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Circle

**Name:** Collette Wheeler

**Primary Supervisor:** Prof. James Knowles

**Secondary Supervisor:** Prof. William Leahy

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**The Cavendish/Talbot/Ogle Circle.**

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# **Chapter 1**

## **Introduction.**

In his book, *Winter Fruit: English Drama 1642-1660*, Dale B.J. Randall ponders the importance of the Cavendish family's influence on literary output during the Civil War and post-Civil War era: "Why might the Cavendishes warrant a chapter of their own? Simply put, we rarely find so many members of a single family concerned with writing drama."<sup>1</sup> While certainly, this is true, when one looks closer into this family you realise there is more at work within the confines of their activities than simply their dramatic writing concerns. What this thesis will attempt to do is take Randall's statement further and look at the reasons why the Cavendish women not only partook in patronage but what they ultimately achieved through their activities. In Randall's work, he focuses on the influence of the Newcastle Cavendishes – William Cavendish, first Duke of Newcastle, his second wife Margaret Lucas Cavendish, and two of his daughters, Elizabeth and Jane. While I am not contradicting Randall's thesis that the concentration of literary endeavours within these two generations is indeed unusual, this thesis will look at further generations and expand upon Randall's original thesis and try to ascertain how this rare familial interest came about.

Randall's focus on William Cavendish and his family suggests that it is only within these members of the Cavendish clan as a whole that we are able to find the extraordinary. What this thesis is arguing is that the Newcastle Cavendishes are in fact the end product of nearly a century's worth of work, planning and scheming, and in fact the real intrigue of this family is not its dramatic production or even the patronage activity that the Cavendishes as a whole provided and thrived at, but the female empowerment and evolution of power that underlies all of it. I will argue how the traces of this family activity can be found all the way through to the actions of the Cavendish family matriarch, Elizabeth Hardwick Barley

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<sup>1</sup> Dale B. J. Randall, *Winter Fruit: English Drama 1642-1660* (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 1995), 313.



Cavendish St Loe Talbot, Countess of Shrewsbury, better known as Bess of Hardwick. The impact and significance of the actions she took during her lifetime can be seen through the generations in the activities of her descendants, though most notably the female ones, perhaps becoming most clear in the literary writings of her great-granddaughters Jane and Elizabeth. I shall, therefore, be arguing that, while Randall's argument that the extraordinary interest of so many members of the Newcastle Cavendish family is worthy of exploration, the extraordinary does not end with their literary output. Ultimately, through the actions of this family as a whole, we are able to see the beginnings of a female, familial evolution of power developing through the patronage ties held by family members during this period.

This thesis will try to understand how they achieved this by examining the importance that patronage had as a form of female empowerment and a means of progression, and how that affected the lives of these sixteenth and seventeenth-century women. It will, therefore, follow the lives of key women linked with the Cavendish family but will focus predominately on the women of what would become the Newcastle line of the family. It will also be continually assessing whether these women were unique in their activities or whether their actions could be read as a model that could be projected on a wider societal scale. The thesis will examine the relationship between female kin and what role those relationships had on the development of women pursuing positions in what was essentially a patriarchal sphere. It will demonstrate how, by looking to their familial past and mimicking and taking inspiration from their female ancestors, the women in this family were remarkably pulling themselves further into the future, using that past inspiration to push their empowerment journey further.

Looking at their lives in this way is a break from the current scholarly approach to the examination of female relationships, which currently seems to only analyse the relationships that women had with their contemporaries, rather than with their past. Gemma Allen looks at the relationship of sisters in her study of the Cooke sisters, while Sara Mendelson and Patricia

Crawford look at the relationships that women have with their female neighbours, their female friends, and their direct female relatives. Nadine Akkerman and Birgit Houben edited a collection of essays that examines the relationships that women had as ladies in waiting with their contemporary aristocratic friends (and enemies). Even people who have studied the Cavendish family haven't been able to look past one generation's effects on the other. In his biography of Bess, David Durant doesn't look past the relationships, or indeed influence, that she had over her family apart from the ones she had with her children and Arbella, the people who came in direct contact with her. S. P. Cerasano, Marion Wynne-Davies, and Margaret J. M. Ezell, whom all looked at the writing of Jane Cavendish and Elizabeth Brackley, suggest there are feministic undertones to their plays and poetry, yet fail to look past their father, whom they credit with their girls' free spirit, and the war, which gave them the freedom they would subsequently desire in marriage.<sup>2</sup> Not one considers an influence from their mother to be worthy of exploration for their unconventional feminist beliefs, let alone any other female ancestors. This limited approach means that scholarly work in this field before now has been lacking any substantial study into the effects that women had in influencing the next generation of women. Writers such as Philippa Gregory have popularised the idea of female generational influence in her fictional retellings of some of England's best known historical events, but the concept has not before now been embraced by academic analysis of these periods.

The importance of analysing the Cavendish women and their inter-generational influence comes from the knowledge that despite unease or conflict that existed between the different generations, each generation is vital in helping the next produce the women within

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<sup>2</sup> Ezell refers to the manuscript volume that the girls produced as "independent, pro-female bias." - Margaret J. M. Ezell, "To Be Your Daughter in Your Pen' The Social Functions of Literature in the Writings of Lady Elizabeth Brackley and Lady Jane Cavendish," in *Readings in Renaissance Women's Drama: Critical, History and Performance 1594-1998*, ed. S.P. Cerasano and Marion Wynne-Davies (London: Routledge, 2005), 253.

them. Bess is all at once looking back at where her family had been before and looking forward to what she wanted them to become. This behaviour continues down the generations and is best encapsulated by Jane and Elizabeth Cavendish in their manuscript of plays and poems. The sisters' collection of poems discuss and celebrate the achievements of their ancestors, with a clear emphasis on their female relatives, honouring their memories by memorialising those achievements in words. The way in which they discuss them shows a clear admiration for their plights (although mildly colder towards Bess, despite everything that she achieved for the family) and thus emphasises how important and influential these ancestors were to them. Yet their plays look to the future and to the lives they will lead after the war is over, when their male relatives have returned from the continent, and when they find themselves to be wives. While Elizabeth was already married at the time of writing the manuscript, she was only by name, and not actually living the life of a wife. Even when discussing their future marriages, the sisters speak about them in a way that is different to their current status quo, suggesting that theirs would be marriages of equals; another look towards the future that they wish to produce.

One could analyse this further, looking at the literary forms through which the girls decided to write. Poems, a writing medium that had in the past been deemed an acceptable form of literary production for women, capture the past achievements of their family. Plays, a medium that would not be widely or popularly used by women until Aphra Behn in the 1670s (though there had been examples of women such as Lady Elizabeth Cary and Margaret Cavendish, Duchess of Newcastle, publishing plays prior to Behn's popularisation, in 1613 and 1650 respectively), were a form that allowed the girls to plot out their future and express in words the world they would like to see unfold in front of them. The juxtaposition in the manuscript, of the past and future always at a hand, is parallel to the same juxtaposition in which the family led their lives – obsessed with the past while constantly looking for ways to

influence and improve the future.

In order to really understand the importance of this family's dynamic and what makes them worthy of study, it is imperative to research them using the correct methods. For the Cavendishes, the idea of family and their patronage endeavours are the only ways to truly grasp what is happening. After reading Juliet Barker's *The Brontës* I understood the advantages of studying a family as a family unit rather than simply by studying them as individual members and was able to spot the small nuances that made this family work the way it did.<sup>3</sup> By understanding them as a family, it meant that I was able to see the patterns and see how the actions of one person affected others. Writing about them as a family as well allows me to emphasise the extent to which they were all intrinsic to each other's lives. While each chapter is set out in terms of the generational progression, each generation is so influential to one another that it is impossible for them to not also seep into each other's chapters, with the matriarch of the whole family, Bess, making appearances in each one. This helps to highlight the idea of the female familial evolution. The constant influence that the past has on the future means that the successes of the future generations would never have been attainable were it not for the foundations laid by the past generations. The past generations are as integral to the success of the future generations as the future generations themselves.

This then brings us to the importance that the patronage activities of the family had on that same evolutionary progression. To understand how the female familial evolution occurs, one also has to understand the other evolution that takes place within the family dynamic. As we see each generation develop female agency further and further, there is also a continual change and furtherance in the activities that the women devote themselves too. Bess, the creator of the dynasty, leads the life of an architectural patron, building houses of great

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<sup>3</sup> Juliet Barker, *The Brontës* (London: Little Brown Book Group, 2014).

magnificence to go along with the dynastic house that she rears to magnificence. Each generation thereafter uses patronage in one way or another to help symbolise their own position within the evolutionary wheel. Mary's patronage of the construction of St John's College's Second Court not only continues the practices of her mother but also symbolises her desire to be an influencer and moulder of the next generation, in the same manner, that she influenced and moulded her niece, Arbella. The Ogle sister's introduction of literary patronage into the Cavendish patronage interests represents their position as the wives who legitimise the family. Bess and Mary's architectural patronage symbolises their need to grow their family's reputation, whereas The Ogle sister's literary patronage symbolises a family who has reached a position where they can begin to partake in the more common practices of an aristocratic family. William's patronage of architecture and literature indicate a man who, while in a position where he can enjoy the patronage of a normal aristocratic man, wants to also rebuild his relations with the past as well as continue to build a grander future for himself and his family. And finally, the complete disregard for family patronage tradition, the Cavendish sisters, like the brand new world they create within *The Concealed Fancies*, demonstrates their desire to begin a brand new tradition of producing for themselves, rather than helping other's produce. For them, their literary output was the only way they could represent their role in the evolutionary wheel. In *The Concealed Fancies* they create a world in which they are equal to their male counterparts and the only way to achieve this, in reality, is to partake in a practice that has never seen women equal to men. By understanding the importance of each of their patronage activities (or lack thereof), one begins to understand how their patronage can tell us a lot more about them than simply their interests. It can tell us about their aspirations, their position, and their political power.

