395 (Letter to Lady Ann Coventry 24 Nov 1722)
[148] Eamonn O'Ciardha, 'Kelly, George' *Dictionary of Irish Biography* (Royal Irish Academy) https://www.dib.ie/biography/kelly-george-a4445 (accessed 30/08/22)
[149]Linda Frey and Marsha Frey, 'Townshend, Charles, second Viscount Townshend (1674-1738)' ODNB: https://doi-org.uea.idm.oclc.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/27617
[150] TNA: SP 35/72/82 for a list of 81 papers relating to Kelly and his link to the Atterbury Plot
[151] TNA: SP 35/72/81
[152] See for example: SP 35/72/1; SP 35/72/2; SP 35/72/6; SP 35/72/36; SP 35/72/93;
[153] TNA: SP35/72/93

'Johnson' was one of Kelly's aliases. It is a common name, but in a letter to Lady Ann dated 6 July 1723, Astell apologises by saying that she had been unable 'to give yo[r] Note to M[r] Johnson, but y[e] Lady at whose house I saw him, having buried her Husband, I have not yet bin able to meet w[th] him.'[154] There are no further details, but both Ryder Street and Bury Street are in walking distance of Astell's home in Chelsea, so it is possible that Lady Ann's 'Note to M[r] Johnson' was in fact for George Kelly; this might also explain why Astell did not simply leave the 'Note' at the house.

Under surveillance

Astell became aware that letters between herself and Lady Ann were being intercepted by government agents. In a letter dated November 1722 she said she was 'glad to hear that [my letter] was acceptable & came safe w[th]out y[e] prying eyes of y[e] Vigilant Ministers.'[155] Again her phraseology is interesting; one wonders what she had previously suggested to Lady Ann that was 'acceptable'? By 7 March 1723 she reports the unpleasant effect that this surveillance was having on her:

> Y[e] folks in fashion being so ill-natur'd in this Neighbourhood, y[t] I think I must quit it, since they will not allow me to go to y[e] Chappel quietly. M[r] Walpole's Woollen Draper now M[r] Justice of Peace, thinks fit to take upon him Ecclesiastical Jurisdiction, & my Acquaintance, except y[e] good Duchess, being afraid of me, convey y[m]selves from me. A persecution I am not concern'd about for my own sake, since I shall always account it an honor & happiness to suffer for a good Conscience.[156]

Walpole's 'Woollen Draper' was his friend, banker, and financial advisor Robert Mann.[157] Although Astell states that she is not troubled by this 'persecution' the tone of her comments suggests otherwise. At some point after this Astell was offered a

[154] Perry, *Mary Astell* p.397 (Letter to Lady Ann Coventry 6 July 1723)
[155] Perry, *Mary Astell* p.395 (Letter to Lady Ann Coventry 24 Nov 1722)
[156] Perry, *Mary Astell* p.396 (Letter to Lady Ann Coventry 7 March 1723)
[157] Taylor, *Walpole* pp.5-6

place in Lady Catherine Jones's house in Jew's Row which would have given her some security and companionship.[158]

By the time of these events Astell was into her fifties and was beginning to have health problems. She had faded from public notice, so she could easily have retreated into a quiet and devout life, but the accession of George I and the growing power of the Whigs spurred her into a renewed dedication to the Stuart cause. She recognised that her relative obscurity as an elderly singlewoman allowed her to assist her aristocratic neighbours in the 'good Cause' and was happy to help. From June 1716 her letters to Lady Ann often speak of her willingness to obey 'any Comands' which is a new reference in her letters. Engaging in this kind of activity must have given satisfaction and a sense of purpose to Astell in her later years. By using her obscurity as a singlewoman, the sending and receiving of letters and other items in 'the Cause' gave her a renewed and outward looking purpose.

Conclusion

The suggestion of Astell's 'contradictions' at the beginning of this chapter are of course anachronistic, for nothing which she did or promoted is out of line with her beliefs and the period in which she lived and worked. The elements of her material world explored here were the forces which shaped her life and are compatible with her life as a singlewoman.

Although she started out in London with little money, her financial acumen and engagement with the new investment opportunities allowed her to remain single, maintain her genteel status and achieve independence from domestic male control. Her primary aim was to prove that a woman could have the same intellectual ability as a man, leading to her engagement with the natural sciences. Her books were the material means which allowed her to do this. Her necessary concession that, once married a woman was obliged to be obedient to her husband however tyrannical, sprang from her deeply held Christian belief in the patriarchal order established in the Bible. She defended this apparent contradiction by arguing that a properly educated woman would not choose to marry a man of poor character; her class perspective

[158] Perry, *Mary Astell* p. 315

meant that she never addressed the fact that her planned 'religious retreat' was only available to wealthier women.

Was she hypocritical in enjoying the social life she tasted with the Duchess of Ormonde, whilst promoting an image of modesty and retirement? We have seen strong evidence of her devotion to the Jacobite cause, which was entirely consistent with her belief that proper order in society was rooted in divinely ordained kingship. The social and material benefits, including the financial support which she enjoyed from her wealthy Chelsea friends, allowed her to retain her independence. The circle of single women who supported and respected her kept her in some material comfort as well as keeping her ideas alive after her death. Although socially and culturally marginalised, scorned, and lumped together in both high and popular culture as 'Old Maids', Astell and many other women who chose to remain unmarried showed that they were able to live diverse lives, negotiating various ways which allowed them to keep degrees of freedom from domestic male control.

Chapter 6 Conclusion

In the period covered by this thesis, in England and Europe, the gender construct in religious, political, and scientific discourse was strictly binary and heterosexual, and ignored a significant minority of singlewomen whose presence challenged this. When moralists and social commentators did notice them, they were seen as a problem group within properly ordered society because they were not under the control of a husband; they were figures of fun in theatres and light literature. Amy Erikson observed that although didactic literature illustrates 'what women were told, and possibly what they heard', it does not tell us 'what women as a whole actually thought or how they went about their daily lives.'[1] This thesis has shown that, though never-married women's lives were different from the universal theoretical construct of 'man and wife', they were never in reality set apart within their communities, for they were neighbours and friends, aunts, sisters and daughters; they played active roles in society as servants, gift givers, writers, teachers and moneylenders, and comprised a significant minority of women, generally estimated at around fifteen percent in urban areas, rising perhaps to eighteen percent towards the end of the period studied.[2]

The proverb that gives the title to this thesis might have made an impression on women in an earlier period, but as we have seen, it was treated less seriously by the seventeenth century. The wording of this 'warning' is interesting. Hell was a very real and terrifying place for many believers in the early modern period. The phrase was intended to foster a climate of opinion against remaining unmarried, and to intimidate women into behaviour approved by patriarchal society; but it begins with a strong and positive word, for 'leading' seems to suggest that the unmarried woman was playing a determined and active role, in control of the situation. Perhaps it was always of doubtful value as a scare tactic, which helps to explain how it soon came to be used in comedies and light verse. Popular culture in ballads and drama now showed the pitiable and ugly 'Old Maid':

[1] Amy L. Erickson, *Women and Property in Early Modern England* (London, 1993) p.8
[2] Amy Froide, *Never Married*, p.22; Bridget Hill *Women Alone* p.11

> My hollow Eyes and wrinkled Brows in faith doth quite disgrace me, My Teeth fall out, and mouth falls in, there's neither Will nor Harry, Nor Roger, nor Tom, nor Nick, nor Sam, will ever with me marry.[3]

Emphasising the signs of ageing, which would of course be exactly the same for married women, the ballad works on the assumption that the Old Maid now wishes that she could have married and is the victim of her unmarried status. More serious discourse spoke of 'superannuated virgins'.

It is only in the last thirty or forty years that historians have begun to pay attention to what had previously been an overlooked part of the population. This thesis is an intervention into the historiography, presenting new evidence of the lived experiences of singlewomen and exploring how they utilised the materials and practices available to them, creating identities and achieving degrees of freedom which marriage would have been likely to deny them. This material was gathered by a methodology which is a novel intervention in the scholarship about this diverse group of women but is applicable beyond this specific study. At the outset, certain constraints of time and accessibility of archives had to be recognised, and these were compounded by restrictions imposed by the pandemic. The well organised archive centre in Norwich was available for the chapter on women's wills, but for the work on Mary Ward, the four-volume edition of texts edited by Ursula DIrmeier had to substitute for visits to archives in mainland Europe. The digitised Ferrar Collection, made available during lockdown, provided much of the material for the work on Virginia Ferrar. Astell's books at Magdalene College provided the opportunity to examine objects which she had owned.

The methodology used in this thesis was a response to observations made by Olwen Hufton and other historians over thirty years ago. As Ruth Harris and Lyndal Roper state in their collection of essays *The Art of Survival: Gender and History in Europe, 1450-2000* (2006), Hufton was 'always aware of the importance of objects in people's

[3] Anonymous *The Old Maids Wish* from the Pepys Collection, Magdalene College Cambridge, (3.150), accessed through Early English Ballad Archive at https://ebba.english.ucsb.edu/ballad/21162/citation

lives.'[4] My thesis builds on Hufton's point, by bookending the knowable moments in a subject's life with possible and plausible routes between those points; it works by asking questions and attempting to provide answers which focus on the material realities for that woman, and her responses; these are always located in the practical possibilities available to her as a singlewoman. The approach is episodic, and not comprehensive, eschewing traditional biographical readings; these are more applicable to studies of men where archival records are almost always fuller; the archival evidence of women's lives, especially singlewomen, is very much rarer, for women usually lived in the shadows of their menfolk. The value of this method is clearly seen in each of the case studies, with the challenges it offers to the work of previous historians, as well as the evidence it adds to other work.

Historians who have set out to place singlewomen in the context of social and economic developments have used the evidence from probate documents and local records to present a valuable but often generalised survey. Singlewomen have been shown to have importance in local economies, running small businesses and acting as moneylenders; they have been identified as a significant minority in the new financial markets in the second half of the seventeenth century. Quantitative studies demonstrate how singlewomen with a little money or land were able to keep a degree of independence and control of their property; they did not, in law, surrender their property to husbands. Quantitative methods give us a broad overview of the place of singlewomen in early modern society. In studying these women, historians always accepted that many may not have made a positive choice to remain unmarried, nor is that suggested here, though it has been argued by one scholar that the high rate of spinsterhood towards the end of this period is possibly an 'index of women's choices.'[5] In a new approach, this thesis has focused first on the material worlds of some Norfolk women, whose probate documents show them as single, then moved on to produce case studies of three women, who choose not to marry. It asks new questions: how did women, who had made a choice to remain single, achieve agency? How common were the strategies they adopted? They sought independence from a husband's control, but

[4] Ruth Harris and Lyndal Roper (eds), *The Art of Survival: Gender and History in Europe, 1450-2000* (Oxford, 2006) p.7

[5] Emma Donoghue, *Passions Between Women: British Lesbian culture 1668-1801* (London, 1993), p.121

to what extent did their activities support this aim? Seeking out material clues in the letters and other texts examined, this thesis proposes some answers; along the way it becomes clear that women who never married, whether by choice or not, were a richly diverse part of the population.

The chapter which examines the wills of singlewomen in the Norwich diocese explores evidence of the material reality of their lives which has never been considered in this way before. Judith Spicksley included the wills and inventories of Norfolk women when compiling statistics on moneylending by singlewomen in probate documents from Lincoln, Chester, Durham and Chichester. This thesis approaches the Norfolk women's circumstances at their deaths in a different way to the quantitative methods of Spicksley, but at the same time it adds evidence supporting her conclusions, and those of Amy Froide, that these women were often involved in lending money to relatives and others in their communities.[6] From the transcripts which were written for the wills of a selection of women, this thesis identified some common elements of the women's lived experiences, at the same time adding to the evidence compiled by Spicksley, Froide and Amanda Capern amongst others, about property owning by singlewomen.[7] The work in this chapter gives a fuller picture than previously available of the lifestyles, attitudes, and strategies adopted by these singlewomen as they negotiated lives which they may or may not have freely chosen, and which did not conform to the social expectations for women of any class or region.

By covering much of the period studied, the analysis of wills in Chapter 2 offers context and background for the three later case studies. It allows us to see how varied women's lives were, both in terms of their material circumstances and their concerns as they approached death, whether they were young or elderly. Across the period and with a range of circumstances they show the importance of the bonds of family and friendship, with a particular bias towards female friendship and family groups; but two new features are apparent: the first hint of a close relationship between two women

[6] Judith Spicksley, 'Fly with a duck in they mouth': single women as sources of credit in seventeenth-century England' *Social History* 32:2 (2007) pp.187-207; Amy Froide *Never Married: Singlewomen in Early Modern England* (Oxford, 2005),pp.128-141

[7] Judith Spicksley, 'Spinsters with Land in Early Modern England: Inheritance, Possession and Use' in Amanda L.Capern, Briony McDonagh and Jennifer Aston (eds), *Women and the Land, 1500-1900* (Woodbridge, 2019) pp.51-76; Amy Froide *Never Married* pp.121-128; Amanda Capern 'The Landed Woman in Early Modern England,' *Parergon,* 19:1 (January, 2002) pp.185-214

which may have been romantic, and the evidence of singlewomen living as well paid and respected servants. Where we can be fairly certain that the testator is elderly, the evidence here supports Amy Froide's argument that:

> single women, contrary to scholarly belief, were the women best positioned to enjoy positive old age….old single women of middling status experienced later life as a period of autonomy, activity and authority. As they aged, these women gained more residential and economic independence, increased their economic, religious and civic activity, extended their familial and civic authority, and continued the social relationships that were significant to them.[8]

With the exception of the few who were betrothed, the material things owned and passed on by most of the women at the end of their lives allow us to begin to understand their experiences, and to see how they negotiated their lives with a measure of control, showing several features in common with the subjects of the next three chapters.