Werner L. Gundersheimer states "Patronage, broadly defined as 'the action of a patron in supporting, encouraging, or countenancing a person, institution, work, art, etc.,"

have been clearly established as one of the dominant social processes of pre-industrial Europe” and certainly something as fundamental to the progression of European social practices is worthy of analysis and study.<sup>4</sup> While ultimately I looked at the contribution of literary patronage through the Cavendish family, initially I came to the subject of patronage through a brief encounter with the Pembroke family and the Wilton Circle. As such my first step into this world was through Michael Brennan’s *Literary Patronage in the English Renaissance: The Pembroke Family*, and David Bergeron *Textual Patronage in English Drama 1570-1640*. While, as stated above, my initial thesis focused on the development of patronage, particularly the women, in the Cavendish family, one particular line in Brennan’s introduction to the Pembroke patronage, really made me consider the idea of patronage in a different manner.

Brennan states that “of no less importance are the characters and the tastes of the patrons themselves, particularly how they chose to interpret their obligations of patronage.”<sup>5</sup> While certainly this definitely speaks true to the patronage that William Cavendish gave those he supported, Brennan’s statement “such patrons must be allowed to develop and mature alongside the culture which they patronise” also encapsulates the patronage granted by the women of the family, both in their individual patronage but also in the grander scheme of the evolution of the patronage that was granted within the family.<sup>6</sup> Brennan’s statement suggests that we are able to interpret and divulge as much information about the patron, as we are those being supported, from the patronage relationship that occurs between the two. This is a relationship I have tried to explore in this thesis. Through Bess’ architectural patronage we can see her determination to create a dynasty, a Cavendish house of great substance and

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<sup>4</sup> Werner L. Gundersheimer, “Patronage in the Renaissance: An Exploratory Approach,” in *Patronage in the Renaissance*, ed. Guy Fitch Lytle and Stephen Orgel (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981), 3.

<sup>5</sup> Michael G. Brennan, *Literary Patronage in the English Renaissance: The Pembroke Family* (London: Routledge, 1988), xi.

<sup>6</sup> Michael G. Brennan, *Literary Patronage in the English Renaissance: The Pembroke Family*, xi.

importance, in both a literal and figurative sense. Mary's patronage divulges her catholic leanings and her determination to remain connected to strong Catholic women of the past, while the Ogle sisters' patronage demonstrates their determination to remain relevant in a period where new nobility appears to be more influential and powerful than the old.

However, what Brennan's statement suggests, and what is proven by the examples of the Cavendish women, is that through patronage, women were granted the same experience in the activity as their male counterparts. In the way we see William's patronage develop between that which he had with Jonson and the later, more in-depth and hands-on approach he had with the likes of Shadwell and Davenant, the women of the family enjoyed the same development. Patronage worked as an activity of importance and possible political motivation, in which women are equal in their experience as men. Indeed, Brennan goes so far as to suggest that while:

social and educational conditions dictated that all major works of the English literary Renaissance were written by men...these same authors were frequently heavily dependent upon women for their literary motivation and encouragement...[they] would have been bereft of much of their inspiration and support if women had not been ready to assume for them the various identities of patroness, sponsor, literary advisor, wife, friend, and mistress.<sup>7</sup>

Women did not only enjoy equality in their patronage activity, but they could also be seen as a more fundamental part of the idea as a whole. Indeed, it is likely that the change from architectural patronage to literary patronage activity that took part in the Cavendish family occurred thanks to the involvement of the Ogle sisters and not William.

In Bergeron's *Textual Patronage in English Drama 1570-1640*, he demonstrates his reasoning behind the idea that women were attractive to authors as a patron, stating that "dramatists wished to become known to the woman, with the implied expectation of some benefit. But many dramatists simply sought recognition, hoping that the patroness' name

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<sup>7</sup> Michael G. Brennan, *Literary Patronage in the English Renaissance: The Pembroke Family*, 8.

would lend a kind of luster to their effort.”<sup>8</sup> However, with more research, I came to find Bergeron’s reasons failing to align with his suggestion that women could bring nothing to a patronage relationship other than their name. Earlier in the chapter, he does state that “in a male-dominated culture, women nevertheless functioned effectively and sometimes compellingly in the drama’s textural economies by offering support for the arts specifically for drama and playwrights” yet fails to elaborate on this anymore, other than the aforementioned importance of a woman’s name.<sup>9</sup> Indeed, Pauline Croft’s *Patronage, Culture and Power – The Early Cecils* contradicts Bergeron’s assessment when it states “the Cecil women played a considerable part in serving the family’s socio-political ends. Close kinship with the two most powerful officers of states under successive monarchs facilitated their participation in the culture and politics of Elizabethan and Jacobean courts.”<sup>10</sup> Women who were in the right environment clearly had the capabilities and opportunities to carve a position within the political spheres for themselves. This then led me to look a bit closer into not only the importance women brought to patronage relationships but what it was a patronage relationship looked like, both for men and women.

Dustin Griffin suggests that with patronage “what is ultimately at stake is the control of high literary culture” and that such acquisitions allow “collectors of luxury goods such as works of art [to] not only possess valuable objects but also accumulate ‘symbolic capital’ that the objects attest to the ‘taste and distinction of their owners.’”<sup>11</sup> While Griffin’s work focuses on the period found in the latter part of this thesis, it does give a sense of what the real

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<sup>8</sup> David M. Bergeron, *Textual Patronage in English Drama 1570-1640* (Hampshire: Ashgate, 2006), 78.

<sup>9</sup> David M. Bergeron, *Textual Patronage in English Drama 1570-1640*, 74.

<sup>10</sup> Pauline Croft, ed., *Patronage, Culture and Power: The Early Cecils* (New Haven, Conn & London: Published for the Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art, The Yale Center for British Art by Yale University Press, 2002), 273.

<sup>11</sup> Dustin Griffin, *Literary Patronage in England 1650-1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 13.



emphasis behind what patronage entailed, that while on the surface it would appear that nobility was acting in a charitable and accommodating fashion, ultimately their intentions were to exert control over society. Patrons had more to gain from the patronage relationship than their respective patronees. They gained political position, literary and societal importance, and it also allowed them to create an image of themselves that wasn't necessarily true. However, Helen Payne in her chapter of *Women and Politics in Early Modern England 1450-1700*, 'Aristocratic Women, Power, Patronage and Family Networks at the Jacobean Court 1603-1625' begins to suggest that when it came to female patronage it wasn't quite as entirely self-serving as Griffin sets out. She states "once appointed to court posts, membership of family service network stretching across the various royal households facilitated the court careers of these women enabling them not only to participate in court politics and patronage for their own purposes but also to promote family interests."<sup>12</sup> Later on, in this introduction, I will discuss the actions of Lady Lucy Russell, Countess of Bedford, and her involvement in returning her family to prominence after the disasters and shame created by her husband Edward Russell, 3<sup>rd</sup> Earl of Bedford during his involvement in the failed Essex Rebellion. Yet, as Payne suggests, their familial obligations likely came because their presence in such circles came about thanks to family connections; predominately male family connections. But, as Payne says, "'family' was a double-edged patriarchal sword for court women: on the one hand, it enabled and facilitated their participation in court service, politics, and patronage, but on the other hand, as most were wives and mothers, pregnancy and other family responsibilities could limit their activity in the sphere" and thus women's patronage practices, in the patriarchal sense, were oft times never fully realised. The

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<sup>12</sup> Helen Payne, "Aristocratic Women, Power, Patronage and Family Networks at the Jacobean Court 1603-1625," in *Women and Politics in Early Modern England*, ed. James Daybell (Hampshire: Ashgate, 2004), 165.

relationship, the intention, and the expectations of those relationships had to be, and were in most cases, very different from those held between men and their patronees.<sup>13</sup>

As shall become apparent in chapter three, through the analysis of the Ogle sisters' patronage ties to Ben Jonson, the patronage relationship between patronee and the female patron could more often be read as a more personal relationship compared to the 'transactional' manner in which male patronage was fulfilled. Payne points out that:

French noblewomen in this period were able to exercise 'a considerable amount of patronage power' because 'the patron-client ties and networks dominating society were informal, fluid, non-institutional and well suited to the exercise of indirect power through personal relationships by women [who] exercised political influence through these ties.' The nature of patron-client networks in England mirrored those of the French nobility, and the personal relationships were the key to the participation of aristocratic women in Jacobean court politics and patronage.<sup>14</sup>

If these patronage relationships held by women were indeed on a much more personal scale than those held by men, it would explain why there is only a scattering of known cases. The lack of documentary evidence, in regards to relationships like Jonson and the Ogles, should not completely discount the circumstantial evidence that exists as it is only this type of evidence that is likely to be found in these types of relationships. While certainly there are cases where women's patronage relationships have worked in a similar fashion to male ones (Lady Anne Clifford, Lucy Russell, Countess of Bedford, even Bess of Hardwick) for which we have clear documentary evidence, we also have the patronage granted by Mary Sidney Herbert, Countess of Pembroke, whose patronage relationships followed closer to the personal relationship precedence displayed by French noblewomen.

Mary set up the Wilton Circle at her house in Wiltshire, which encouraged the writings of such poets as Edmund Spenser, Michael Drayton, and Samuel Daniel. Sidney opened up her

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<sup>13</sup> Helen Payne, "Aristocratic Women, Power, Patronage and Family Networks at the Jacobean Court 1603-1625," 166.

<sup>14</sup> Helen Payne, "Aristocratic Women, Power, Patronage and Family Networks at the Jacobean Court 1603-1625," 170.

home, in the same manner as William Cavendish would during the seventeenth century, and created a place where writers could be free to explore their ideas and collaborate with others. This type of patronage relationship could be the type to be considered as a more personal interaction and is thus less likely to be documented, recorded or specifically noted. As a personal interaction the need for such valiant declarations and thanks of support were not necessarily required as this is essentially a patronage relationship between friends and like-minded people.