Many of the scholars who have written about Mary Ward, including those who worked with Ursula Dirmeier to produce the comprehensive collection of source material for Ward's foundation, have done so with the conviction that this remarkable woman was acting in direct response to revelations from God. Other historians, such as Laurence Lux-Sterritt, have been concerned with the theological ideas which inspired her, and her place in developing theories within the Catholic church about the role of female religious; they paid little attention to her material existence. Commissioned by Ward's followers who were anxious to continue her project and preserve her memory, we can identify a kind of paradox in *The Painted Life of Mary Ward,* a series of fifty paintings which are displayed in the Augsburg convent. These were created in the second half of the seventeenth century over some years by several artists who worked in a similar style. They are a visual version of the narratives written after Ward's death. Her followers have consistently emphasised what they believe was her religious inspiration and this is continually referenced in the panels; at the same time the sequence

[8] Amy Froide, 'Old Maids: the lifecycle of single women in Early Modern England,' in Lynn Botelho and Pat Thane (eds), *Women and Aging in British Society since 1500* (Harlow, 2001), p.90

presents, in cartoon-like reconstructions, engaging images of the material world of Ward and her followers. This attention to the physical details of Ward's life is also found in the letters which were studied for this thesis.

By exploring the material means through which Ward struggled to create an order of 'Jesuitesses,' this thesis gives a distinct and new picture of her work. It becomes clear that Ward was a very determined, inventive, and disruptive force for change, a view of her which her followers today would no doubt agree with. But the new intervention in this thesis focuses on her lived material experience; by removing any concept of divine inspiration, it gives her agency and control which is denied to her by the religious scholars' continual emphasis on God's intervention in her life. She defied the orders of the papal hierarchy by sending secret letters, acted as a secret agent for her Jesuit supporters, was chameleon-like in her use of different guises, and made deliberately hard and dangerous journeys to prove that the strength of a woman could equal that of a man. The accounts given in the standard biographies of the 1621 journey to Rome, for example, are unrealistic. This thesis has shown that the distance she travelled could not have been covered on foot in the time stated and in winter; the suggestion of a diversion across Italy to the shrine at Loreto cannot be correct. By challenging the work of these historians and showing the material reality of such a journey at this time of year, this chapter gives a new perspective on a woman whose work has largely been seen in the light of her faith in God's will, rather than her own agency. Examining Ward's activities in a way which is divorced from religious belief throws a new light on the how she used aspects of the material world to promote her religious project and gives new insight into the way a singlewoman and her companions worked to be free to live, travel and act as they chose to in the first half of the seventeenth century.

The case study of Virginia Ferrar breaks new ground by exploring in detail the activities of a woman largely ignored by historians, who have been overwhelmingly concerned with the men in the family. Chapter 4 shows a woman who engaged in practical projects, and promoted schemes for new agricultural work, which she and her father hoped would benefit colonial expansion. Ferrar's practical experiments in the cultivation of silkworms resulted in recognition of her, in her own name during her lifetime, as an expert in sericulture. Whilst one or two historians have recently paid attention to her work as a sericulturist, it is ironic that she achieved wider recognition

during her lifetime as an expert than she has been given in the present century. In cooperation with her father, she engaged in correspondence with English inhabitants in Virginia, getting information of the plants, creatures and geography of the colony. Her discoveries, though flawed, became part of the discourse of the Hartlib circle in the middle of the seventeenth century.

In the archival sources available for this thesis there is no evidence about the time she and her family spent on the European mainland during the early years of the Civil Wars. This period of her life may well offer a fruitful opportunity for future research in continental archives. After her return to England, it is clear that she had wanted to take up a position as a lady's maid to an elite woman, but for a reason which can only be guessed at, she did not leave her father and Little Gidding but stayed on, working at practical projects for the development of agriculture in the Virginia colony. In the draft letter she wrote to her aunt about the offer from Lady Lenthrop, we can see from her alterations and amendments that she was enthusiastic, but also uncertain, about this major change in her life; it also shows her enthusiasm for the material world of genteel society which became a more important feature in her later life. The value of examining material 'things' was demonstrated powerfully by seeing the original draft of this letter in the Pepys Library, at Magdalene College, Cambridge, with its hastily written and scrambled handwriting. Had she left her father and her research projects, taking up the position as a lady's maid, then her circumstances would have been very different. Instead, she remained at Little Gidding and demonstrated her independence by refusing a marriage proposal. The value of the new approach adopted in this thesis is shown by the challenge offered here to David Ransome's dismissive suggestion that Benjamin Woodnoth's offer of marriage was perhaps withdrawn because, like her mother Bathsheba, she 'did not have the art of pleasing.'[9] Ransome's attitude to both Virginia and her mother is evident in the wording. The method adopted in this thesis, identifying the likely nature of Woodnoth by reading the correspondence in the archive, shows instead that it is more reasonable to assume that she chose not to marry him, contrary to Ransome's suggestion. In a similar way, examining the Ickworth Harmony gave clear proof that this young woman was very skilled at the intricate work required to produce it. This discovery was only possible by seeing the book itself, and

[9] David Ransome 'Ferrar, John (c.1588-1657)' ODNB https://doi-org.uea.oclc.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/9356

contradicts Ransome's dismissive comment that 'seemingly she merely pasted in the cuttings.'[10] The strips of silk which had been part of the original binding made real her fascination with sericulture, and her love of clothes. Her correspondence after the death of her father, gives us a good idea of what her circumstances were in the second half of her life. Since we do not have a journal or diary, we receive a much more practical picture; this thesis argues that this gives us an understanding of her life, which can be distinguished from any thoughts she might have expressed in a journal. Instead, exploring the day-to-day material realities of her life enables us to appreciate how this clever and worldly woman lived independently, with agency and control.

Whilst it is not possible to say conclusively that Virginia Ferrar chose not to marry, the subject of the fifth chapter, Mary Astell, quite clearly had a negative opinion of marriage, so it is safe to assume that she chose to remain single. The challenge for this thesis in dealing with Astell is that apart from her books, almost nothing of her material world survives. The only correspondence which was available to see were her two letters in the Bodleian Library, Oxford, to Archbishop Sancroft, and one letter to Sir Hans Sloane in the British Library. Otherwise this thesis had to rely on the letters transcribed by Ruth Perry from the private collections of the Duke of Beaufort and G.H.Wheler.

Astell's published works on contemporary politics and religion have provided much material for some scholars, particularly those who specialise in the history of philosophy, politics, and ideas. They consider Astell's ideas and her participation in contemporary discourses in the context of the history of philosophy, politics and religion, which are in themselves male constructions. Astell's published contributions were matters of paramount importance to her, but they fail to give us an appreciation of the material reality of her life. Ruth Perry's biography *The Celebrated Mary Astell: An Early English Feminist* is a valuable work but, as the subtitle suggests, is very much grounded in the feminist scholarship of the 1980's. It is argued here that it is wrong to approach Astell as a 'feminist icon'. Although it is true that in her books she presented strong arguments against the injustice experienced by genteel and elite women, who were denied adequate education and opportunities for independence, it is

[10] Ransome, 'Ferrar, John.' Ibid.

inappropriate to identify her as a feminist; the term is anachronistic and ignores the way she conducted her life as a singlewoman, the realities of which are suggested in this thesis. The research presented here adds a great deal to some details of her life given by Perry, and contributes additional suggestions based on reasonable assumptions to fill any gaps about the way she lived. Because of the limitations of archival material, a more indirect method had to be used to explore Astell's material circumstances.

By using the few records of her finances which survive, together with references in her later letters, it was possible to suggest how she managed to support herself. The financial help she received from a circle of wealthy women made her life easier and more secure, whilst the fate of other singlewomen such as Elizabeth Laroon, the daughter of a successful painter, who became a parish pauper, illustrates just how vulnerable life could be for unmarried women.[11] The discovery of part of Astell's library presented a fruitful opportunity to examine those books as material artifacts and to show how they provide evidence of her strategy of presenting herself as a learned woman, on the same level as male thinkers. Challenging the stereotype of the irrational woman incapable of learning and logical thought was a very important aim for her, supported practically by the physical methods of study she used, in her marginalia. Finally, her role as a Jacobite go-between, much evidence of which is presented here for the first time, links her with the secret communications and activities of Mary Ward, so that these two singlewomen give an idea of how potentially disruptive they were. Is this somehow of a part with their disruption of the heterosexual binary?

This thesis has shown that close relationships with female friends were important for never married women. Astell's passionate feelings about Lady Catherine Jones led some earlier feminist historians to the conclusion that she had lesbian longings which she never acted upon. Without any explicit private accounts of same sex relationships, like that of the early nineteenth century diarist Anne Lister, it is impossible to say that any of the women in this study had erotic connections with other women, though it is

[11] Jeremy Boulton 'The Painter's Daughter and the Poor Law: Elizabeth Laroon (b.1689 –fl.1736)', *The London Journal,* 42:1 (2017), pp.13-33,

almost certain that there were such relationships, which would have encouraged individual women to reject marriage.[12] Unfortunately it has not been possible to find any evidence of Astell's clothing, or what she looked like, other than the brief assertions in George Ballard's biographical sketch of her modesty and her desire for obscurity. However we know that she sometimes dined with her elite Chelsea friends, so she must at least have worn clothing that suited those occasions. Clothing and appearance was, and remains to this day, an important part of the lives of women and men, but unless further evidence is found, for example Astell's will or probate inventory, this remains an unknown part of the material world of this woman.

Does the length of time covered in this study point to any kind of development in the situation of singlewomen who never married? From the three detailed case studies we can see that remaining unmarried and independent was most easily achieved by women who had some money. All three of these women were literate and had education, or they could not have produced the textual evidence on which the case studies rely. In that sense they were not typical of most women who never married. By examining a range of women's wills, Chapter 2 gives a wider picture, and supports the argument that singlewomen, without the higher profiles of the subjects in the case studies, still frequently showed agency and a sense of identity, giving expression to that in their testaments. The Norfolk women, in both rural and urban communities, developed strategies for individual survival and autonomy, using friendship groups and moneylending, as well as sometimes having the skills of higher status servants. New methods of investment in the later part of this period certainly gave singlewomen more opportunities to make money, but informal moneylending was likely to be followed by women outside bigger cities. Spreading print culture and increasing literacy had an impact on their lives, but this may have been more negative than positive, promoting the 'ideal' of marriage and motherhood for women. Unmarried scholars like Astell, and her friend Elizabeth Elstob, faded from public recognition in the later eighteenth century, though some elite women, almost all of whom were

[12] Anne Lister *I Know My Own Heart: Diaries 1791-1840* (ed.), Helena Whitbread (London, 1988)

married and did not demonstrate the application to scholarship shown by Astell and Elstob, did argue in privileged salons, for elite women's education.[13]

Is it legitimate to concentrate on singlewomen, considering them apart from the experience of other women? As Sara Mendelson and Patricia Crawford argued over thirty years ago:

> Most people were accustomed to view female life in terms of three stages: maid, wife, and widow….the plot of the story of 'maid, wife, and widow' imposes a restrictive narrative of normative heterosexual life which excludes a significant proportion of the female populace.[14]

This thesis has shown that, although singlewomen were excluded from the heterosexual binary construct of early modern society, in practical ways they were always woven into the communities in which they lived. Whilst Mendelson and Crawford's assertion that there were 'limited options for self-sufficiency open to single women 'is true, many of the women included here showed degrees of agency and a sense of identity which allowed them to live free of the constraints of domestic life and the overall control of a husband.[15]

As Amanda Goodrich succinctly put it: 'the things people own help to define who they are and how they see themselves.'[16] An understanding of the material realities of the women's lives studied here has allowed us to go further than just seeing how they saw themselves. By making reasonable assumptions about why they made certain choices, this thesis shows how gaps can be filled in the historical record. Very little, beyond some statistical evidence, was known about singlewomen in the Norwich diocese until now; in this thesis the reality of their lives within their families and the wider communities is shown for the first time. The choices made by the women in the

[13] John Brewer, *The Pleasures of the Imagination: English Culture in the Eighteenth Century* (London, 1997) pp.49-50; Sylvia Harcstark Myers, *The Bluestocking Circle: Women, Friendship, and the Life of the Mind in Eighteenth-Century England* (Oxford, 1990)
[14] Sara Mendelson and Patricia Crawford, *Women in Early Modern England, 1550-1720* (Oxford, 1998) p.76
[15] Mendelson and Crawford *Women in Early Modern England* p.268
[16] Amanda Goodrich, *Georgians Revealed: Life, Style and the Making of Modern Britain* (London, 2013) p.6

individual case-studies, about material objects and activities, also tell us more about them, providing new ideas about how they achieved agency and relative freedom in their lives.