Certainly, when considering the patronage relationships held by Mary Sidney Herbert, contrary to my argument that personal patronage relationships didn't necessarily produce dedicatory proof, there is clear evidential proof that demonstrates Sidney's literary patronage involvement. But, while developed on a personal level, Sidney's patronage was different from the patronage provided by the likes of the Ogle sisters. As a writer herself, Mary, like those she supported, was another soul at the "mercy of the muses" and they, in turn, assisted her by acknowledging her role as a fellow writer. To assume that, because Mary got dedicatory acknowledgment, all women who participated in a similar form of patronage would be celebrated in the same way, would be to completely misunderstand and misinterpret the varied facets of the act of patronage. Not all patrons and patronees had literature as a common language. Julie Crawford presents the examples of the dedication given to Mary Sidney Herbert by Samuel Daniel in which he claims "that his 'Rhymes' were a joint project, 'Begotten by [her] hand, and [his] desire.'" <sup>15</sup> Mary Sidney received it because she was in the same world as them and dedications acted as personal exchanges even when found in such public forums.

Ultimately, this thesis is arguing that we have to reconsider our concept of women during this period, including their patronage activities. Our lack of documental evidence

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<sup>15</sup> Julie Crawford, *Mediatix: Women, Politics and Literary Production in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 4.

doesn't mean that the Ogle sister's patronage did not exist, it means we have to develop a better understanding of the forms that female patronage acknowledgment took. This is what I undertake to discover in chapter three. Antoni Maczak makes an interesting point when he says:

it is true that patronage phenomena all over Europe displayed many similarities, especially in their external forms...However, the patron-client relationship seems to have played different, even contrasting roles in various local/regional systems of authority and power. The papers and discussions of the 1984 Munich conference on clientage show how complex those human relationships were, and also that this complexity was rooted not so much in the patron-client (or patron-broker-client) relationship itself, but rather in its socio-political matrix.<sup>16</sup>

Patronage was clearly not a straight forward "money for praise" transaction and took various forms with a myriad of different outcomes. To discount all literary relationships that do not come with accompanying dedications as non-patronage relationships underestimates the varied forms that patronage took. If it could be so different between various local/regional systems, as Maczak suggests, then surely it could also be different not only between genders but also between individuals. As Maczak points out, its complexity was rooted in its socio-political matrix. This means that those who used patronage links as a way of furthering their own political agenda would have a very different experience to those who purely partook in the practice from an aristocratic duty viewpoint, or even from a place of love and desire of whatever it was they were acting as a patron to.

This complexity and the variety of reasons for practice causes us to reconsider women's roles within this period and forces us to try to understand their place in a society so dominated by patriarchy. To get a full understanding of events we need to ascertain the reasoning behind their actions and what caused them to pursue patronage to fulfil their

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<sup>16</sup> Antoni Maczak, "From Aristocratic Household to Princely Court: Restructuring Patronage in the Sixteenth Century," in *Princes, Patronage and Nobility: The Court at the Beginning of the Modern Age c. 1450-1659*, ed. Ronald G. Asch and Adolf M. Birke (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), 315-316.

political desires. My greatest source of knowledge in this respect came from Sara Mendelson and Patricia Crawford's *Women in Early Modern England*, which gave a true, detailed and brilliantly explained insight into the complicated balances that women experienced during this period; fulfilling their roles as daughter and wives, but also fulfilling their own potential and creating a place for themselves in society. They highlight how women could sometimes enjoy the same type of life as their male counterparts: "aristocratic women enjoyed many elements of a common lifestyle with gentleman and nobleman, just as the lives of the poorest women, like their male counterparts, were dominated by the struggle to survive", but while they might share in the same lifestyle, their lives and rights were very different: "yet, for a woman, 'equal participation' was actually denied if she married, since she lost her status as a legal individual through the doctrine of coverture. No adult woman, whether married or single, participated as a citizen in the same way as a man did, with the exception of the queen regnant."<sup>17</sup> Indeed they go on to suggest that "at least in theory, women acknowledged that the powers granted them by their husbands were privileges to be negotiated, not rights to be defended."<sup>18</sup>

This awareness of their condition, of the subjugation that they were expected to accept, explains the motives behind some of their actions: the desire to find themselves, not necessarily equal to men, but at least not in servitude to them. As Dorothy Leigh wrote, "if she bee thy wife she is always too good to be thy servant, and worthy to be thy fellow."<sup>19</sup> Patronage appears to have been one method chosen to achieve this level. Mendelson and Crawford incorporate in one sentence what it is I am trying to achieve through this thesis:

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<sup>17</sup> Sara Mendelson and Patricia Crawford, *Women in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 124-125.

<sup>18</sup> Sara Mendelson and Patricia Crawford, *Women in Early Modern England*, 135.

<sup>19</sup> Sara Mendelson and Patricia Crawford, *Women in Early Modern England*, 135.

Those historians who have discovered with surprise that seventeenth-century wives were ‘mostly not docile and passive’ have taken their bearing from men’s rather than women’s perspective. Women’s writings reveal that their aim was not so much to escape ‘due subjection’ as to preserve self-respect, to avert moral and social disgrace, and to transform their unhappiness to some constructive end.<sup>20</sup>

The Cavendish family function as a perfect example to help reconstruct our idea of women during this period in the vein of those that Mendelson and Crawford set out.

So much work has already been done on dispelling the idea that women were the docile, meek, subjected figures that centuries of male history books have led us to believe them to be, but their methods, their reasoning, and their achievements are a lesser studied subject. We know Lady Anne Clifford fought for the right to claim the family estates that were left by her father to her male cousin, but what was the bigger picture of such actions and what did she achieve by doing it? We know the Cooke sisters were well educated and that they continued to pursue their individual interests and endeavours long into their marriages, but what did they garner from such pursuits? Mary Sidney created and encouraged the Wilton Circle, but what did she gain from the experience. There is example after example of women during this period acting differently from what, for a long time, has been considered the ‘norm’, but the reasons behind their actions have rarely been explored. Mendelson and Crawford’s analysis of women during this period made me consider the Cavendish women’s reasoning much closer.

In her analysis of The Countess of Arundel’s collecting, Elizabeth V. Chew explains how beneficial Alethea Talbot was to her marital family, and writes “Alethea Talbot's effect on the Howards exemplifies the ability of early modern elite women to determine the economic, social and cultural standing of their marital families.”<sup>21</sup> Alethea, the daughter of

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<sup>20</sup> Sara Mendelson and Patricia Crawford, *Women in Early Modern England*, 136.

<sup>21</sup> Elizabeth V. Chew, “The Countess of Arundel and Tart Hall,” in *The Evolution of English Collecting: Receptions of Italian Art in the Tudor Stuart Period*, ed. Edward Chaney (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), 287.

Mary and Gilbert Talbot, the granddaughter of Bess of Hardwick, came from a prominent and important family and married into the Howard family, another, traditionally, prominent and important family.<sup>22</sup> It is unlikely that Mary and Gilbert were using the marriage to push their family up the societal ladder, as Bess had done with Mary when creating a greater allegiance between the Cavendishes and Talbots. Nor was this match a way of securing more funds for the already very wealthy Talbots. As Chew explains, “the substantial dowry she brought to her marriage enabled her husband to reclaim much of the material status his prominent family had lost through two generations of disgrace in the late sixteenth century. He was able to buy back Howard family properties, including Arundel House on the Strand, their primary residence.”<sup>23</sup> In essence, it is thanks to Alethea that the once powerful Howard family were able to rise up in society once again, with the couple being an element of the party accompanying the Elector Palatine Frederick V and Princess Elizabeth Stuart to Heidelberg on their marriage in 1613. We see the same situation occur in the marriage of Lucy Russell, Countess of Bedford and the actions she took to bring favour and importance back to her marital family. This provides us with some indication that women could have had a much larger role to play in their marriages than simply being wives. Indeed, Thomas Howard’s last will and testament even alludes to the important role that Alethea played in restoring his family’s reputation. As Chew points out: “Language used by Lord Arundel in his final will indicated his gratitude to his wife ‘who brings to our poor family the best means of substance.’”<sup>24</sup>

I used Gemma Allen’s *The Cooke Sisters – Education, piety and politics in early modern England* as a model for educated women in this period. Allen points out that,

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<sup>22</sup> The Howards had fallen into disgrace after Alethea’s husband, Thomas’, father Philip and grandfather Thomas, were involved in plots to overthrow Elizabeth I.

<sup>23</sup> Elizabeth V. Chew, “The Countess of Arundel and Tart Hall,” 287.

<sup>24</sup> Elizabeth V. Chew, “The Countess of Arundel and Tart Hall,” 287.

throughout history, the way that the Cooke sisters have been studied could be an indication as to why women studies have not progressed in the same way men's have. She says:

The sisters have long received brief individual mention in the biographies of their male relatives. The manuscript 'Anonymous Life' of Burghley, written within five years of his death and possibly by his secretary Michael Hicks, described Mildred as a 'wise & vertuous Gentlewoman...excellently lerned.' In the early seventeenth century, William Camden characterised the sisters primarily in terms of their father, Sir Anthony Cooke, 'whom having brought up in Learning, both Greek, and Latin, above their Sex, he married [them] to men of good Account.' In the first biography of Anne's son Francis Bacon, published in 1657 by his chaplain, William Rawley, Anne was described as a 'choice lady, and eminent for piety, virtue, and learning; being exquisitely skilled, for a woman, in the Greek and Latin tongues.'<sup>25</sup>

It is, of course, impossible to get a clear image or idea of how women were when we can only view them through their relationships with their male kin. However, through Allen's analysis, like Mendelson and Crawford's before, it allowed me to see the women, not only in their own right but as influential members of early modern England's patriarchal society. Like Juliet Barker's book about the Brontës, where she also tried to understand them as a family unit, it becomes apparent that when considering them like this, one can begin to understand them better as individuals. While her study focused on the relationships held between women over one generation, where mine looks at the relationships held over a total of four generations, Allen's book gives us a good example of how women interacted, and how, while looking out for their own best intentions, they were, whether consciously or unconsciously, also looking out for the good of their female kin as well.