When struggling to survive in London, for example, Mary Astell chose to keep her books, valuing them above any items of clothing she could pawn to raise money for food and lodgings. Those books were the 'grossly material things' which she needed to promote her freedom as a published author; seeing the detailed marginalia in the books she owned showed the practical methods which Astell used to develop her learning. When not unwell, Mary Ward's time was taken up with travelling and canvassing support for the communities of singlewomen which she aspired to create; as part of her promotional activities she acquired materials for her women to create gifts for those supporters, though there is no evidence that she herself engaged in the making of these 'tokens'. Virginia Ferrar has attracted little attention from historians in comparison with Ward and Astell; seeing the fine strips of pink silk from the original binding of the Ickworth Harmony was a haptic experience, bringing alive Ferrar's lifelong interest in material and clothing. Ferrar's sense of identity was that of an independent gentlewoman and businesswoman within her community; she also had the skills and interest to create clothing for herself which she shared with her friends and family.

By choosing not to marry these three women had freedom which they would have been unlikely to enjoy if they had husbands and children. By staying unmarried, Ward could make extensive journeys around Europe and England, Virginia Ferrar was able to run her own business affairs and make frequent visits to family members, and Astell was free to pursue life as a scholar, author, and later as a Jacobite agent. This thesis has added significant new evidence to the existing historiography of a minority of women in the early modern period; and in doing so it has also offered a new contribution to scholarship by devising a method which explores the material realities of individuals' lives, asks questions and provides answers which fill gaps in our knowledge of them, allowing us to understand individuals in a much richer and rounded way.

Appendices

Appendix 1 Wills Database

Single Women Database.xlsx

Appendix 2 Timeline for Mary Ward (1585-1645)

1585

23rd January - Mary Ward (MW), eldest child of Marmaduke Ward and Ursula Wright (widow of John Constable) was born at Mulwith, near Ripon in Yorkshire. Father's family are landed gentry with some connections to northern nobility. Strongly and strictly Catholic household.

1590

12th August - Marmaduke and Ursula Ward are listed as recusants, with serious financial implications for them.

MW is sent to live with her maternal grandparents Robert and Ursula Wright at their large estate Ploughland, near Welwick in Holderness

1594

Second half of year- MW's father sends for her so she returned to Mulworth.

1595

2nd Feb - Fire destroys Mulworth manor. Mary saves her two younger sisters and herself by sheltering in a fireplace.

1598

Mary is sent to live with Mrs Catherine Ardington at Harewell in Nidderdale. From this time her father is seeking a suitable marriage for her.

MW's Father is hoping to marry her to one 'Talbot of Grafton.' Other proposed husbands listed in various later biographies.

1599

MW goes to live with the Babthorpe family at Osgodby, as a companion to Lady Grace Babthorpe, and experiences sexual abuse there from a member of the household.

1600-1605

Whilst living in the Babthorpe household Mary becomes convinced that she wished to become a nun: 'so near as I can remember about the 15 year of my age…'

5th November - Gunpowder Treason: Marmaduke Ward, who is in or around London, is among those arrested and questioned. Mary's uncles John and Christopher Wright, die in a siege of the plotters at Holbeach House, Staffordshire.

1606

March/April - MW is in London with her father 'in Lodgings in Bauldwins Gardens.' Agreement now for her to become a nun.

June - Mary begins the journey to Flanders with a Mrs Catherine Bentley, listed as one of her daughters on the travel pass. On arrival she goes to the Jesuit College and is met by Fr Keynes. She is sent to the Convent of Poor Clares and becomes a lay sister.

1607

12th March - MW has been acting as an unenclosed lay sister, begging for charity in the town to support the enclosed religious. She decides to become an enclosed nun in a strict order.

Late April/early May - Leaves the noviceship of the Walloon Poor Clares and puts on secular clothing. She sets about founding a Poor Clares convent for Englishwomen at Gravelines.

1607/8 MW may have travelled to Brussels in her secular clothing to obtain the Archduke's grant or permission to establish the community, but this is not supported by available contemporary evidence.

1608

April - Bishop Jacques Blaes of St Omer writes to the Archduke Albert with a recommendation for the 'virgines Anglicanae.'They wish to establish a Poor Clare Convent.

22nd April - MW sends a petition to the Archduke, setting out their circumstances. They have been given a house and a piece of land in Esquelbecq by the Governor of Graveline together with a financial endowment, so they would not need to rely on support from the community.

1st June - Thomas Edmondes, English diplomat writes from Brussels to Robert Cecil, Secretary of State that the Jesuits have 'lately sett in hand one Mistress Ward to sue for leave to sett upp a house of Poore Clares neere unto Graveling….But I understand that some difficultie hath ben as yet made '

Contemporary documents indicate that three-way negotiations about the location and conditions for the establishment were taking place for over a year or more between MW, Bishop Blaes and the Governor.

November - House rented in St Omer, near to the English Jesuit College, because purpose-built convent is not ready to receive new women coming from outside or transferred from the Walloon Poor Clares convent.

1609

2nd May - MW has 'revelation' that she should not join the order of Poor Clares.

15th September - Ward's Community moves from rented building in St Omer to newly built convent in Gravelines. The new convent, when built, is said to be very damp. MW stays behind in St Omer and leaves for England not long after (so October?)

1609 - 1610 MW is in England for a few months. Has another 'revelation.' (The Gloria) whilst 'I adorned my head at the mirror.'

1610

30th January - English Ambassador Trumbull writes to Robert Cecil that the Jesuits are 'busie with the Archduke, for lycense to erect a newe Monastery of Nunnes at St Omer…' This is MW's new community.

MW and a small group of English women companions are in St Omer, in a house said to have been bought by MW 'which she furnished, and ordered in manner so as to live in a regular observance, and their cloaths conformable, very grave and retyred, but not of the monasticall.'

1611

19th July - Purchase of the house of Francois Marcotte in St Omer.

5th October - Nuntius Guido Bentivoglio writes to Cardinal Scipione Borghese that the English Ladies are considering constitutions to govern their establishment, to carry out the religious and secular education of English girls both there and back in England, working also in England for the conversion of heretics.

MW- has formed her determination to create a community of female religious to be run like the Jesuit order, unenclosed and pursuing an active apostolate. MW is ill at some time this year, probably with measles.

1612

2nd October - Second house for the growing community in St Omer purchased from a Jacques Ricquart.

1614

20th January - Third house purchased. MW is ill, probably measles again(?).

These purchases were not confirmed by the town authorities until May 18 1616

11th April - MW announces she must travel to England for three or four months, apparently for business which she alone could conduct.

16th July - MW crosses, probably again with Catherine Bently, as one of her 'fowre daughters.'

November - Reference in Fr. Lee's address to the women about their 'superior' being away indicates MW almost certainly back in England then.

1615

January/February - An attack on the activities of the women in England, written in Latin at this time, states that there are six of them in England who are 'gadding about'.

March - MW probably back in St Omer from England.

October/November - MW in St Omer, and very ill.

1616

January/February - Petition on behalf of the English Women for approval of their plans for an Institute is submitted to the Pope, but it leaves out reference to active apostolate, referring only to teaching English girls in St Omer.

2nd – 18th May - Negotiations and documentation of the city authorities to recognise the ownership of the three houses in St Omer

9th July - MW at Spa, in Belgium, partly for her health and partly to arrange the setting up another house in Liege.

22nd August - MW still in Spa according to message from English Ambassador Carleton to Ralph Winwood, secretary of state. MW is seeking permission from the Bishop of Cologne to allow the 'English Votaries of Saint Omers' to settle in Liege.

24th November - Fifteen Englishwomen leave St Omer to travel to Liege. (This is about 185 miles if via Brussels, 167 miles if via Lille and Namur)

1st December - MW and her companions have taken a tenancy on a house in Liege.

1617

February - Bishop Blaes of St Omer writes a letter of recommendation for the English Ladies to Ferdinand von Bayern, Bishop of Liege.

27th May - The Bishop of Liege's Privy Council issued a promise of protection for the English Ladies at their property, as requested by MW.

21st July - Ambassador Trumbull from Brussels reports that 'the Matrone of the English gentlewomen' [at St Omer] had been pursued for debts there but this was 'smothered' in secret' to avoid a scandal, and she 'nowe hath another house preparing for her at Leege.'

21st July - MW travels from Liege to England and stays there for about a month. Possible bad storm on the Chanel crossing. She makes more than one trip back and forth to England between this date and 1618.

21st October - Report from General Vitelleschi (Jesuit Order) includes information that in the summer the four Englishwomen had travelled with two Jesuits in a carriage on the pilgrimage to Sichem in Belgium.

1619

21st July - MW has returned to Liege (perhaps from England?) by this date.

1616-1620 - Financial problems involving loans and mortgages relation to the properties in Liege and the community in St Omer. Increasing opposition from many Jesuits to the work in communities proposed by MW. MW's community in St Omer was split by the activities of a Sister Praxedis.

1620

3rd October - George Talbot, Earl of Shrewsbury, sends a petition to Maximilian of Bavaria, supporting the Englishwomen.

Later in year a petition is sent, apparently from Thomas Sackville, for a place in Cologne for the English women's Institute.

1621

20th January - City of Cologne appoints a commission to consider Talbot's petition.

May/June - MW writes to Nuntius Albergati in Cologne, either from Cologne or Triers.

3rd – 4th September - City Council of St Omer receive report from their legal officer about debts which the English women owed to various creditors, so they authorised distraint.

11th September - Complaint by the women that their tables, chairs, beds, mattresses and kitchen equipment and equipment for brewing beer has been taken by force.

September to October - MW is in Cologne. She writes to General Vitelleschi seeking his support, trying to set up communities in Trier and Cologne.

End of September/beginning of October - MW travels to Brussels for audience with Archduchess Isabella Clara Eugenia, seeking support for journey to Rome to gain Pope's approval for her Institute.

1621

21st October - MW and companions begin journey to Rome from Liege to try and obtain the approval of the Pope. On Archduchess's advice they dress as pilgrims, and almost certainly travel along 'The Spanish Road' into Italy.

24th December - MW and companions arrive in Rome. - The Petition to the Pope shows MW's determination that they should be unenclosed and free from the control of Bishops.

Throughout the next few weeks MW has various meetings with men, hoping to get their support and approval. There is no evidence available as to where she and her followers were living at this time.

1622

21st January - Ambassador Henry Wotton reports that the manner of dress of MW and her companions and their presence in Rome is causing general comment.

During this year MW continued to press the Papal authorities to approve their proposals but was meeting more and more opposition.

15th August - Some kind of school for young girls has been established in Rome. The women are reported to be asking for money from supporters.

29th October - MW writes from Rome to Barbara Babthorpe in Liege, about the transfer of some of the women in Liege to Rome. Barbara Babthorpe is to accompany them on the journey. There is a clear reference to the difficulty of this journey because

MW says: 'Make I not bould with your sickly body, to send for you so hard a iurnay in the deep of winter.'

2nd November - Report by William Farrar to John Bennett, representative of the English secular clergy in Rome, that there are 14 'Jesuitesses' living in one house in Shoe Lane in London.

1623

25th January - MW's sister Barbara Ward dies, apparently of smallpox followed by TB.

March - 'Godfathers information about the Jesuitrisses,' against MW's communities and activities is delivered to the Papal authorities. Amongst other claims, the author says she travels to England and other places, and the women wear fine clothing.

March/April - Sister Dorothy's account of her work in Suffolk, showing the 'underground' work done amongst both gentry and poorer people. Sister Dorothy is supported by Lady Timperly of Hintlesham Hall in Suffolk. Dorothy reports that she was brought before a magistrate and interviewed at one point.

12th May - MW goes 'on foot' from Rome to Naples, with companions, to set up a community there. The distance is about 140 miles and on arrival they find accommodation in an inn. MW falls ill.

16th September - MW writes to Barbara Babthorpe from Naples, asking her to try and send money, also stating that they are unable to begin teaching because it is so hot.

25th November - MW is back in Rome and writes to Winifrid Wigmore in Naples. She writes of an illness she has suffered:

30th December - Elizabeth Cotton, MW's secretary, writes to Winifrid Wigmore that MW is again unwell. They are going to Perugia where MW is setting up another community.

1624

13th January - MW writes from Rome to Susan Rookwood, installed as superior in Naples, and to Winifrid Wigmore also in Naples. Both letters refer to the conveying of letters for the Jesuits.

18th January - MW writes to Winefrid Wigmore that she intends to set out that day and travel 120 miles towards Perugia. The distance from Rome to Perugia is about 113 miles

30th January - MW writes to Winifrid Wigmore from Perugia saying that they are not yet living in the house they are to occupy in Perugia because the house, provided by the Bishop, is being made better for them.

6th February - MW writes from Perugia to Father Edward Coffin, giving an account of the journey to Perugia. The journey was very hard, but they were helped by being driven in a coach towards the end.

16th April - MW writes to Winefrid Wigmore that she is not 'sicke at this time only my head which will quickly passe.' She proposes sending 'some tokens' to 'Father Curtione his brother the Counceller and his wyfe' as they have two daughters who may join the institute.

15th May - MW to Frances Brooksby in Cologne. Expresses concern for the health of the Superior there.

15th May to 23rd July - MW is at the spa at San Casciano for treatment of gallstones.

23rd July - MW is back in Perugia and reports improved health from the treatment at San Casciano, where doctors told her to take a complete rest.

7th September - The 'Jesuitesses' are reported to be living 'obscurlie' and in great need.

10th September - MW is in Perugia and is ill again.

27th October - MW reports a meeting with the Pope, achieved by following him to Frascati, about 15-19 miles from Rome.

30th November - Report by Margaret Horde in Rome says they need money for gifts, and that MW is reasonably well, but weak.

<u>1625</u>

February - Thomas Rant from Rome makes lewd suggestion about how they might 'propagate' by being in a man's house.

First part of 1625 - MW continues to make efforts to gain Papal approval.

April - Pope orders the closing of all the women's houses in Italy, but this is not enacted until November. The schools are then closed, but the women stay in the houses until about November .

26th April - MW needs to go from Rome to San Casciano, to the spa, but also says she needs to be in Rome.

17th May - She reports being given money and the use of a coach for the first part of the journey to San Casciano, where she plans to go in the next few days.

28th June - MW writes to Winefrid Wigmore that the spa waters are helpful and will aid her poor health.

5th August - Reported from London to Thomas Rant that the chief of the 'Jesuitrisses' in London has died of 'spotted fever.'

1626

11th November - MW and a small group of companions set out from Rome, cross the Alps and travel to Munich, via Florence, Parma, Milan and Lake Como.

24th November - The group is in Florence as Grand Duchess Christina of Tuscany issues a testimonial for MW and her party addressed to Maximillian I of Bavaria

14th December - The group is in Milan and MW is entertained by Cardinal Borromeo and stays for four days. They then travel along a section of the Spanish Road via Como, Riva, Chiavenna, the Spluga Pass, the Canton of the Grisons (Protestant and hostile), Via Mala, Chur, and along the Rhine to Feldkirch.

Christmas Eve - MW and party said to have arrived in Feldkirch, spending the evening praying in the church.

1627

4th January - Archduchess Claudia von Tyrol writes from Innsbruck to Maximillian of Bavaria about MW's arrival. MW is intending to travel to Munich on her way to

Flanders. The Archduke and Duchess give them a coach in which to travel to Hall in the Tyrol.

7th January - They arrive in Munich, having partly travelled by boat.

16th February - MW writes a long business letter about which of her women members should travel to which houses.

21st April - Maximillian orders his treasury to pay the English women 2,000 guilders annually and gives them the Paradeiserhaus to establish a school for local girls.

26th July - MW is now in Vienna and her health is bad again.

The Englishwomen are given the house 'Stoss am Himmel' in Vienna in which to live and work, together with allowances from the Emperor and Empress.

1628

March - MW is in Pressburg (Bratislava) about 60 kilometres from Vienna, at the invitation of Cardinal Pazmany to establish another girls' school.

6th May - MW is in Prague but is not certain they will establish a 'foundation' there because of the very unsettled nature of the religious politics.

6th July - Barbara Babthorpe writes from Pressburg of the establishing of a community there, with a house being renovated for them. Also being entertained by Archbishop Pazmany.

7th July - The suppression of the houses in Naples, Vienna and Pressburg had been decided by the Congregatio de Propaganda Fide presided over by the Pope, but enforcement was very slow. Maximillian of Bavaria continues to support the community in Munich for the time being.

mid-August - MW in Eger Northern Hungary, for treatment at the Spa. She is with four of her companions.

19th December - MW is back in Munich unwell again. The community in Prague had failed.

1629

2nd January - MW leaves Munich to travel to Rome to petition the Pope in person. It is a very cold and snowy journey.

February - They arrive back in Rome but MW is very ill and bedridden for three weeks.

25th March - MW sends a long petition to the Pope written in Italian.

1630

The campaign by the opponents in the Papal hierarchy gathers strength throughout this year

April - The Community in Liege is to be dissolved because of its enormous debts. A decree is issued on 30 April. MW had written to the Community earlier in April saying that they did not need to obey the Decree because it did not have Papal authority.

April - MW travels from Rome to Munich via Venice. Bought 'sewing silks' in Venice as diverted there by outbreak of plague on more direct route back to Munich.

30th April - Archbishop and Elector Frederick issue decree suppressing the Liege community.

4th July - Gustavus Adolphus lands with his army on the Pomeranian (German) coast, and a new phase of the Thirty Years Wars begins.

22nd November - Decision made by the Congregatio de Propaganda Fide to have the communities supressed by Papal Bull and for MW to be imprisoned and bought before the Inquisition for trial.

28th November - MW sends a plea to Pope Urban VIII from Munich, not knowing about that decision.

1631

13th January - Pope issues the Bull which suppresses MW's Institutes and condemns her as a heretic, though it is not yet formally published

7th February - MW is arrested in Munich and taken to the Angerkloster, the Convent of the Poor Clares

10th February - MW writes from the Angerkloster in Munich to Mary Poyntz, at the request of Dean Jakob Golla to ensure obedience with the terms of the order made earlier but communicates with her women by secret letters in invisible ink.

10th February - MW in the Angerkloster creates 2 petitions for her women to send, one to the Pope and one to the Cardinals of the Inquisition but says they must not appear to come from the women.

13th February - MW to Elizabeth Cotton (in lemon juice) from the Angerkloster, Munich. MW is accompanied by Ann Turner acting as her nurse, but her health is very bad. She instructs her about using invisible ink and gives details of the very strict regime being imposed.

15th February - MW from Angerkloster to the women in the Paradeiserhaus, reporting on poor health.

17th February - MW to Elizabeth Cotton. Warns her of the need to be careful with letters. Suggests writing duplicates in case one lot is intercepted. Also concern that 'if you have writ the names whom Mother Keyse should labour by plainly all is discovered. Be carefull what you say heer and neither heer nor to any complaine of any '

17th February - (evening) Expresses concern about the whereabouts of her papers which were seized by Dean Golla when she was arrested.

18th February (midday) - MW to Elizabeth Cotton and Mary Poyntz- more illness. She says not to trust Maximillian and don't let his wife know of the secret letters

19th February - MW to Elizabeth Cotton. MW begins to use the code names during this correspondence

20th February - MW writes to Eliz Cotton concerning their various supporters and others, suggesting actions to be taken.

February/March - a series of damaged letters by MW

First half of April - order is given for MW's release, but she stays in the Convent until Palm Sunday, leaving after that on 14 April.

The authorities insist that MW should travel to Rome for examination.

31st May - The full definitive text of the Bull *Pastoralis Romani Pontificis* suppressing and condemning MW's Institutes is published, though it had been circulating since 13 January that year.

9th June - MW, from the Paradeisahaus in Munich, writes to Dean Golla responding to the demand, but wants to see the original order.

11th June - Golla writes asking permission from the Cardinal for MW to travel to the spa at Eger for health reasons.

11th June - MW writes to the Cardinals of the Inquisition and says she has only written four letters during the time of her imprisonment. She wants permission to come to Rome to clear her name or take whatever punishment imposed on her.

3rd July - The pope forbids MW's journey to Eger and orders Golla to recommend the Italian spas.

4th September - Dr Alphonso Ferri undertakes bail so that MW can travel from Munich.

17th October - Nuntius Carafa writes to Cardinal Barberini. He has instructed Golla to send MW to Rome. She has set out or was about to.

24th October - MW sets out to Rome with Elizabeth Cotton and Ann Turner.

26th November - MW is in Bologna. Writes to Cardinal Barberini for a passport for the rest of the journey. Her letter reaches Rome on 15 December, but an outbreak of plague means that the border between Bologna and the Papal States is closed.

<u>1632</u>

January/February - MW leaves Bologna.

4th March - MW arrives in Rome. The Bull is not withdrawn.

17th April - Peter Biddulph, English Agent in Rome, reports that 'tow Jesuitesses' have 'taken boat for M[ar]sielly and so they will go to Paris' with four English Priests. MW is trying to get the Bull withdrawn.

From now on MW makes very frequent use of code names and codes words.

11th December - MW in Rome writes to Mary Poyntz in Munich, with arrangements for the Munich community. Troubled by the advance of the Swedish army under Gustavus Adolphus.

1633

15th January - MW in Rome writes to Mary Poyntz in Munich in regularly used code.

19th February - MW is ill again, but not dying.

2nd April - Urban VIII grants alms to MW of bread and wine.

Throughout 1633 MW trys to establish a house in Rome with the Pope's approval.

22nd June - MW is at Anticolo, a spa about 40 km north east of Rome. Plans to return to Rome on 27th June.

30th July - MW (in another coded letter) plans to buy house for community in Rome. Instructs Mary Poyntz to come from Munich to Rome via Loreto.

6th August - MW is in Rome, ill and suffering from the heat to Mary Poyntz. Planning to meet up with Poyntz at Loreto.

27th August - MW from Rome to Mary Poyntz. Includes the short instruction to 'Burn all mine' meaning her letters.

1st or 2nd September - MW in Rome to Mary Poyntz. More illness, toothache

2nd – 8th September - MW in Rome to Mary Poyntz. Better health but trying to raise money.

10th September - MW in Rome to Mary Poyntz. More illness of her and others.'

17th September - Winefrid Bedingfield now heading Munich community as Poyntz is travelling to Rome.

1st October - Poyntz has not arrived and MW is anxious about her whereabouts.

5th October - Mary Poyntz has arrived in Ferrara. MW instructs her to keep journey details secret 'when you hire cotch or horses.'

29th October - Mary Poyntz, now in Rome but very ill.

November - Mary Poyntz and MW in Rome write to Winefrid Bedingfield in Munich. MW is ill. They will move into their new house in Rome at end of November. (Much detail in this letter about clothing)

November - Elizabeth Cotton and MW in Rome to Winefrid Bedingfiled in Munich. MW still very ill.

26th November - MW in Rome to Frances Brooksby in Pressburg. Hasn't heard from her for two years. Instructs her to go to Munich.

<u>1634</u>

New Year - MW in Rome this year. Corresponding sometimes about materials for gift making.

c. April - MW in Rome to Winefrid Bedingfield in Munich. Requesting 'tiffinie' for making ruffs.

9th November - MW in Rome to Winefrid Bedingfield in Munich. Concerned about plague there.

30th December - MW in Rome to Winefrid Bedingfield in Munich- Concern for the safety of all there because one of them has died of the plague.

<u>1635</u>

January - Mary Poyntz and MW in Rome to Winefrid Bedingfield in Munich. Concerned for health of women there. MW is ill again.

Spring - Mary Poyntz and MW in Rome to Winefrid Bedingfield in Munich. Instructing her to listen carefully, but say little.

23rd July - Mary Poyntz and MW to Winefrid Bedingfield. In MP's handwriting: news about conduct of war. MW is still extremely ill.and has sent for St Casciano water.

25th August - MW in Rome to Winefrid Bedingfield in Munich, reassuring her that she is not dying.

End of November - MW in Rome to Winefrid Bedingfield in Munich. Maximillain is giving some money.

1636

Beginning of year - Mary Poyntz and MW in Rome to Winefrid Bedingfield in Munich about repairs to the school building, which still has pupils.

End of October - Mary Poyntz and MW in Rome to Winefrid Bedingfield in Munich. MW is planning/hoping to travel to England with Mary Poyntz but they lack money for this.

1637

7th February - MW in Rome to Winefrid Bedingfield in Munich. Holy man praying for them.

7th May - MW is in Nettuno (small coastal town south of Rome) to Frances Brooksby in Munich, who is in charge because Winefrid Bedingfield is ill.

20th June - MW in Rome to Frances Brooksby in Munich. MW thanks her for money sent, but is ill again.

30th July - MW receives the last sacraments.

10th September - MW sets out from Rome, carried on a litter and accompanied by two companions and four servants. Long journey to England begins.

17th December - The group have arrived in Paris. They remain in Paris for five months apparently because MW's illness worsened.

1638

20th May - They leave Paris and travel on.

End of May - MW at Spa for treatment. Then travels to Cologne and Bonn to seek support for fresh community in Liege like those in Munich and Rome i.e. not against Papal ruling. Fails in this. She is too ill and weather is too bad to make the journey to England over winter.

1639

4th February - MW is in Liege, writes to Mary Poyntz in Bonn. Long letter with guidance/instructions for business of the houses.

20th May - They arrived in England, staying first in London.