Allen retells how "Mildred's marriage was influential in determining her sisters' matches, for in February 1553 Anne Cooke was married to Cecil's friend, Nicholas Bacon, as his second wife, after a proposal from Walter Haddon had been rejected." Not only did she assist in providing a good match for her sister, she also "on the accession of Mary I, Anne was instrumental in securing pardons for her husband and her brother-in-law, William Cecil,

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<sup>25</sup> Gemma Allen, *The Cooke Sisters: Education, piety and politics in Early Modern England* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2013), 4.



through her service to the new Queen.”<sup>26</sup> While certainly those pardons were beneficial to herself, and her husband and her brother-in-law, one wonders whether she would have petitioned for a pardon for Nicholas Bacon had he not been married to her sister. She did not simply use her influence with the Queen to further her own agenda; she also used it to the benefit of her female kin.

Allen’s and Mendelson and Crawford’s books, therefore, opened my eyes to a new idea of women during this period and helped spur on the alteration that I made to my original thesis idea of looking at the women of the Cavendish family purely through their patronage activities. What began to become more interesting to me was not simply their patronage work but what they achieved through it and how, directly or indirectly, they used it in favour and support of their female kin as a way to fight against their shared female condition. As Johann P. Sommerville sets out in his introduction to *Patriarchia and Other Writings*:

In seventeenth-century England, social theory – and practice – gave fathers and husbands very wide authority over their wives and children. People said that fatherly (or patriarchal) authority was derived from God. The father, they claimed, was the head of the family according to the divine law of nature; his wife, children, and servants owed him obedience by the will of God himself.<sup>27</sup>

It would, however, appear that there were a number of contemporary examples of women, despite what divinity and the behavioural books of the time deemed was an acceptable way for them to act, who did not subscribe to such restrictions.

Amy Louise Erikson gives an example of a clear violation of the common law rule of coverture “whereby a married woman’s property was technically considered to belong to her

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<sup>26</sup> Gemma Allen, *The Cooke Sisters: Education, piety and politics in Early Modern England*, 2.

<sup>27</sup> Sir Robert Filmer, *Patriarchia and Other Writings*, ed. Johann P. Sommerville (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), ix.

husband.”<sup>28</sup> She documents the story of the widowed mother of the autobiographer Alice Thronton who “when she came to live with her daughter and son-in-law in Yorkshire she wrote her name on all of her own goods. This turned out to have been a good idea in 1668 when her son-in-law died heavily in debt. When the appraisers arrived, *all* of the goods in the house appeared to have belonged to the deceased mother-in-law.”<sup>29</sup> Erikson goes on to state that “the fact that inventories for married women are virtually non-existent does give the impression that half of the female population who were married at any given time owned nothing. The legal fiction of coverture is reinforced by the surviving documents.”<sup>30</sup> While women legally had no rights, it is clear that they appear to have found ways to circumvent the legal system to ensure security for themselves when found in situations where they could find no male security. Women might have generally adhered to patriarchal norms but demonstrated strategies which enabled them to avoid such constraints when necessary. Erikson also points out that “Women favoured female legatees, whether daughters, granddaughters, nieces, in-laws, or friends, in a small but significant way. It is not unusual to find a widow whose husband had favoured his sons in his will, using her own will to try to equalize their daughter’s portion.”<sup>31</sup> According to Erikson, women appear to have tried to do as much with the possessions that they had to ensure their daughters and other female kin did not suffer too much under patriarchal rule.

Sara Mendelson disagrees with this notion, however, in *The Mental World of Stuart Women* when she writes “although Stuart women suffered a wide range of disabilities

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<sup>28</sup> Amy Louise Erikson, “Possession – and the Other One-Tenth of the Law: Assessing Women’s Ownership and Economic Rules in Early Modern England,” *Women’s History Review*, Vol. 6 No. 3 (1997): 370.

<sup>29</sup> Amy Louise Erikson, “Possession – and the Other One-Tenth of the Law: Assessing Women’s Ownership and Economic Rules in Early Modern England,” 371.

<sup>30</sup> Amy Louise Erikson, “Possession – and the Other One-Tenth of the Law: Assessing Women’s Ownership and Economic Rules in Early Modern England,” 371.

<sup>31</sup> Amy Louise Erikson, “Possession – and the Other One-Tenth of the Law: Assessing Women’s Ownership and Economic Rules in Early Modern England,” 373.

because of their sex, their knowledge of the fact did no mould them into a cohesive group. Class interests are certainly more obvious than a sense of gender solidarity among seventeenth-century women.” She does concede that there are a few exceptions, such as the Countess of Warwick who conducted “charitable missions among the ‘poor widows’ and ‘weeding women’ of her neighbourhood, and her diary reveals a sympathy with their mental outlook as well as with their appalling material condition” but according to Erikson’s analysis of wills during the period this appears to have been common practice.<sup>32</sup> Erikson writes, “widows gave more bequests to the poor, most of whom were other widows, than any other will makers.”<sup>33</sup> Indeed when discussing ladies-in-waiting Nadine Akkerman and Birgit Houben write “by creatively manipulating their gender as a tool for political propaganda...leading court women were able to transcend the alleged limitations of their sex. In doing so, they became powerful players, sometimes individually but more frequently collectively.”<sup>34</sup> We can therefore acknowledge that there was more awareness of and action against patriarchal constraints amongst women than some like Mendelson would allow for and that women in the period did, in fact, try to improve their situation.

Julie Crawford suggests that one way that women did this was by using all varying forms of literary production to further the female cause. She writes:

when Mary Wroth invoked Susan Herbert and Mary Sidney Herbert in her romance, she was certainly imagining a same-sex ‘concentrate’ or loyalty and political prudence particularly to women, and useful for the purpose of political critique.’ But she was also evoking the alliance between their families more generally and attempting to shore up their commitment to a political cause.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Sara Heller Mendelson, *The Mental World of Stuart Women: Three Studies* (Brighton: Harvester, 1987), 5

<sup>33</sup> Amy Louise Erikson, “Possession – and the Other One-Tenth of the Law: Assessing Women’s Ownership and Economic Rules in Early Modern England,” 373.

<sup>34</sup> Nadine Akkerman and Brigit Houban, ed., *The Politics of Female Households: Ladies in Waiting Across Early Modern Europe* (Boston: Brill, 2014), 1.

<sup>35</sup> Julie Crawford, *Mediatix: Women, Politics and Literary Production in Early Modern England*, 7.

The furthering of a female agenda, both in the sense of a familial pursuance and political, appears to have been of wider importance than has previously been considered.

Crawford goes on to state that thanks to Phyllis Rackin's claim that misogyny was 'everywhere', we, as modern historians, now find ourselves "in unintended ways, [encouraged] to find it everywhere", going on to suggest that we then limit ourselves when reading women's literature during this period with the view of them merely as examples of a female attempt to "'find a voice' in print, [not allowing for us] to make space for such a phenomenon as 'the woman writer'" concluding with the fact that "[women's] motivations for writing and publishing literary texts were as varied as those of men."<sup>36</sup> It is with this point that I find myself disagreeing with Crawford, who appears to overlook the wider implications involved when analysing female literary production during this period. While certainly she is correct in pointing out that not every woman who wrote literature was doing so as a way to assert female presence, or even that every woman wrote for political means, with women like Mary Sidney standing out as an example of a woman who appears to have enjoyed writing simply for the sake of writing, and if anything, used her literary efforts to complete her brother's work, rather than attempting to find a voice of her own. But of course, in a period where women were discouraged by behavioural books to speak publically, written or aurally, any form of female literary production had political connotations. More importantly, however, by ignoring, or at least relegating the purpose behind some women's decision to write as simply being an enjoyable pastime, it then gives way to allow those who did use writing for political means and to indeed find their own female voice in a patriarchal world, to be ignored and neglected.

This is what brought me onto the Cavendish family, who appear to have been a great example that disproves the type of female patron/client relationship that Crawford describes.

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<sup>36</sup> Julie Crawford, *Mediatix: Women, Politics and Literary Production in Early Modern England*, 2-3.

The relationship that developed between the Ogle sisters and Ben Jonson grossly differs from the example that Crawford sets with Lucy Harington Russell, with Jonson appearing to be as interested in the women as his patrons, as he was with the men. Indeed, Jonson even used the work that he produced during the time he was supported by William Cavendish, to honour William's female predecessors, his mother Katherine and aunt Jane. William's daughter, Jane, and Elizabeth, even went on to write poems and plays, an outlet through which they attempted to make sense of the dangerous and different world they found themselves in during the Civil War. The later female generations of the Cavendish family, the ones who dealt exclusively with literature production, were the very opposite to the women that Crawford described in the introduction to her book. Not only were they the intended patrons of writers, but they also wrote with every intention of attempting to find their own female voice.

This then led me to reconsider education for women during this period and whether that too differs from the stereotypical view of the type of education that women received and what that can tell us about how these women operated. As D'Arne Welch points out:

most medieval thought was not favourable to the education of women if it considered the subject at all. Dominant belief about women included their irrationality and inconstancy, and only the nun, because of her special position, asexual and virginal, was deemed to be 'freed' from such inherent feminine traits. Eileen Powers makes the point that 'serious treatises often express doubt whether it is wise to allow any woman except nuns to have learning.'<sup>37</sup>

However, given the influx of educated men during the early modern period, it would only be natural that the acknowledgment of the importance of education would filter down to some women. J. H. Hexter observes:

beginning sometime in the reign of Henry VIII, the scions of the titled nobility of England, swarm into those citadels of clerkly training, the English university. Greys,

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<sup>37</sup> D'Arne Welch, "Sixteenth-Century Humanism and the Education of Women," *Paedagogica Historica: International Journal of the History of Education*, No. 24 (1984): 241.