1640

MW writes from London to a member in Rome instructing this woman how to gain support. She is doing the same amongst the Catholic elite in London, hoping to start a school in London. MW is in much better health at this time.

1642

30th April - MW writes from London to Elizabeth Keyes in Rome. The group are leaving London to travel north the next day. Written in haste as country is moving towards civil war.

1st May - They leave London to begin long journey north, where there is support for Charles. London is now too hostile. They travel in three coaches guarded by four men.

14th September - They reach Hutton Rudby, and MW rents an old house.

October - MW who remains unwell, travels on pilgrimage to Mount Grace.

Cromwell's soldiers come to the house but do no harm.

1643

The party moves to Heworth, a village outside York, at beginning of the year.

1644

2nd July - Charles I is defeated at Marston Moor. MW and her group have moved from Heworth into the city of York. Cromwell's forces lay siege to York.

11th July - York falls to the Parliamentary forces. The group returns to the house at Heworth which has been very badly damaged.

1645

30th January - MW dies.

Appendix 3 Timeline for Virginia Ferrar.(1627 – 1688)

1624

May - Revocation of the Virginia Company Charter and the consequent financial difficulties of the Ferrar family.

June - Mary Woodnoth Ferrar, mother of Nicholas, John and Susanna, buys the Little Gidding estate for £6000 and the family move out of London to Bourn in Cambridgeshire. L.G. needed much renovation before full occupation. [Susanna was married to John Collect and they also went there with their children including Mary and Anna Collet]

1625

The Ferrar family moved to Little Gidding, escaping plague.

1626

Family made Little Gidding their sole residence.

1627

Christmas Eve - Virginia Ferrar born to John Ferrar and Bathsheba Ferrar (nee Owen), now living at Little Gidding.

1634

Late spring - Visit to Little Gidding by Edward Lenton. Detailed account in Lenton's letter to Sir Thomas Hetley, later used as basis for *The Arminian Nunnery* pamphlet.

1638 or 1640 - The children of Su Collet Mapletoft were being looked after at Little Gidding by Mary Collet Ferrar. Virginia is 12 or 14 at this time.

1640

The Ickworth Harmony states it was made by Virginia Ferrar when she was 12 years old.

1641

The Arminian Nunnery published. Distorted version of Lenton's account of 1634.

1642

March - Charles I visits Little Gidding and stays for several hours.

August - After outbreak of Civil War John Ferrar takes his children John and Virginia abroad, probably to Leyden.

1646

Early spring - family back at Little Gidding.

Virginia writes to 'Deare and worthy Aunte', in draft of letter to family members expressing love and respects.

1647

March - Richard Collett writes from the Virginia colony to John Ferrar with details of growing season there. John Ferrar was sending multiple enquiries concerning Barbados and the Virginia colony throughout this period until the first half of the 1550's.

29th June - Virginia writes to Bathsheba that they are quiet and 'no soldiers near us.' Also on the other side, writes a letter to her father, concerned about his bad eyes and looking forward to his return to Little Gidding. Virginia asks her mother to buy her materials which she has listed in a separate note enclosed. She then writes: 'Deare mother I hope wee shall shortly have you att home with us for we do very much misse you.

Late in the year, Hester Kestian, Virginia's cousin, the daughter of John Collet and Susanna Ferrar writes, suggesting that Virginia could move to live with her, saying that 'my cosin Parkes came to see mee and telling her for what reasons I intended to leave my house she tould me she had taken a house at Wallingford about 8 milles from London and if I would send my goods theither in her name and you and I and the children bee theire we should have 2 roomes to ourselves …'

1st November - draft letters from V.F. to 'sweete cosen' and 'Deare and Honored Aunt'. The Aunt may be Susannah Mapletoft. V.F. thanks her for 'the erings you sent mee worth 3s and 6p and I gave you but 2s and […] soe I am indeted to you 1 shilling [….] which I have sent you in my letter with many thank for your paines in b[uying?] of them and the hatt which fitted my Brother very well…'

12th December - Mary Collet writes to John Ferrar that a regiment of horse is quartered on them

1648

September - in a draft letter by Virginia to a female relative, possibly Susanna Chidley, her spelling is corrected by another hand above certain misspelt words, Virginia is apologising for her slowness in giving thanks for letter and 'tokens' received.

1649

2nd May - Draft letter from Virginia to 'most Deare to mee & intirely beloved frend' later called 'cosen': 'truly it is a troubling time in all places I hope to see thee before I write to thee again for my sister Leggatt intends to go to Cumberloe Gren the week after Whitsuntide …. you have heard of the unfortunate mischance the befell my cosin Mapletoft his hous was bourned I cannot say down to the ground but the [little] part that is left not to be lived in before it is pouled down to the ground soe there are all come to live at Giddin soe we see afflictions every day happen God grant us to make good youse of them Amen…'

7th August - Susanna 'Su' Chedley/Chidley (nee Collet, previously Susanna Mapletoft, her first husband Joshua Mapletoft having died in 1635), is mother of Mary Mapletoft ('Mall'), now married to Laurence Ward. Su writes to Virginia. about Mall's planned emigration to Virginia. Mall and Virginia are very close as Mall was brought up at Little Gidding. Su is Virginia's aunt, and daughter of Susannah Collet (nee Ferrar) Virginia's great aunt and John Collet.

August - Virginia is staying at Cumberlow Green Herts with her cousin Margaret Legatt until September

Ann Mapletoft, daughter of Su and Joshua Mapletoft lives at Cumberlow Green with William and Margaret Legatt her aunt and uncle. Her father Joshua Mapletoft died in 1635, and her mother Su had remarried James Chidley. Ann Mapletoft was born in about 1624, so was close in age to her second cousin Virginia, and exchanged many affectionate letters with her, suggesting that they were close.

17th September - Virginia has returned to Little Gidding from Cumberlow Green and writes to thank her 'Most deare and valued sister' Margaret Legatt

10th October - Virginia is unwell, as in second letter, from Su to John Ferrar, her uncle, she is sending bottle of syrup for his daughter

November - Virginia writes (draft) to Su Chidley her cousin to thank her for the syrup, so is better. Says delay in thanks is because 'my deare Father hath soe imployed mee about viginia and the mappes of virginia that the obligation before mee all most put mee in a quandary were I was but recalling my fancie and taking a litle respite….'

3rd December - 'My deare Father came to me this morning and tould mee I must needs write to thee…..'

Christmas and New Year wishes from Virginia to Ann Mapletoft 'Monday night from my fathers Chamber by the fier side 1649.'

<u>1650-51</u>

Various letters from correspondents in Virginia to John Ferrar and Virginia concerning sericulture, etc.

Virginia and her father begin exploring breeding of silkworms for export to grow in colony of Virginia.

26th January - John Stirrup of Virginia to Virginia. Thanks her for books, sends items (Indian pipe, basket etc.) and details of Roanoke River navigation, noted and underlined in John Ferrar's hand.

February - Virginia to Anna Mapletoft:'Bless god wee are in quiet and no sowders neare to molest us…' A second letter to 'my most Deare and worthy sister'. There are a lot of greetings to family members. It seems her father John has gone to London on business.

2nd March - Anna Mapletoft to Virginia. Speaks of the need of 'one anothers prayers then now in thes districted times.' Also speaks of the news of John Collet ('my deare granfather's 'death.) John Collet, Virginia's uncle by marriage, the husband of Susannah Collet and resident at Little Gidding died on 27 March 1650.

18th March - Two letters on one sheet. Virginia to her 'Dear cosen' Ann Mapletoft. Her aunt and uncle John and Susannah Collet are both very ill. She herself was ill 'and feared it was an ague' but is now 'very well indeed.'

22nd March - (this date is clearly marked by the writer-) Anna Mapletoft again writes to Virginia from Cumberlow Green, pleased that Virginia is well.

18th April - Mary Legatt writes to Virginia, thanking her for her letter and the 'most costly token which I had …. The honour to rise[ve]…'

19th April - Anna Mapletoft writes to Virginia, happy to hear of Virginia's good health. Goes on to say: 'I was never better in health in my life than I am now which is a great comfort to mee espeshally in my condeshion….' She makes an enigmatic comment: 'I see true friends are Hard to bee found I will say noe more than soe for I suppose you know my mening…' What does she mean by referring to 'my condeshion'? It seems unlikely that she is pregnant because she would have changed her name. There is an indication that she actually married in 1653. Question of when Ann Mapletoft married Mr Alsop and when she gave birth.

23rd April - Su Chidley writes to V.F. that she has sent her 'trimminges for your hatt & a [……..] that cost fifteene shillings for those at ye second hand is not worth …..'

May- Cover of letter by Virginia to Lady Berkely in Virginia:'Honoured Madame thar is a large Mapp of Vorginia sent you and Bookes alsoe and Seeds and rootes of Fine Flowers presented from youre most humble Handmade Virginia'

3rd May - Another expression of love from Ann Mapletoft to Virginia.

May/June - Ann Mapletoft to Virginia. She says how happy she is at receiving a letter from Virginia every week, but doesn't seem sure that she has the time to reply at that rate!

10th June - Virginia to Anna Mapletoft at Cumberloe Green which is 'Mr and Mrs Legatt's house at Comberloe Green, leave this at Mr Warren a shopkeeper in Baldock' Can't say when John and Bathsheba 'your Onkel and Aunt' will be with her. She writes in haste to catch the letter delivery as 'I have bin all this morning awriting to London.'

20th August - a long (now damaged) letter sent by Virginia to Lady Berkely wife of the Governor of Virginia, in John Ferrar's hand.

26th August - Letter to Virginia from her 'obliged cosin' John Mapletoft expresses hope of seeing her at Sturbridge Fair, Cambridge.

A Broadside was printed for Richard Woodnoth at the Star under St Peters Church in Cornhill with Virginia Ferrar given as the author:*The wonderful and admirable Vertue of the Sassafras Tree in Virginia, and the most excellent Cures to be effected by the Tobaccos Green leaf and Juyce……*It gives 'medical' advice on the use of tobacco leaves and after that, dietary advice for the newly disembarked passenger in a long postscript.

John Ferrar assembled various pages of printed material concerning silkworms and silk production, with various marginal notes. This document has not been dated

Virginia is sent a letter and verses praising her for her work on silkworms by a John Pykering of Virginia. John Pyckering's verses are specifically addressed: 'To the honoured Lady Mrs Virginia Ferrar on her new discovery of the Silk-trade in this part of the world.'

A fragment of verse by L.G. praises 'The gidding Virgin' and her device which shall make fine material and advance the wealth and happiness of the people of Virginia.

25th November - Virginia writes to Anna Mapletoft of Cumberlow Green thanking her for buying for her and sending on 'shoose I never had a payer in my life that fitted mee better then these doe….'

<u>1651</u>

Letter from Mary Legatt to Virginia apologises for not writing sooner, and hopes it will be welcome as it brings news of 'the healthe of my Deare Cosen Anne but one thing give me leave to tel you if she now continew eating of dry bred burnt bleake upon coals she shoud not continew in her health but she promises faire y[t] she will not [……..] it any more.'

27th March - Letter to Virginia, from Michael Upchurch of Virginia. Demonstrates that Virginia was seen by some male colonists as an important person to communicate with. He sends her some native items e.g. an Indian basket and the rattles of a 'rattel snak'.

3rd May - Letter to Virginia. from William Sharman of Virginia, thanking her for the silkworm eggs which she sent him, and sending one or two 'tokens' such as a rattlesnake skin.

22nd September - Letter from Susannah (Su) Chidley to V.F. telling her how lucky she is to be content to be living together with her 'worthy father'.

27th October - Virginia to Ann Mapletoft at Cumberlow Green, includes answering Ann's query about whether Virginia. took any 'physicke of the Doctor this winter' and whether she will keep with the same Doctor this winter.

1652

7th February - Letter from a Virginian colonist Laurence Ward regarding the cultivation of silkworms. There is a detailed marginal comment by John Ferrar, the addressee, who mentions Virginia's experiments with feeding the worms with apple leaves and other trees rather than mulberry leaves, so this indicates that it was Virginia who was carrying out the practical research.

16th September - Virginia's cousin Benjamin Woodnoth, now widowed, writes to her with tentative marriage proposal.

1653

1653? A long poem on the silkworm ascribed to John Ferrar junior refers to 'the Ladys bookes' and 'Virgins Counsell' as showing Virginia planters that the Virginia silkworm will feed on other trees leaves, not just mulberry leaves.

2nd July - Virginia to Anna Mapletoft, inviting Ann and 'her good frend' to come and stay.

2nd July - Jane Collet to Virginia. Refers to 'fforty shilling left by Cossen Mapletoft for Cosen Alsop…'

10th July - from Laurence Ward in Virginia to Virginia.

1655

Written on April 25th received July 20th - Letter from Major Wood at Fort Henry in Virginia to Virginia Ferrar, referring to her and her father's regular letters, so demonstrates a continuing interest in Colony by Virginia and John Ferrar.

April to May - Benjamin Woodnoth and John Ferrar exchange correspondence about a debt which B.W. said was owed to him. The tone of these letters is demanding and suggests hostility from B.W.

Draft letters by Virginia to Margaret Legatt (nee Collet) and Jane Collet (nee Smith). She sends Jane Collet ten shillings with a request that she buys 'an elle and a quarter of the best sarsnet' for her.

Soon after 25th March (Easter Sunday) - Draft letter by Virginia to 'Deare & Honoured Aunt? (Probably Susanna Collect.) With news of the offer of position as a gentlewoman. Speaking first of safe delivery of Ann Mapletoft's baby.

The explicit mention of Anna Mapletoft's having been delivered of a baby daughter is very problematic with the supposed dating of 1649/50. The letter from Virginia to Ann Mapletoft currently dated 2nd July 1653 suggests that Ann Mapletoft was engaged or even married at that date, and so the birth of a daughter could be expected by 1655. The reference to Cosen Alsop in the letter from Jane Collet to V.F. dated 2nd July 1653 seems to confirm the married name of Cousin Ann.

Undated drafts from V.F. possibly to Jane Collet and Margaret Legatt include a reference to 'Cousin Ann'.

1656

4th April - Letter from Mary Ward (nee Mapletoft) daughter of Su Collet, writing from Maryland to Virginia. She is responding to a letter from Virginia in which she encouraged her to 'sett upon the silke trade'. Mall asks Virginia about the current price of silk and speaks of separate enquiries from John Virginia's father. This seems to support the idea that Virginia was writing independently of her father.

26th April - Letter from Ann Alsop to John and Bathsheba Ferrar, asking them to take in her 'poore Chile' and bring her up. Draft scribed by Su Chidley Ann's mother. So it seems that Mr Alsop her husband has died. The child is presumably the daughter whose birth V.F. reported about in 1655.

27th July - Letter to Virginia from Jane Collet, includes reference to sending her the suit of clothing which she wrote for, with the money she sent.

1657

Early May?- Draft letter V.F. to Jane Collet includes thanking her for 'my gowne & peticote' which she had sent to her.

Late May - Letter from Nicholas Collet, London to John Ferrar. Refers to 'the Coate for Cosen Alsops Childe' who must be little Pegge. The cover letter accompanying this refers to the letter being accompanied by a 'Bundle in Brown Paper.'

12th August - Letter from John Ferrar (written by another) to Virginia who is away from Little Gidding. He sets out very full detail of his illness (passing large stools, vomiting, pains in stomach etc.)

September - Letter from John Ferrar to Virginia giving details of many sick and dead people in the area. He is glad she is well. This is probably his last letter to his daughter.

September - Letter from Virginia to her father. She is at Mr Childes house at Oundle. Appear to be 3 separate hands on this letter. Also a letter from John to Virginia which speaks of much sickness around.

28th September - John Collect died. He had appointed Virginia as his executrix.

8th October - Letter to Virginia from Benjamin Woodnoth. Formal short condolences on her father's death. She is his executrix and he demanded the money which he claims is owed to him by John Ferrar.

9th October - Susannah Collet (nee Ferrar) Virginia's great aunt died.

22nd October - Letter from Benjamin Woodnoth to John Ferrar II demanding the money he says should have been paid to him by John Ferrar senior. He has not had a reply from Virginia, John's executrix.

31st October - Su Chedley/Chidley (nee Collet) Virginia's aunt died.

3rd November - Letter from John Ferrar II to his wife Ann, explaining that Bathsheba had been at Little Gidding when he stopped there and was in a very distressed sate, and she had 'told my sister' she was determined to return to London. This no doubt added to the pressure on Virginia at this time

November - Bathsheba Ferrar (nee Owen) Virginia's mother left Little Gidding for good and lived in London until she died.

From 1657 after her father's death Virginia lives in a small house of her own on the estate. The Little Gidding Estate has been bequeathed to her younger brother John Ferrar II by her father.

1658

Spring - Letter from Virginia to Ann Alsop, includes telling her that 'Pegge hath lost her Ague quit and is very well I thanke god…'

5th April - Virginia uses a brief letter from Peter Mapletoft to note details of sums of money she has been sent by Peter and John Mapletoft, 'sister Legatt' and Aunt Mary totalling fifteen pounds. This indicates that Virginia is taking charge of her finances now father is dead.

2nd July - Letter from Judith Mapletoft to her sister in law Ann Alsop then at Little Gidding. There is a note by Ann Alsop listing money set out 'since my dearest went' - presumably she means since Pegge went to Little Gidding.

Letter from Mary Collet to John Ferrar II asking for her rights in her house at Little Gidding. Another indication that there are family tensions and disputes about the disposal of an estate. Mary Collet later left Little Gidding and went to live in her brother Thomas's house in Highgate.

15th September - Letter from Mary Legatt to Virginia. asking her to remind John Ferrar II to pay the £53 due to her sister Hester Kestian, as well as the money that is owed to her. Ann Alsop is at Little Gidding, as Mary Legatt sends her love to her in a P.S.

August onwards - Correspondence and discussions about Virginia selling property she inherited from her father in the Bermudas. This property was tenanted, and cousin Nicholas Collet advises her to give first option of purchase to the tenant, advising her to sell to him for £20. She insists on £25.

1659

21st February - Letter to Virginia from Nathaniel Waterman her tenant in Bermuda, which confirms that Virginia received the land in her father's will. He pleads for her to reduce the amount she is asking from £25 'w[hi]ch is you know a great matter for a poore man to pay at one time.' If she is charitable he will also send a box of oranges and lemons, some sweet wood bark and a bottle of orange flower water.

July - Letter from Nicholas Collet to Virginia at Little Gidding confirming his understanding that she is determined not sell the Bermuda land for less than £25, but asks her to consider a lower sum.

August - Nicholas Collet writes to Virginia saying that her brother John Ferrar II is making a claim to her Bermudas land, which Nicholas Collet says is not likely to succeed. He wants her to sell the land to the tenant as soon as possible and will himself make up any shortfall in the selling price if necessary.

Bathsheba, Virginia's mother dies.

1659 onwards - Virginia makes visits to London: to Highgate, staying with her aunt Mary Collet Ferrar; to stay with Elizabeth Kestian and Mary Leggatt in Westminster and in 1673 Clapham.

1660

1660's Correspondence from various relatives to John Ferrar II at this time frequently send 'respects and service' to cousin Virginia, who was therefore also at Little Gidding.

1660's Virginia derived income from her part of the Little Gidding estate, see for example in letter from Richard Knight concerning the money owed to her.

7th March - Letter from William Legatt to Ann Alsop who is at Little Gidding with her daughter, his godchild. He had sent a gift for the child but had never received an acknowledgement. He hopes to come and visit in the summer. Draft letter from Virginia to William Legatt responding to this letter of his to Ann Alsop her cousin. In it she writes 'we shall bee soe happy to see you heare att Gidding and we are in a house of my one.'

August - Letter to Virginia from Richard Knight a tenant at Little Gidding, asking for a loan of four pounds.

1662

18th August - Letter from Ann Alsop (nee Mapletoft) to Virginia. Glad she has returned safely, so Virginia has been staying with her away from Little Gidding.

5th October - Letter from physician Arthur Coldwell of Oundle to Virginia, suggests she is unwell.

4th November - Ann Alsop writes from Stamford to Virginia, who has returned from a visit to her.

1664

16th January - Mary Utie writes to Virginia from Maryland, saying how much she enjoyed Virginia's company, so presumably visited her when staying in England.

14th February - Letter from Ann Alsop, in Lincolnshire to Virginia. Tells of her ill health, but now better, and hopes for Virginia's good health. 'my poor peg' sends her services, so the child little Peg is now with her mother.

23rd May - Virginia is staying with Nicholas Collet her cousin at the Sign of the White Hind in Lombard Street, London. Postscript says she is going on to Highgate to stay with Mary.

10th July - Letter from Ann Alsop at Lincoln to Virginia, who is now back at Little Gidding.

6th August - Letter from Jane Collet to Virginia, praising her 'much desired company' suggesting that Virginia had been staying with her.

1665

Letter fragment from Ann Alsop to Virginia describing proposed journey: 'I shall com on hors to Stanford and then to Giding and so to London,' suggesting that she has been staying with friends in Louth in Lincolnshire.

5th May - Letter from William Legatt in London to Virginia. He has been staying with her at Little Gidding, he owes her £28 and is apologising for delay in paying.

Letter from Virginia to a 'Deare Cosen' mentioning plague at Peterborough.

1670

30th May - Letter from Dorothy Wright, who may be a distant relative, to Virginia about a salve for an abscess which John Ferrar II's wife has on her leg.

17th August - Letter to Virginia from Elizabeth Ferrar, widow of Richard Ferrar. Elizabeth is Virginia's aunt. She sends a begging letter from London where she lives. She cannot afford the rent which is being demanded and 'I have not clothes to keepe mee warme'. Indicates that Virginia is known to have some financial resources.

October/November - Virginia is at Clapham and writes to sister in law Ann Ferrar. Details of purchases of dresses and other items illustrate the growing picture of London as a centre of consumer culture and Virginia's interest and involvement in that.

11th December - Virginia has been in London. A letter from Nicholas Collet to John Ferrar II shows this as he says he had met her there.

1674

January - Letter from Elizabeth Waller of Tonbridge in Kent, a distant relative, to Virginia, includes drafts of letters by Virginia showing that she is in Clapham near London, hoping that she may travel to Elizabeth's in Kent in the summer.

14th June - Draft 'Thank you' letters to 'Deare Cosen', 'Most deare and precious sister' and 'My Very Deare Cosen' all indicate she has been staying with relatives and is now back at Little Gidding

1677

16th August - Virginia writes to sister-in-law Ann Ferrar. She has been in Clapham a fortnight and intends to stay there 'for sum time.' Writes of health or sickness of family members. Has enquired about cost of a 'manta of silke & cape' which Ann has asked her to buy. Also asking her brother to send her £20. Suggests the money be wrapped in linen and placed inside nine or ten pounds of butter from 'my Cosen Jane Colets shop'.

26th August - Ann replies confirming she has sent £15 in the butter as requested, and asking V.F. to buy thread, needles and knitting needles for her.

November - Letter from Ann Ferrar II to her Aunt Virginia who is in London.

1678

16th January - Virginia is in Clapham with Elizabeth Kestian and Mary Leggat.

23rd October - Virginia writes, in a draft reply to a letter from her sister-in-law, that she is at Nicholas Collet's next to The White Horse, Little Britain, London and is minded to stay there for the winter.

1679

13th March - Virginia writes to her brother for money. She is still in London

March - Virginia writes a thank you letter to Nicholas Collet and his wife with whom she has been staying all winter. She is now back at Little Gidding.

Draft letter by Virginia to Martha Collet and Mary Farrar Collet repaying the £4 she borrowed when she was staying at Highgate with them. Asking them to send her the picture of her father.

1680

Spring - Drafts of letters by Virginia to Nicholas Collet in London. One as 'reference for her nephew to be an apprentice and one asking to be sent various items: a mourning coat, half an ell of slight green sarcenet about half ell wide, 5 yards of 'bangalle', a gray 'gas'hood, a black 'allomode' hood, a quarter of a pound head powder, a pair of strong buttons for sleeves, half a dozen 'orings.'

October - Letter to Virginia from Elizabeth Kestian, encouraging her to come to Highgate for better air as she has been unwell.

End of year - Death of Mary Collet Ferrar, as witnessed by draft letter from Nicholas Collet to John Ferrar II giving details of her estate. He and 'Cosin Collett' are appointed executors.

1687

27th November - Letter to Virginia from John Watson of Steeple Gidding. She is apparently wanting to sell some pewter and brass and iron. He is interested and asks her price.

1688

January - Letter from Virginia to Goodman Smith, Shoemaker in Kimbolton asking him to send the shoes which were ordered as they are needed now.

January - Letter from Nathaniel Smart saying he cannot pay her more than the £20 he has offered for the items she is wanting to sell.

Follow up letter from Nathaniel Smart lowering his offer.

The Ferrar Collection shows seven cover letters all from female relatives and friends addressed to Virginia in January. It seems that there was a general awareness that she was likely to be dying.

14th January - Virginia Ferrar dies.

11th February - Letter from David Salmon to John Ferrar II with her nuncupative will.

Appendix 4 Timeline for Mary Astell (1666-1731)

1666

12th November - Astell born in Newcastle. Father-Peter Astell (1638-1678), mother-Mary, daughter of George Errington, a wealthy old Northumberland Catholic family. Father's family part of prosperous Newcastle coal trade. Astell's paternal aunt, who lived with them, never married.

1674

Astell begins informal education by Uncle Ralph Astell, a Cambridge Platonist and curate at St Nicholas Church, probably from the age of eight.

1678

Father died. Family now becomes poorer.

1679

Uncle Ralph died.

1684

Astell begins to write poems indicating that she would dedicate herself to a religious life.

1688

Astell leaves Newcastle for London, journey of about two weeks by coach, and settles in Chelsea.

Astell writes 'begging letter' (undated but filed with letters from 1688) to Archbishop William Sancroft. Meeting with her, he gave her with money and contacts. Astell visits the conservative printer and publisher Rich Wilkin.