Brandons, Mannesers, Cecils, and Devereux all appear on the college registers. Between 1525 and the end of the century six peers of the Howard family alone matriculate at Oxford or Cambridge. In his years at Cambridge as tutor and master of Trinity, Archbishop Whitgift supervised the education of Herberts, Norths, Cliffords, Cavendishes, and Zouches. Among the great crown servants who surround Elizabeth – the Cecils, the Bacons, Walsingham, Smith, Coke, Hatton, Sydney – there is scarcely one without a university education.<sup>38</sup>

And certainly, it would appear, this appreciation and acknowledgment of education did persuade some men that education was as vital in women's lives as it was in men's. Gemma Allen's book on the Cooke sisters perhaps gives the greatest insight into the type of education that could have been granted to aristocratic women and what they were able to achieve armed with that education. As Allen suggests:

the sister's education deserves closer attention than the imprecise panegyric it has so far received since it sheds light both on their distinctive experience and on wider issues of early modern female learning. Girls in this period were educated in the home, and therefore the extant source material through which to investigate their educational provisions is scarcer than that generated by their male contemporaries in scholarly institutions.

Thus, as Allen goes on to say, "scholarship on early modern education has thus long concentrated on the prescriptive texts, written by male pedagogues"<sup>39</sup> As the majority of female education took place in family homes or under the tutelage of their parents, the documentary of evidence on female education is sparse at best.

Thanks to this form of tutelage, understanding of what female education actually consisted of has been limited, and scholarly research into it has been difficult, with the idea of it either being ignored entirely, or work on the subject consisting of a great deal of 'reading between the lines', in an attempt to come to some form of assumption. In fact, the belief that women did not partake in extensive education is not only supported by its lack of evidential proof, but by rhetoric and opinion of the time, as Josephine Kamm points out when she says

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<sup>38</sup>J. H. Hexter, "The Education of the Aristocracy in the Renaissance," *The Journal of Modern History*, Vol. 22, No. 1 (March 1950): 4-5.

<sup>39</sup> Gemma Allen, *The Cooke Sisters: Education, piety and politics in Early Modern England*, 6.

that in “*The Mother’s Legacie to her Unborne Child*, written in 1622, the author, Mrs Elizabeth Josceline, is concerned that the coming child, if a girl, should be taught no more than to read the Bible, to write, and to acquire the attributes of a virtuous woman and good housewife.”<sup>40</sup> If women themselves of this era were of such a persuasion, it would be easy to come to the conclusion that educated women were a rarity during this period. However, like the behavioural books discussed later, such accounts wouldn’t have to exist unless there was a fear that they needed to be stopped, so while Elizabeth Josceline writes condemning female scholars, it is likely she felt she had to, not because there wasn’t a lot of women seeking and receiving education, but that, in fact, there was a rising amount of women trying to secure an education akin to their male relatives. Indeed, James Daybell’s study of female letter writing during this period, which he believes “represents a sophisticated and layered source for the study of female education and literacy”, suggests that there were a large number of women who clearly demonstrated that they were at the very least literate, and could read and write.<sup>41</sup>

He states that:

a preliminary survey of such repositories in England, Wales, Scotland, and Ireland, for the period to 1642, reveals in excess of 10,000 individual letters sent by women. For the Tudor period alone, a comprehensive search of available archival materials produced over 650 individual women who conducted correspondence between 1540 and 1603, and a corpus of more than 3000 manuscript letters.<sup>42</sup>

This, therefore, supports the suggestion that rather than the lack of primary evidence of female education meaning that women during the period were not educated, that female education merely took a different form to men's and was not as formal in deliverance, but nonetheless existed and was vital to a women's progression through life.

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<sup>40</sup> Josephine Kamm, *Hope Deferred – Girls Education in English History* (London: Methuen & Co., 1965), 54.

<sup>41</sup> James Daybell, “Interpreting Letters and Reading Script: Evidence for Female Education and Literacy in Tudor England,” *History of Education*, Vol. 34, No. 6 (6 November 2005): 715.

<sup>42</sup> James Daybell, “Interpreting Letters and Reading Script: Evidence for Female Education and Literacy in Tudor England,” 698.

Of course, like men, the degrees of education differed. As James Daybell states “for the majority of the upper classes the locus of female education was the ‘domestic sphere’ or household: the quality of educational provisions was uneven and largely dependent on favourable parental attitudes.” Jane Stevenson seconds this when she wrote:

Education-for-rule aside, a classical education did not have, for women, the function of marking social divisions which it did have for men. Throughout the early modern period, a male of the rank of ‘gentlemen’ or above would normally be Latinate, but his wife or daughter might be anything from a Mildred Cooke to functionally illiterate, without this having any effect on her status. Therefore, women’s education was not directly a function of class, but rather, even within the elite, dependent on the educational theories, social context, and aspirations of her immediate family, particularly those of her father.<sup>43</sup>

Traditionally for aristocratic girls, needlework, singing, dancing, playing music, cookery and household management were key elements to their educational upbringing. This is, however, where the road of education ends for some women. These attributes would not only enhance their marriage prospects by helping them to appear more attractive to a suitor but would also help them, practically, once married and managing a household or estate of their own. When Josephine Kamm describes a woman’s typical day, she says "the older women did fine needlework, crewel-work- and silk-spinning; while the younger ones practiced singing and played on the lute, zither and other musical instruments. And they all found time to practice cookery, elementary surgery, and the distillation of health-giving waters"<sup>44</sup> This gives us a view of the types of activities most women partook in on a day to day basis. Norma McMullen supports this argument that women were set less testing educational tasks when she presents the general female educational system in more detail. She explains how "a daughter of the gentry received her education in the seclusion of a private household. She spent her earliest years learning the essentials of moral behaviour and religion in her own

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<sup>43</sup> Jane Stevenson, “Women and Classical Education in the Early Modern Period,” in *Pedagogy and Power: Rhetorics of Classical Learning*, ed. Yun Lee Too and Niall Livingstone (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 109.

<sup>44</sup> Josephine Kamm, *Hope Deferred – Girls Education in English History*, 47.



home. One would assume that the girls were also given their first instruction in reading as soon as they were physically and mentally capable of taking instruction.”<sup>45</sup> She states that once girls reached an appropriate age one of two things would happen, they would either be kept at home and taught by a governess or various tutors with their own specialty, or she would be sent to the “home of some other gentle family to be brought up” as was the case with Ann and Frances Courtney “who, when their mother died in 1620, were sent to Westerham, Kent, and placed in the home of ‘a gentlewoman whose name was Isley, to be taught to work [probably needlework] and write and dance, and play upon some sorts of musick.”<sup>46</sup> This type of education for women was not universal and there were those who believed that a humanist education was as appropriate for women as it was for men. While for men a classical education was a way of preparing them for future political offices, humanists saw female education as a way to ensure the piety and morality of women. As D’arne Welch writes:

A humanist classical education became suitable for women by helping to secure and protect that very feature, that “noble gift” most desired in her by humanists and opponents of the education of women alike. The argument that education was dangerous and unsuitable for women was thus refuted in humanist philosophy by providing a morally based curriculum, with the humanists carefully emphasizing the moral side of their educational prescriptions for women.<sup>47</sup>

Daybell supports this through his analysis of letter writing, suggesting we can further our understanding of the different forms of education that were provided to women through their letters. He states:

the use of letters as evidence of female literacy clearly privileges ‘literate’ groups, rather than representing a ‘universal measurement of literacy in the way that signatures are capable of population-wide comparison of literacy rates differentiated by social

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<sup>45</sup> Norma McMullen, “The Education of English Gentlewomen 1540-1640,” *History of Education*, 6:2 (1977): 93.

<sup>46</sup> Norma McMullen, “The Education of English Gentlewomen 1540-1640,” 93.

<sup>47</sup> D’Arne Welch, “Sixteenth-Century Humanism and the Education of Women,” 247.

status, gender, chronological period and geographical location; it does, however, permit a more qualitative examination of hierarchies of literacy.<sup>48</sup>

Jamie Goodrich points out that Anthony Grafton and Lisa Jardine describe female education as being “purely decorative”; a way to impress or entice a husband.<sup>49</sup> Yet there are numerous examples of women that used education for so much more. The Venetian ambassador Nicholo Molin described Arbella Stuart’s scholarly abilities when he wrote: “she speaks fluently Latin, Italian, French, Spanish, reads Greek and Hebrew, and is always studying.”<sup>50</sup> Yet, for Arbella, a potential successor to Queen Elizabeth I’s throne, her position and potential was surely enough to entice a husband and she did not need education as an extra feather in her hat. Goodrich suggests a more important use for her education when he disputes Grafton and Jardine’s ‘decorative’ argument: “more recently, scholars have implicitly offered another response to this question by demonstrating that Englishwomen composed translations that transformed their knowledge of foreign languages into a source of political agency with public applications.” He goes on to highlight a feminist trail of thought that suggests “Lumley’s freehold reworking of Euripides *Iphigenia at Aulis*...[was a] political commentary on the execution of Lady Jane Grey.”<sup>51</sup>

D’Arne Welch also disputes Jardine and Grafton’s claims when she sets out the reasoning behind female education from the humanist point of view. She says:

they held all women to be rational and therefore capable of benefitting from a humanist, bookish education. They believed that a humanist education would protect a woman's virtue by dispelling ignorance and that such an education, by making the woman a more

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<sup>48</sup> James Daybell, “Interpreting Letters and Reading Script: Evidence for Female Education and Literacy in Tudor England,” 698.

<sup>49</sup> Jamie Goodrich, “Returning to Lady Lumley’s Schoolrooms: Euripides, Isocrates and the Paradox of Women Learning,” *Renaissance and the Reformation*, (Fall 2012): 97.

<sup>50</sup> David N. Durant, *Arbella Stuart: A Rival to the Queen* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1978), 156.