1689

Astell sends Sancroft a handstitched booklet of poems.

1692

July - Astell travels to Salisbury, and meets John Norris. She begins to learn French having been advised to do this by Norris so that she can read the work of French philosopher Nicholas Malebranche.

1693

21st September - Astell writes to John Norris, having read his *Discourses.* They continue this debate by exchange of letters.

1694

Astell's first book *A Serious Proposal to the Ladies for the Advancement for Their True and Greatest Interest. By a Lover of Her Sex* is printed and published by Rich (or Richard) Wilkin, the conservative monarchist printer.

1695

Letters Concerning the Love of God, Norris's publication of the letters he and Astell had exchanged. Astell was not named as part author, but at her insistence, the book is dedicated to Lady Catherine Jones.

On 17th September - Astell is in Salisbury.

2nd Edition (corrected) of *A Serious Proposal to the Ladies* is printed by Rich Wilkin, at some time this year.

1696

A Serious Proposal to the Ladies [3rd edition corrected] is published by Rich Wilkin.

1697

A Serious Proposal to the Ladies, Part II: Wherein a Method is Offered for the Improvement of Their Minds is published by Rich Wilkin, with a preface dedication to Princess Anne.

A Serious Proposal to the Ladies, for the Advancement of Their True and Greatest Interest. In Two Parts is published, printed for Richard Wilkin

September - Astell begins studying mathematics relevant to astronomy with John or Margaret Flamsteed at Greenwich. Continues this until February 1698.

1700

Astell is listed as a shareholder in the so-called Mine Adventure of Humphrey Mackworth.

Some Reflections upon Marriage, Occasion'd by the Duke and Duchess of Mazarin's Case, Which Is Also Considered, written by Mary Astell, published by John Nutt

1701

A Serious Proposal to the Ladies, for the Advancement of Their True and Greatest Interest. In Two Parts is a reissue, printed for Rich Wilkin

1702

March-Queen Anne comes to the throne. High Church and Tory opposition to Dissenters whipped up by the demagogue Dr Henry Sacheverell, who argues that 'passive obedience' and 'passive resistance' were true forms of patriotic idealism. Astell is sympathetic, but less extreme.

1703

Some Reflections upon Marriage [2nd edition] Printed for Rich Wilkin. Astell begins to be drawn into party politics and debates about political and religious toleration.

1703

December – Publication anonymously of Astell's *Moderation Truly Stated: Or, a Review of a Late Pamphlet Entitled Moderation…..* Printed for Richard Wilkin n 1704. Her authorship was guessed at.

1704

Astell's *A Fair Way with Dissenters and Their Patrons* is published, printed for Rich Wilkin. This is a response to Defoe's satirical piece *A Short Way with Dissenters…* Astell, like many, thought the author was serious.

Astell's *An Impartial Enquiry into the Causes of Rebellion and Civil War in this Kingdom* is published, printed for Rich Wilkin

1702-1704

Ruth Perry says she was living in 'her rooms on the second floor of a shared house in Chelsea,' and that 'she became a figure in London society,' but gives no reference for either of these statements.

1705

*The Christian Religion as Profess'd by a Daughter of the Church of England …*Printed for Rich Wilkin.

1706

Third edition of *Some Reflections Upon Marriage*, with a new long preface added by Astell. Astell writes to Henry Dodwell, the nonjuror, generally supporting him but criticising him on a point of doctrine.

1708

Anthony Ashley Cooper, 3rd Earl of Shaftsbury, publishes *A Letter Concerning Enthusiasm*, expressing very Whiggish attitudes to a group of French Protestant religious refugees and their extremist views. Astell is strongly opposed to this.

1709

Astell publishes *Bart'lemy Fair: Or, An Enquiry after Wit; In which due Respect is had to a Letter Concerning Enthusiasm, To my Lord XXX by Mr Wotton,* condemning Shaftesbury's arguments, printed for Richard Wilkin

Astell was then satirised twice in *The Tatler* for her earlier proposal for 'a Nunnery' to educate young gentlewomen.

6th June - Astell is involved in the opening of a charity school for the daughters of Chelsea Hospital Veterans, founded by Lady Elizabeth Hastings and supported by Lady Catherine Jones, Lady Ann Coventry and Elizabeth Hutcheson, the group of elite women who were Astell's friends and supporters.

1710

She is developing a cataract.

1712

Chelsea tax records show Astell living in her own house at the bottom of Paradise Row in Chelsea. Her payment is assessed at £10.

1714

Death of Queen Anne, the last Stuart monarch. Astell's sympathies are with the Jacobites and against the Hanoverians.

Lady Betty Hastings begins making payments from her bank account to Mary Astell this year.

7th August - Astell writes to the newly installed Bishop of Rochester, Francis Atterbury, requesting tickets for herself and two friends to attend Rochester Cathedral on 12 August to hear the music.

1715

Jacobite plotter James Butler, 2nd Duke of Ormonde and husband of Mary, Duchess of Ormonde, leaves England, having been impeached for high treason. Astell's supporter, Lady Anne Coventry, is the sister of the Duchess. Astell begins an involvement with the Duchess, almost certainly assisting her as a go-between for Jacobite correspondence.

The Duchess's name appears in several of her husband's letters about Jacobite business. The Duchess was in direct correspondence with the Pretender. At this time Astell regularly sends parcels, letters and packages to the Duchess and her sister Lady Ann Coventry.

1719

Ormonde is involved in plans for an invasion of England for the Pretender. The plans failed.

End of October - Astell plans to go and stay at Burwash in Sussex for some time over the winter. This is probably to act as a conduit for information from the Jacobites on the continent. Arranges for her correspondence to be passed safely through Mr Pitt under 'his cover as Member of Parliament.'

1720

February - Astell has returned to Chelsea from Burwash. Begins her financial involvement with South Sea stocks and opens an account at Hoares Bank by 23rd September this year.

July - Astell is lodging in New Bond Street, next door to The Blue Fluke, and writes to Sir Hans Sloane thanking him for allowing her and some 'Honorable Ladies' to visit his Collections, thanking him for his offer for a piece of ground for the Charity School, but explaining that it cannot be taken up.

1722

Walpole's anti-Jacobite campaign peaks with the arrest and trial of Christopher Layer in November. Francis Atterbury is also arrested this year because of his support for a Jacobite invasion.

Re-issue of Astell's *Bart'lemy Fair* with a new preface, with the purpose of moderating antipapist feeling, and criticising Walpole's regime. It appears under the title *An Enquiry after Wit wherein the Trifling Arguing and Impious Raillery of the Late Earl of Shaftesbury in his letter concerning Enthusiasm and other Profane Writers are fully answered, and justly exposed.*

1723

Atterbury is forced into exile. Christopher Layer is executed in May.

In the aftermath, with continuing government anti-Jacobite activity and surveillance, Astell herself becomes the subject of surveillance by Walpole's agents and considers moving.

July - Astell has been unwell and writes to Lady Ann Coventry that Mrs Methuen, Astell's friend has died peacefully.

1724

Astell has moved to Mannor Street Chelsea. Writes to Sir Hans Sloane, requesting another visit to his collection, with Lord Huntingdon and his sister.

1726

Astell moves in with Lady Catherine Jones to Jones's house in Jew's Row, Chelsea.

1730

Though now unwell, Astell is still involved with the administration of the Chelsea Hospital School, writing a receipt for money received from Lady Betty Hastings.

1731

Astell finally asks Dr Johnson, a reputed surgeon, to operate on the malignant breast tumour she had found some time earlier.

c.11th May Astell dies and is buried at Chelsea on 14th May.

Biographical Notes on Astell's elite circle of supporters:

Lady Catherine Jones: (1672-1740) daughter of Richard Jones, 1st Earl of Ranelagh and dedicatee, at Astell's insistence, of Norris's *Letters Concerning the Love of God.* Close friendship with Astell whom she supported and who lived with her in the last few years of her life. Never married. Was her father's executrix and spent years sorting out his debts. Her ashes were mingled with a woman called Mary Kendall, with whom Jones was said to have lived in 'close union and friendship.'

Lady Elizabeth Hastings: (1682-1739) also known as 'Lady Betty.' Daughter of Theophilus Hastings, 7th Earl of Huntingdon. Lived at Ledstone Hall in West Yorkshire from 1703, and never married despite several proposals. Ran her estate very effectively and created many charitable trusts. Gave money regularly to Astell from 1714.

Lady Ann Coventry: (1673-1763) daughter of Henry Somerset, 3rd Marquess of Worcester and later 1st Duke of Beaufort. Married in 1691 at 17 to Thomas Coventry 2nd Earl of Coventry, who was considerably older. He left her in a great deal of debt when he died in 1710. She repaid these debts and made the estate profitable. Possibly involved in Jacobite activities with her elder sister Mary Butler, Duchess of Ormonde, and with Astell. She had one son who died aged 9. Lady Ann sometimes stayed with her sister Ormonde in Chelsea during the winter season but spent most of the year on her country estate.

Elizabeth Hutcheson, appointed by Astell as her executrix. Her first husband was Robert Stewart, plantation and slave owner in the Leeward Islands, and active campaigner for the slave trade!!!!! After the death of her second husband Archibald Hutcheson, she went to live in a 'religious household a trois' with Hester Gibbon and William Law.

Bibliography

MANUSCRIPT SOURCES

Bodleian Library, Oxford

MS Ballard 43	Letter from Elizabeth Elstob to George Ballard 24 December 1736
MS Ballard 74	Passage in draft of Ballard's chapter on Mary Astell, omitted from print version
MS Rawlinson Letters 59:89	Letter from Mary Astell to Archbishop Sancroft 1688
MS Rawlinson Poet 154:51	Collection of handwritten poems by Mary Astell sent to Archbishop Sancroft 1689
MS Rawlinson D 198:101-114	Letter from Henry Dodwell to Mary Astell 30 March 1706

British Library

Sloane MS 4045 f.336	Mary Astell's letter to Sir Hans Sloane February 1720

Magdalene College Old Library, Cambridge

[Astell's Marginalia]

In (H.8.14) MS inscription on upper endpaper "Sarum Ex Libris Phylia Julis 28. 1692 pret xd."; list of prices in pounds, shillings, and pence on lower endpaper, in *Treason's masterpiece or A conference held at Whitehall between Oliver the late usurper and a committee of the then pretended Parliament etc.*

In (H.5.20) On upper pastedown, "May 9 1690 pret 3s:6d" partially deleted, over inscription of Astell's pseudonym; MS notes on upper and lower endpapers and lower pastedown; 'a table to ye conferences' on lower endpapers in *A vindication of the authority, constitution, and laws of the church and state of Scotland by Gilbert Burnet, Professor of Theology in Glasgow.*

In (H.16.39) MS inscription on upper endpaper "MA Mar.4.1694/95"; MS notes in pencil on lower endpaper and lower pastedown in *An Essay toward a Natural History of the Earth and Terrestrial Bodies, especially minerals by John Woodward*.

In (H.19.50) MS inscriptions on title page "M.A. May 1708 The gift of ye learned Author"; MS notes in pencil on upper endpaper, lower endpaper and pastedown; many MS pencil notes on margins up to p.57; then again on p.115 and p.122 in *The Scripture Account of the Eternal Rewards or Punishments of All that hear the Gospel by Henry Dodwell*

In (G.1077) MS note on upper endpaper “By Dr. Wm. Sandcroft since A. Bp. Of Cant.” And “Repinted 1690”; MS addition of pagination in pencil at top of pages, then index of some points added in *Modern Policies taken from Machiavel, Borgia, and other Choice Authors by an Eye-Witness*

In (B.8.29) (B.8.30) MS inscriptions on upper endpaper in pen including “Sarum 2 Vol: pret [3s?] Decem. 17 1695”; marginalia throughout, notes and mathematical sketches in pencil on upper and lower pastedowns and endpapers in both volumes of *De la Recherche de la Verite par Nicholas Malebranche* 2 Vols.

In (H.14.18) Extensive notes on upper and lower endpapers and marginalia throughout, including mathematical calculations in *Les Principes de la Philosophie de Rene Descartes*

Magdalene College Old Library, Cambridge – The Ferrar Papers
[Listed in order of the Collaborative Handlist]

FP587	Letter by John Ferrar 30 Jan 1626
FP666	List of household items in Virginia Ferrar’s hand –(probable date 1687/88)
FP802	Letter from Ann Collet to her parents -July 1631
FP809	Letter from Ann Collet to Nicholas Ferrar -Sept 1631
FP995	Letter by Nichlas Ferrar to be read aloud to Bathsheba Ferrar re. wifely duty
FP1056	Letter from Bathsheba Ferrar to her brother Henry Owen 1637
FP1113	Draft letters from Virginia Ferrar to her mother and father - June 1647
FP1116	Letter from Virginia Ferrar to her aunt -1 Nov 1647
FP1145	Letter from Virginia Ferrar to Su Chidley -Nov 1649
FP1148	Letter from Virginia Ferrar to Ann Mapletoft -Dec 1649
FP1150	Letter from Virginia Ferrar to Susannah Collet re.offer of place by Lady ‘Lenthrop’ and Ann Mapletoft’s baby -now dated 1655
FP1152	Endorsement by Michael Lloyde Ferrar about Viginia Ferrar’s fame
FP’s 1153,1190, 1202,1230	Letters between Virginia Ferrar and Virginia Colonists - various dates
FP1164	Letter from Su Chidley to Virginia Ferrar- 23 April 1650
FP1168	Letter from Virginia Ferrar to Ann Mapletoft -May/June 1650
FP1176	Letter from Virginia Ferrar to Lady Berkeley – 20 Aug 1650
FP1181	Letter from Virginia Ferrar to Ann Mapletoft -25 Nov 1650
FP1183	Broadside on the Sassafras Tree –(first edition) London 1650
FP1186	Letter from John Ferrar to John Mapletoft about silkworm trade etc in Virginia -1650(?)

FP1187	'The History of the Silkworm' handwritten text by John Mapletoft and John Ferrar -1650(?)
FP1190	Letter and Verses from John Pickering, Virginian planter, to Virginia Ferrar 1650 (?)
FP1191	Letter to Virgina Ferrar from Joseph Beaumont -1650
FP1192	Printed poem referring to Virginia Ferrar as 'The Gidding Virgin'
FP1202	Letter from Edward Johnson of Mulberry Island to Virginia and John Ferrar
FP1194, 1200, 1203, 1205	Letters to Virginia Ferrar from Virginia colonists – various dates c. 1650
FP1214	Letter from Benjamin Woodnoth to Virginia Ferrar 16 Sept 1652
FP1225	Letter from Virginia Ferrar to Ann Mapletoft –2 July 1653
FP1229	Letter from Jane Collet to Virginia Ferrar -2 July 1653
FP1236	Note on recto side of this refers to 'verses on the Natrall Silke Worme of 1653' (text now missing)
FP1251,1252	Exchange of letters between John Ferrar and Benjamin Woodnoth –beginning April 1655
FP1257	Letter from John Ferrar to his son, John Ferrar ll -1655
FP1258	Draft letters from Virginia Ferrar to Jane Collet and Margaret Legatt -1655(?) or 1648(?)
FP1275	Letter from Ann Alsop (nee Mapletoft) to John and Bathsheba Ferrar -26 April 1657
FP1292	Letter from John Ferrar to Virginia Ferra with details of illness -Sept 1657
FP1297	Letter from John Ferrar to Virginia Ferrar =Sept 1657
FP1298	Three letters from Virginia Ferrar to John Ferrar -Sept 1657
FP1302	Letter from Basil Berridge to Ann Ferrar -John Ferrar ll and wife Ann are now at Little Gidding
FP1303	Letter from Benjamin Woodnoth to Virginia Ferrar to Virginia Ferrar -8 Oct 1657
FP1304	Letter from Benjamin Woodnoth to John Ferrar ll -22 Oct 1657
FP1305	Letter from Edward Palmer to Virginia Ferra re. money he has been lent -2 Nov 1657
FP1306	Letter from John Ferrar ll to wife Ann re Bathsheba
FP1308	Letter from Virginia Ferrar to Ann Alsop -Spring 1658
FP1314	Letter from Peter Mapletoft to Virginia Ferrar setting out money sent to her as executrix -5 April 1658
FP1319	Letter from Judith Mapletoft to Ann Alsop -2 July 1658
FP 1323	Letter from Nicholas Collect to Virginia Ferrar re. sale of her Barbados land -1658

FP1326	Letter from Nathaniel Waterman (her tenant) to Virginia Ferrar (landlady) -21 Feb 1659
FP1330	Letter from Nicholas Collet to Virginia Ferrar re sale -June 1659
FP1332	Letter from Nicholas Collet to Virginia Ferrar re sale of her land -Aug 1659
FP1334	Letter from Viginia Ferrar to Edward Palmer reminding him of money owed -1659
FP1335	Draft of letter from Virginia Ferrar to cousin William Legatt - March 1660
FP1348,1350,1372	Letters between Virginia Ferrar and Ann Alsop detailing exchange visits
FP1366,1368	Letters to Virginia Ferrar whilst she is staying in London with Nicholas Collet and wife -May and July 1664
FP1369	Letter from William Legatt to Viginia Ferrar -5 May 1665
FP1380	Letter from Richard Knight to Virginia Ferra requesting a loan -Aug 1660
FP1383	Letter from Elizabeth Ferrar to her niece Virginia Ferrar - begging letter
FP1398	Letter From Virginia Ferrar to Ann Ferrar from Elizabeth Kestian and Mary Legatt's house in Clapham
FP1410	Letter from Virginia Ferrar to Ann Ferrar, again staying at Clapham -16 Aug 1677
FP1418	Letter from Ann Alsop to Virginia Ferrar, with Nicholas Collet in London with draft reply from Virginia proposing to stay in London for winter -1678
FP1431	Draft letter from Virginia Ferrar to Martha Collet and Mary Collet Farrar -1679
FP1441	Letter from Elizabeth Kestian to Virginia Ferrar reporting death of Mary Collet Ferrar -Oct 1680
FP1497	Virginia Ferrar to John Weston re sale of metal items -Nov 1687
FP1507	Letter from Virginia Ferrat to Goodman Smith re purchase of shoes – 8 Jan 1688
FP1508,1509	Letters from Nathaniel Smart re his purchase of her 'chamber furniture' -Jan 1688
FP1510-1516	Letter covers addressed to Virginia Ferra from female friends and relatives -Jan 1688
FP1517	Letter from David Salmon to John Ferrar ll with copy of Virginia Ferrar's nuncupative will (now lost) -11 Feb 1688

The National Archives

Court of Chancery, Six Clerks Office:

C6/365/24	Astall v Richardson (1686)- claim by Astell's mother for money owed to her husband
C6/365/58	Astell v Richardson (16689)- continuation of that claim

State Papers:

SP35/40/182	Letter by Mary Astell to Bishop of Rochester (7 August 1714)
SP 35/32/36	Arrest Warrant for Capt. Kelly's servants in Rye (27 July 1722)
SP 35/37/11A	Copy of cipher in George Kelly's handwriting found among Capt. Kelly's papers (1722)
SP 35/72/82	List of 81 papers relating to George Kelly, clerk, concerning his prosecution linked to Atterbury plot (1723)
SP 35/72/81	Detailed examination of George Kelly before the Committee of the House (2 Feb 1723)
SP 35/72/1	Examination of George Kelly, Jacobite suspect, alias James Johnson (21 May 1722)
SP 35/72/2	Examination of Jane Barnes, widow of Bury Street (21 May 1722)
SP 35/72/6	Deposition of Elizabeth Levett concerning George Kelly, alias James Johnson (18 August 1722)
SP 35/72/36	Information received from John Collet, wine cooper, St James, relating to Atterbury plot (10 Sept 1722)
SP 35/72/93	Examination of Edmund Bingley concerning his acquaintance with George Kelly (30-31 Dec 1722)

Prerogative Court of Canterbury:

PROB 11/592/22	Will of John Butler of Burwash, Sussex

Norfolk Records Office

Wills from Will Registers:

281 Stockdell	Will of Anne Beckett 1661
202 Bowrne	Will of Elizabeth Meake 1606
113 Cockes	Will of Blythe Norton 1604
227 Spencer	Will of Margaret Duffield 1608
133 Bull	Will of Elizabeth Daudye 1614
23 Lawson	Will of Anne Barnard 1622
143 Mittings	Will of Thomasine Awcocke 1626
110 Jay	Will of Emma Jay 1628
209 Playford	Will of Ursula Bate 1634
127 Smythe	Will of Margaret Butler 1638
368 Tennant	Will of Ann Downing 1661
227 Spencer	Will of Margaret Duffield 1608
104 Stockdell	Will of Elizabeth Love 1664
69 Sayer	Will of Martha Brereton 1616
70 Battelle	Will of Elizabeth Cady 1650
404 Alden	Will of Alice Harrison 1671
98 Wiseman	Will of Bridget Gladdon 1674
104 Battelle	Will of Alice Brewer 1651
113 Cockes	Will of Blythe Norton 1604
29 Mason	Will of Mary Downing 1619
152 Rowland	Will of Elizabeth Bale 1607
18 Gibson	Will of Elizabeth Allison 1640
238 Tennant	Will of Margaret March 1660
60 Wiseman	Will of Mary Cooper 1674
188 Tennant	Will of Helen Cole, written 1656, proved in 1660
578 Tennant	Will of Ann Hickling 1661
253 Stockdell	Will of Elizabeth Aggs 1666
28 Tennant	Will of Mary Foster 1660
23 Lawson	Will of Anne Barnard 1623
268 Stockdell	Will of Mary Bolton 1666
4 Cockes	Will of Ann Daber, Dauber 1604
139 Alden	Will of Lucy Mancer 1663
499 Alden	Will of Judah Holle 1673
87 Purgold	Will of Ellen Moore 1648
53 Purgall	Will of Joan Ulfe 1631
109 Cally	Will of Elizabeth Payne 1656
332 Calthorpe	Will of Elizabeth Neale 1680
152 Rowland	Will of Elizabeth Bale 1607
236 Styward	Will of Alice Styward 1611
240 Cooney	Will of Mary Stacy 1613
158 Bradstritt	Will of Dorothy Kenninghall 1622
112 Alston	Will of Alice Bridge 1643
24 Alden	Will of Mary Cokler 1670
246 Tennant	Will of Mary Mickleburgh 1660
21 Green	Will of Elizabeth Carre 1639
105 Battelle	Will of Dorothy Bell 1652
85 Spendlove	Will of Bridget Corbett 1627

18 Gibson	Will of Elizabeth Allison 1640
87 Purgold	Will of Ellen Moore 1648
199 Wiseman	Will of Ann Jubes 1675
441 Calthorpe	Will of Judith Hassett 1684
2 Tuck	Will of Susan Harrison 1632
368 Tennant	Will of Ann Downing 1661
47 Amyson	Will of Agnes Gebon 1644
21 Green	Will of Elizabeth Carre 1639
28 Tennant	Will of Mary Tennant 1660
578 Tennant	Will of Ann Hickling 1661
116 Wiseman	Will of Elizabeth Stevenson 1674
29 Mason	Will of Mary Downing 1691
200 Bradstritt	Will of Mary Mendham 1621
445 Tuck	Will of Elizabeth Breese 1633
133 Alston	Will of Elizabeth Fulcher 1643
404 Alden	Will of Alice Harrison 1671
170 Stywarde	Will of Ann Brandon 1611
172 Playford	Will of Ann Bateson 1634
70 Battelle	Will of Elizabeth Cady 1649
34 Stockdell	Will of Thomas Neave 1664

Original Wills (placed on microfilm by NRO)

OW122	Will of Mary Crowe 1677
OW 52	Will of Katharine Dyer 1627
OW 12	Will of Sisley Gunn 1677
OW 405	Will of Mary Browne 1627

Archdeaconry of Norwich Wills (placed on microfilm by NRO)

ANW, 1653-1660, fo.42, no.41	Will of Nicholas Beckett (1653) (MF/RO 325/4)
ANW, 1653-1660, fo.529, no.535	Will of Edward Neale (1658) (MF/RO 326)
ANW, 1638-1639, fo.68, no.54	Will of Christopher Neale (1638) (MF/RO 326)

Probate inventories:

DN/INV 27B/61	Inventory of Ann Brandon 1615-16
DN/INV 63/153	Inventory of Elizabeth Neale 1685

Parish Registers:

PD274/1	Baptism, Lessingham of Anne Corke 3 December 1580
PD274/1	Burial record of Robert Corke 9 December 1584

Microfilm References for Norfolk Records Office:

Alden:MF422; MF421
Amyson:MF416
Alston:MF415
Battelle:MF94
Bowrne:MF78
Bradstritt:MF86
Bull:MF83
Cally:MF416
Calthorpe:MF424
Cockes:MF77
Cooney:MF83
Gibson:MF413; MF412
Green:MF412
Jay:MF89
Lawson:MF86
Mason:MF85
Mittings:MF88
Playford:MF409
Proctor:MF421
Purgall:MF91
Purgold:MF93
Rowland:MF78
Sayer:MF84
Smythe:MF412
Spencer:MF79
Spendlove:MF410
Stockdell:MF419
Styward:MF81
Tennant:MF420
Tuck:MF409;MF/RO21/1,2
Wiseman:MF/RO281/1,2

Prerogative Court of Canterbury
PCC Wills 1655-1659 Piece 249:Aylett, Quire Nos 319-372 fo.352 (Will of George Woods 1655)

Tyne & Wear Archives
Transcript of "The Common Council Book 20th October 1656 to 24thSeptember 1722, 87v"

University of Sheffield Library
The Hartlib Papers
39/2/12A-13B: 12B, 13A BLANK: Letter of John Ferrar to Samuel Hartlib 28 November 1653
https://www.dhi.ac.uk/hartlib

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