<sup>51</sup> Jamie Goodrich, “Returning to Lady Lumley’s Schoolrooms: Euripides, Isocrates and the Paradox of Women Learning,” 98.

moral and hence wiser person, would also make her a better mother and wife. The humanist' views on the condition of the uneducated woman and the harm she could do, served to further increase their awareness of the necessity of education for women.<sup>52</sup>

While certainly it is fair to say that “the education of the wife was seen almost solely in terms of her increased ability to provide worthy companionship for her husband” with More saying “an educated wife would be...‘a lifetime companion...ever agreeable never a trouble or a burden”” that does not mean that just because women were granted an education for those reasons, that they were the only reason they used their education for.<sup>53</sup> In fact, Anna Maria van Schurman used her education to argue the case for female education. She wrote fourteen theses in favour of women studying:

The first three come from natural philosophy and might be summarized rather simplistically as making the point that women are human beings...the next two highlight the distinction between men and women not from a biological but from a social standpoint...argument six resembles the first three as a claim about women’s capability for advanced learning, but the reasoning derives from theology since all Christians are meant to study and reflect on the Bible...from thesis seven on, Schurman argues for the moral and intellectual virtues that derive from learning.<sup>54</sup>

Van Schurman’s work could perhaps be described as the outcome of education that men feared: the empowerment and newfound ability to proclaim to the masses how women could rectify their shared condition.

Sarah Gwyneth Ross takes this argument and goes even further. In *The Birth of Feminism* she states:

in the last decades, scholars have come to recognize that from the fifteenth century onwards "pro-woman" arguments took an increasingly central place in European literature. In 1991 Constance Jordan even offered us ‘Renaissance feminism’ as a

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<sup>52</sup> D’Arne Welch, “Sixteenth-Century Humanism and the Education of Women,” 242.

<sup>53</sup> D’Arne Welch, “Sixteenth-Century Humanism and the Education of Women,” 250.

<sup>54</sup> Joyce L. Irwin, “Introduction,” in *Whether a Christian Woman Should Be Educated and Other Writings from Her Intellectual Circle*, written by Anna Maria van Schurmann, trans. and ed. Joyce L Irwin (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1998), 11.

conceptual category for understanding the defenses of female dignity and capability that poured out of European presses during the Renaissance era.<sup>55</sup>

Ross' work did make me reconsider my initial ideas of women during this period; rather than women becoming enlightened thanks to education, that perhaps women were already enlightened, and used their new found access to education as a way to accomplish their enlightened vision. She states that women used their family networks, the place where they usually were granted their education from, as a way to get their ideas out into the public. She writes "By publishing their works within the safety of family networks and deploying familial metaphor when approaching male patrons, women themselves used the 'intellectual family' as a rhetorical device for making their novel status as scholars and authors appealing to contemporary culture."<sup>56</sup> Yet Ross goes on to say that despite the evolution from educated women being an actuality within the late fifteenth and sixteenth century, who used their familial networks as a way to ensure their words were heard, to being self-serving, independently standing women, was a quick one. Ross states "By the seventeenth century, there was a strong tradition of Italian and English women humanists. The learned woman was no longer a startling figure, and the father or father-patron became less crucial as a means to secure legitimacy."<sup>57</sup> Such a quick evolution further confirms that women were already aware of the unequal lives that they held compared to their male counterparts and only required the necessary tools to make their equal statures a reality. Contrary to what the behavioural books predicted, education did not create unruly women, it merely awoke them.

This evolution is one that appears to have taken place within the Cavendish family, prevalent with the women, either born into or married into it, who came after the matriarchy of Elizabeth Cavendish (Bess of Hardwick). This evolution was one of the reasons I thought

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<sup>55</sup> Sarah Gwyneth Ross, *The Birth of Feminism: Woman as Intellect in Renaissance Italy and England* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2009), 1.

<sup>56</sup> Sarah Gwyneth Ross, *The Birth of Feminism: Woman as Intellect in Renaissance Italy and England*, 2.

<sup>57</sup> Sarah Gwyneth Ross, *The Birth of Feminism: Woman as Intellect in Renaissance Italy and England*, 3.

the Cavendish family were so interesting to study. At the start, my only real knowledge involved the bookends of my thesis, Bess and the two Cavendish sisters, Jane and Elizabeth. In fact, for a while, it was only these two that I really felt I had anything to talk about, not only because they are the most documented, but because the vast difference in the way in which they use their position and abilities really emphasised the idea of female evolution that I wanted to explore. However, once one looks closer at the generations between Bess and the Cavendish sisters, one could acknowledge the progression that was taking place. Thus I came to a realisation that my thesis was going in two different ways. While I was always looking forward to the next evolution and the next progression, I was always looking back, analysing what had come before and ascertaining how that was influencing the future. That was also the case when doing the research for my thesis. I was using modern textbooks for my secondary reading, which were making modern theories and conclusion on things that happened in the past, while still looking at contemporary manuscripts, pamphlets and books and again making retrospective conclusions. The contemporary materials informed my modern materials, and my modern materials informed my contemporary materials. Reading feminist theory allowed me to read the Cavendish sisters' manuscript in a different way to how I would have read it without it. In the same way, reading William Cavendish's letters to his wife Elizabeth provides a greater understanding of Court life and his feelings about it, than can be garnered from reading Trease's *Portrait of a Cavalier*. There was a great deal of to-and-froing when writing this thesis: Looking forward, but never forgetting what was behind. And it would appear that this is what the women of the Cavendish family did during their own lifetimes and it determined how they lived those lives.

The beginning of any study into the women of the Cavendish family during this period has to start with its matriarch, Bess of Hardwick. While certainly David Durant's biography gives a good indication as to the events of her life and some sense of who she was

and where she fitted into early modern English society, when researching Bess the best way to find out who she is, is not through biographies, but by understanding what she did and how she spent her life. Bess poured herself into her life's activities and you can tell more about the person she was by analysing letter and newsletter writing, as well as early modern architecture than you could simply by reading biographies and reading through her letters. By understanding the environment in which she operated one can develop a greater understanding of not only who she was, but also why she did what she did.

When considering her letter writing and newsletter correspondence, James Daybell's essay "Suche neues as on the Quenes hie ways we have mett': the News and Intelligence Networks of Elizabeth Talbot, Countess of Shrewsbury (c. 1527-1608)" gives an in-depth view of Bess' intelligence activities and acknowledges the position she created for herself with it. Daybell discusses Professor Harris' work in which she "aligns herself with feminist theorist who have sought to re-conceptualise the 'domestic' as 'political'."<sup>58</sup> He elaborates on that idea when he states that, "[t]he letters [Elizabeth, Countess of Shrewsbury] received throughout her life illustrate her interest in areas of news traditionally viewed as a 'male', such as parliamentary business, war, armed rebellions and naval preparations."<sup>59</sup> Bess would not have been able to physically place herself into these spheres in person; however, with the ability to transmit this information through letter form, it ensured that, while she was not necessarily part of these spheres, she was thoroughly informed about them. In a society where knowledge was power, that certainly put her in a profitable position. He continues:

the centralisation of the government may have reduced the role of the great noble households as political institutions, which performed many of the function – administrative, judicial, patronage and military, later assumed by the State a process that limited the opportunities for women as members of aristocratic households significant political influence was relatively short-lived: the late seventeenth century

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<sup>58</sup> James Daybell, "Introduction: Rethinking Women and Politics in Early Modern England," in *Women and Politics in Early Modern England*, ed. James Daybell (Hampshire: Ashgate, 2004), 2.

<sup>59</sup> James Daybell, "Introduction: Rethinking Women and Politics in Early Modern England," 6.

the growth of Parliament and new bureaucratic institutions and the emergence of political parties 'drained power and resources from king, court and patronage networks, the institution that facilitated aristocratic women's political activity. The early modern period, therefore, marked the epoch of women's political influence.<sup>60</sup>

Daybell continues to examine the importance of letter writing in the journal *History of Education*, in his essay "Interpreting letters and reading script: evidence for female education and literacy in Tudor England", suggesting that the contents of letters allow us a greater understanding of not only a women's positioning in society but also her education.<sup>61</sup> Sara Jayne Steen and Barbara Kiefer Lewalski both also analyse the importance of letters when examining the life of Bess' granddaughter Lady Arbella Stuart, with Lewalski describing them as being an example of "rhetoric of disguise and defiance."<sup>62</sup> Understanding the importance of letter writing allows us to truly understand why it was such an influential pastime and how Bess was able to utilise it in such a powerful way.

The same can be said when considering Bess' other interests. Malcolm Air's *The Making of the English Country House 1500-1640* and *The Tudor & Jacobean Country House: A Building History*, along with Nicholas Cooper's *House of the Gentry* gives us an insight into not only what could be achieved through early modern architecture patronage, but goes into specifics as to what women would have achieved through this form of patronage.<sup>63</sup> Jeremy Musson's *How to Read a Country House* and Thomas Woodcock and John Martin's *Heraldry in National Trust Houses* provide in-depth rule books as to what specific elements

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<sup>60</sup> James Daybell, "Introduction: Rethinking Women and Politics in Early Modern England," 3.

<sup>61</sup> James Daybell, "Interpreting Letters and Reading Script: Evidence for Female Education and Literacy in Tudor England".

<sup>62</sup> Barbara Kiefer Lewalski, *Writing Women in Jacobean England* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1993), 67. See also Sara Jayne Steen, "Introduction," in *The Letters of Lady Arbella Stuart*, ed. Sara Jayne Steen. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994).

<sup>63</sup> See Malcolm Airs, *The Making of the English Country House* (London: The Architecture Press, 1975) and Nicholas Cooper, *Houses of the Gentry, 1480-1680* (New Haven: Published for The Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art in Association with English Heritage by Yale University Press, 1999).

of a house mean and what they mean to the builder.<sup>64</sup> More specific to Bess herself, Philip Riden and Dudley Fowkes' *Hardwick: A Great House and its Estate* and Pamela Kettle's *Oldcotes: The Last Mansion built by Bess of Hardwick* analyse in depth the homes most associated with the Bess legacy.<sup>65</sup> Musson's book along with Riden/Fowkes' and Kettle's makes reading the process of her building activities and the imagery in Bess' homes much easier to understand and allows a greater understanding of what the houses meant not only to Bess but to society as a whole. These books are also useful when considering William Cavendish's architectural pursuits, allowing us to analyse the similarities and differences between Bess and her grandson, and what those differences and similarities tell us about their relationship and the relationship of the family as a whole.

When it came to the next generations of women in the Cavendish family, however, there aren't quite as many texts written specifically about them and their attributes and interests. It, therefore, means that to understand them one has to look further afield, analysing others of a similar temperament and disposition and using them as models while also paying close attention to their related manuscript sources. The one exception to this, of course, being Arbella Stuart, whose influence rivalled that of Bess' and is represented in a number of books documenting the lives of early modern English women. Sarah Gristwood's *Arbella: England's Lost Queen* and Phyllis Margaret Handover's *Arbella Stuart, Royal Lady of Hardwick and cousin to King James* work well as biographies documenting her life's events, while Sarah Jayne Steen's introduction to her edited *The Letters of Lady Arbella Stuart*, gives

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<sup>64</sup> See Jeremy Musson, *How To Read a Country House* (London: Ebury, 2005) and Thomas Woodcock and John Martin, *Heraldry in National Trust Houses* (London: National Trust, 1999).

<sup>65</sup> See Philip Riden and Dudley Fowkes, *Hardwick: A Great House and Its Estates* (Chichester: Phillimore, 2009) and Pamela Kettle, *Oldcotes: The Last Mansion built by Bess of Hardwick*, (Cardiff: Merton Priory Press, 2000).



both a detailed look into not only the life but also the mind of this could be Queen.<sup>66</sup>

However, when it comes to the other women of the next generation, one is only given a slither of insight into the minds of Mary Cavendish Talbot, Countess of Shrewsbury, and the two Ogle sisters Catherine Ogle Cavendish and Jane Ogle Talbot. For Mary, Peter Linehan's edited *St John's College, Cambridge: A History*, A. F. Torry's *Founders and Benefactors of St John's College, Cambridge: With Notes, chiefly biographical*, and Sara Jayne Steen essay "The Cavendish-Talbot Women Playing a High Stake Game" show us a woman who is conscious of her religious identity as well as her place as a descendant of her mother, and how these different aspects affect her outlook on life.<sup>67</sup> For Catherine and Jane, it is books on their heritage and patronage efforts that demonstrate who they were and where their importance to this thesis lies. Sir Bart Henry Asgill Ogle's *Ogle and Bothal: or a History of the Baronies of Ogle, Bothal, and Hepple, and of the Families of the Ogle and Bertram, who held possession of those Baronies and other Property in the County of Northumberland and elsewhere, etc.*, as well as Arthur Collins' *The English Baronage: or an Historical Account of the Lives of the Most Memorable Actions of our Nobility, with their Descents, Marriages and Issue, etc.*, gives us an idea of the Ogle standing and what that meant for Catherine, in particular, when marrying into the newly establish Cavendish dynasty.<sup>68</sup> But perhaps, more importantly, when trying to ascertain the importance of the Ogle sisters to this new family, it is within the works of Ben Jonson that one begins to comprehend why this

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<sup>66</sup> See Sarah Gristwood, *Arbella: England's Lost Queen* (London: Bantam, 2003) and Phyllis Margaret Handover, *Arbella Stuart, Royal Lady of Hardwick and cousin to King James* (London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1957).

<sup>67</sup> See Peter Linehan, ed., *St John's College, Cambridge: A History* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2001) and Sara Jayne Steen, "The Cavendish-Talbot Women: Playing a High Stakes Game," in *Women and Politics in Early Modern England*, ed. James Daybell (Hampshire: Ashgate, 2004).

<sup>68</sup> See Sir Bart Henry Asgill Ogle, *Ogle and Bothal: or a History of the Baronies of Ogle, Bothal, and Hepple, and of the Families of Ogle and Bertram, who held possession of those Baronies and other Property in the County of Northumberland and elsewhere, etc.* (Newcastle-upon-Tyne: Privately Printed, 1902).

injection of an established noble family really crafted the way to answering Randall's question as to why the Cavendishes warrant a chapter of their own. Why indeed the Cavendishes deserve an entire thesis of their own. While certainly, Jonson's epitaphs for Catherine and Jane gives us a contemporary description of who they were, it is Helen Ostovich's analysis of Jonson's patronage in *Ben Jonson in Context* and her introduction to "The Magnetic Lady" in *The Cambridge Edition to the Works of Ben Jonson* along with James Loxley, Anna Groundwater and Julie Sanders' edited *Ben Jonson's Walk to Scotland: An Annotated Edition of the Foot Voyage* that indicate not only who they were but, more importantly, what they did.<sup>69</sup>

Mary, Catherine and Jane were not members of the early modern society that has been deemed worthy of widespread analysis in the same way that Arbella's has, therefore, while certainly, we have the aforementioned pieces that give us some insight into who and what they were, they aren't enough to allow for true in-depth analysis of their position within the family. As such one can begin to studying women of similar natures to make a model and ascertain the environment in which Mary, Catherine, and Jane were working and living, thus allowing us to come to some more conclusive ideas as to what caused their behaviour. Kathy Lynn Emerson's *Wives and Daughters: the women of Sixteenth-Century England*, Barbara J Harris' "Sisterhood, Friendship and the Power of Aristocratic Women, 1450-1550" in *Women and Politics in Early Modern England*, as well as Helen Payne's "Aristocratic Women, Power, Patronage and Family Networks at the Jacobean Court 1603-1625" also in *Women and Politics in Early Modern England* are vital to understand not only women, but the

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<sup>69</sup> See Helen Ostovich, "Introduction to *The Magnetic Lady*," in *The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Ben Jonson* ed. David Bevington et al. Vol. 6 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), Helen Ostovich, 'Patronage,' in *Ben Jonson in Context*, ed. Julie Sanders (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010) and James Loxley, Anna Groundwater and Julie Sanders, ed., *Ben Jonson's Walk to Scotland: An Annotated Edition of the 'Foot Voyage'* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015).

dynamic between women within a group or a family during this period.<sup>70</sup> Indeed Payne's conclusion that "the exercise of power by women at court, as in early modern society generally, is thus difficult to evaluate...[given] the fact that the 'actual power of women was hidden behind institutional powerlessness" meaning that "with both direct access and formal channels of power closed to them, most Jacobean court women were obliged to operate through those informal channels which were available: an important place in the Queen's service and favour, significant kin and other personal relationships, patronage networks and judicious hospitality." This, therefore, means that, when it comes to analysing the women in this family, just because it is not recorded does not mean it did not happen.<sup>71</sup> In a society where women had to work in the shadows, the shadows are where modern researchers must now look to find their answers.

The same can be said for Catherine's daughter in law, Elizabeth Bassett Cavendish who, like most women, is often only mentioned in passing when discussing the Duke of Newcastle's wives, with many opting to spend more time looking at his second wife, the more exciting Margaret Cavendish. However, despite there being no black and white proof to support the idea, it is likely that Elizabeth Bassett Cavendish played an important role in the formation of William Cavendish's play and poem writing daughters Jane and Elizabeth. Indeed, the only sources directly relating to Elizabeth are the manuscript letters sent to her by William while he was at court, the poems written about her by her daughters, and David and Martine Swinscoe's *Swinscoe, Blore and The Bassetts* book, detailing her family history.

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<sup>70</sup> See Kathy Lynn Emerson, *Wives and Daughters: the Women of Sixteenth-Century England* (New York: Whitson Publishing Company, 1984), Barbara J. Harris, "Sisterhood, Friendship and the Power of Aristocratic Women 1450-1550," in *Women and Politics in Early Modern England*, ed. James Daybell (Hampshire: Ashgate, 2004) and Helen Payne, "Aristocratic Women, Power, Patronage and Family Networks at the Jacobean Court 1603-1625".

<sup>71</sup> Helen Payne, "Aristocratic Women, Power, Patronage and Family Networks at the Jacobean Court 1603-1625," 170.

Even in that, she is only barely mentioned, with the highlights of her entry consisting of her birth and her marriages to William and Henry Howard. And perhaps, in the grand scope of Jacobean and Caroline society, indeed in the scope of the Cavendish family itself, Elizabeth's accomplishments are minimal, but her position as the de-facto choice of tutor to the Cavendish children, particularly the daughters, and the subsequent literary activities of Jane and Elizabeth, mean that while she might not have done anything of great substance herself, her actions are the foundations to her daughters' life choices, as has been the case with every generation in this family. Indeed, the feminist undertones held with the Cavendish sisters' writings could in all likelihood have come from Elizabeth. Therefore, like Mary, Catherine, and Jane before her, to understand why Elizabeth would have acted in the way she had, one has to understand what was happening around her and understand what other women in the same position did.

Certainly the pieces on female education and feminism cited above, such as Norma McMullen's "The Education of English Gentlewomen 1540-1640" in *History of Education* and Sarah Gwyneth Ross' *The Birth of Feminism: Women as Intellect in Renaissance Italy and England* along with Gemma Allen's *The Cooke Sisters: Education, Piety and Politics in Early Modern England* are of great interest and help when understanding the importance of education in the formation of women during this period. Others such as Dymphna Callaghan's two edited books *The Impact of Feminism in English Renaissance Studies* and *A Feminist Companion to Shakespeare*, as well as J.H. Hexter's "The Education of the Aristocracy in the Renaissance" in *The Journal of Modern History*, and Heidi Brayman Hackel and Catherine E. Kelly's edited *Reading Women: Literacy, Authorship, and Culture in the Atlantic World, 1500-1800* give in detail the change in a society in which women are beginning to reap the benefits of an education, although one not quite as advanced as that prescribed for their male

contemporaries.<sup>72</sup> Indeed, the contemporary anonymously penned *An Essay to Revive the Antient Education of Gentlewomen, in Religion, Manners, Arts & Tongues, with An Answer to the Objection against this Way of Education* gives us a real-time display of what this development of female education meant for women during the period.<sup>73</sup> Josephine Kamm's *Hope Deferred: Girls Education in English History* points out that "to the authors of the majority of books and treatises on education the mere thought of a learned woman was ludicrous" yet states that despite this "women...devoted much time to reading English and foreign history, and those who did not write books translated them."<sup>74</sup> While certainly women still partook in the more conventional idea of female education with "fine needlework, crewl-work and silk-spinning...singing and play[ing] the lute, [also] cookery, elementary surgery, and the distillation of health-giving waters" to suggest that this was the only type of education that all women in English society received would be to completely misinterpret and misunderstand the changing tides of sixteenth and seventeenth-century English society.<sup>75</sup> Indeed, Jane Stevenson, in her paper "Women and Classical education in the Early Modern Period" in Yun Lee Too and Niall Livingstone's edited *Pedagogy and Power* focuses on women who write Latin and Greek particularly those with "the ability to compose metrical poetry [as it] is the nearest possible thing to an unequivocal indication that the writer in question had received an education comparable to that of a man."<sup>76</sup> While there is certainly

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<sup>72</sup> See Dymna Callaghan, ed., *The Impact of Feminism in English Renaissance Studies* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), Dymna Callaghan, ed., *A Feminist Companion to Shakespeare* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2000) J. H. Hexter, "The Education of the Aristocracy in the Renaissance", and Heidi Brayman Hackel and Catherine E. Kelly, ed., *Reading Women: Literacy, Authorship, and Culture in the Atlantic World, 1500-1800* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008).

<sup>73</sup> Anon, *An Essay to Revive the Antient Education of Gentlewomen, in Religion, Manners, Arts & Tongues, with An Answer to the Objection against this Way of Education* (London: Printed by J.D. to be sold by Tho Parkhurst at the Bible and Crown at lower Cheapside.)

<sup>74</sup> Josephine Kamm, *Hope Deferred – Girls Education in English History*, 47-53.

<sup>75</sup> Josephine Kamm, *Hope Deferred – Girls Education in English History*, 47

<sup>76</sup> Jane Stevenson, "Women and Classical Education in the Early Modern Period," 83-84.

no indication that Elizabeth Bassett Cavendish had the education, nor delivered an education to her daughters, that was equivalent to their male counterparts, to assume, as current research suggests, that Jane and Elizabeth received their education solely thanks to their father and his fore thinking ways would be misinterpreting the role of educational development of women during this period.

For the remaining members of the family to appear in this thesis, their stories and lives have been documented extensively and their activities have been analysed in great depth. Even though Gloria Italiano Anzilotti expressed disbelief that “surely a man that aroused such expression of encomium from such a wide array of people [when referring to declarations made about his character from Edward Hyde, Earl of Clarendon, Thomas Shadwell and Charles I]<sup>77</sup> deserves to be better known three centuries later” William Cavendish, while not necessarily well known to the wider society, is well remembered and influential to all kinds of early modern scholars and researchers.<sup>78</sup> Both Geoffrey Trease and Lucy Worsley have written entire biographies on him in the shape *Portrait of a Cavalier: William Cavendish, First Duke of Newcastle* and *Cavalier: The Story of a 17<sup>th</sup> Century Playboy*, respectively, while countless chapters, articles, and papers have been written about his involvement in the Civil War, his architectural patronage, his literary patronage, as well

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<sup>77</sup> Edward Hyde refers to him as “one of the most valuable men in the kingdom” - Edward Hyde, Earl of Clarendon, *The History of the Rebellion and Civil Wars in England Vol. 1* (Oxford, At the University Press, 1849), 125. Thomas Shadwell describes him as “the greatest master of wit, the most exact observer of mankind, and the most accurate judge of humour that ever I Knew.” - Thomas Shadwell, *The Virtuoso*, ed. Marjorie Hope Nicolson et al. (London: Edward Arnold Publisher Ltd, 1966), 3. While Charles I was reported, by Cavendish's wife Margaret Cavendish, to have said: "his noble bounty and generosity is so manifest to all the world, that I should light a candle to the sun, if I should strive to illustrate it." - Margaret Cavendish, *The Life of the Thrice Noble, High and Puissant Prince William Cavendish Book III* (London: A. Maxwell, 1667), 111.

<sup>78</sup> Gloria Italiano Anzilotti, “Introduction,” in *An English Prince: Newcastle's Machiavellian Political Guide to Charles II*, written by William Cavendish, Duke of Newcastle, ed. Gloria Italiano Anzilotti (Pisa: Giardini, 1988), 16.

as his, science, art and musical patronage.<sup>79</sup> His literary patronage, particular that of Ben Jonson, has been examined and analysed time and time again, by the likes of Anne Barton in “Harking Back to Elizabeth: Ben Jonson and Caroline Nostalgia” in *ELH*, Robert C. Evans in *Jonson and the Context of his Times*, Helen Ostovich in “Patronage” in *Ben Jonson in Context* as well as her introduction to “The Magnetic Lady” in *The Cambridge Edition to the Work of Ben Jonson: Volume 6*, David Riggs in *Ben Jonson: A Life*, as well as Nick Rowe’s article “‘My Best Patron’ William Cavendish and Jonson’s Caroline Dramas,” in *The Seventeenth Century: Special Edition – The Cavendish Circle*.<sup>80</sup> The overarching sentiment of the collection is the importance of Jonson and William to one another. For Jonson, William was a way for the aging and out of vogue writer to remain within the public eye. For William, Jonson was a way to associate himself with a bygone era and thus allowing him to associate himself with a legacy that had been taken away from him thanks to the actions of his father. His architectural patronage, while referenced in many of the book associated with Bess of Hardwick's own architectural patronage, was looked at in depth in Lucy Worsley's Ph.D. thesis *The Architectural Patronage of William Cavendish., First Duke of Newcastle, 1593-1676*. While Cavendish’s patronage activities give us an insight into his tastes and interests, it is by looking at society as a whole and, not just the changing tides but the changing of the crown, that demonstrate why Cavendish felt the need to develop and devote such a great deal of time to these activities and interests.

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<sup>79</sup> See Lisa T. Sarasohn, “Thomas Hobbes and the Duke of Newcastle: A Study in the Mutuality of Patronage before the Establishment of the Royal Society,” *Isis*, Vol. 9, No. 6 (Dec., 1999), Keith Whitlock, “John Playford’s the English Dancing Master 1650/51 as Cultural Politics,” *Folk Music Journal*, Vol. 7, No. 7 (1999), Timothy Raylor, “‘Pleasure Reconciled to Virtue’: William Cavendish, Ben Jonson, and the Decorative Scheme of Bolsover Castle,” *Renaissance Quarterly*, Vol. 52, No. 2 (Summer 1999), Lynn Hulse, “Matthew Locke: Three Newly Discovered Songs for the Restoration Stage,” *Music & Letters*, Vol. 75, No. 2 (May, 1994) and Richard Pears, “Battle of the Styles? Classical and Gothic Architecture in Seventeenth-Century North East England,” *Architectural History*, Vol. 55 (2012).

<sup>80</sup> *The Seventeenth Century: Special Edition – The Cavendish Circle* Vol. 9 No. 2 (1994).

J.S.A. Adamson's "Chivalry and Political Culture in Caroline England" in Kevin Sharpe and Peter Lake's edited *Culture and Politics in Early Stuart England* analyses the conflict between tradition and improvement that was prevalent during the period. While Charles I's reign distanced itself from the chivalric displays commonly presented during the Elizabethan and Jacobean eras, the new King couldn't eradicate the past entirely. As Adamson suggests:

For Charles I, the legacy of Elizabethan chivalry was as we have seen, an awkward one – particularly after the 1630s rapprochement with Spain. The Cornelius Vroom tapestries commemorating the victory of 1588 could be easily banished from court, but eradicating that myth of the golden age of Elizabethan chivalry which these tapestries had symbolised was not so easily accomplished. As Dr. Butler has argued, a concern for the 'Elizabethan values' – in particular for opposition to Spain and support for international Protestantism – was one of the pervasive themes of works written for the popular stage in the 1630s: 'the values of the old national myth of England's greatness which Elizabeth was supposed to have been furthering and which Charles certainly was not'<sup>81</sup>

Adamson goes on to explain how Cavendish himself analysed this conflict between chivalric past and present in his play *The Variety*:

Manly, is a plain-speaking critic of the fopperies of the court who dresses as an Elizabethan: he recalls the days when 'men of honor flourish'd, that tam'd the wealth of Spain' and 'set up the States [of the United Provinces]'. Manly contrasts nostalgically the way Garter Knights once made their way to Windsor attended by magnificent retinues, and the fashion-conscious courtiers who were now the knights, travelling to the Garter ceremonies privately, for reasons of economy, with only a page and a barber as their foppish entourage.<sup>82</sup>

For William, the past Elizabethan age, not only represented a time when his country prospered, flourished and was triumphant, but so too did his family, and this was certainly a comparison that he wanted to make. This theme of memorialising the past to create a better future is explored by Anne Barton in "Harking Back to Elizabeth: Ben Jonson and Caroline

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<sup>81</sup> J.S.A. Adamson, "Chivalry and Political Culture in Caroline England," in *Culture and Politics in Early Stuart England*, ed. Kevin Sharpe et al. (London: Macmillan, 1994), 181.

<sup>82</sup> J.S.A. Adamson, "Chivalry and Political Culture in Caroline England," 181.



Nostalgia”.<sup>83</sup> David Howarth’s *Images of Rule: Art and Politics in the English Renaissance 1450-1649* takes an interesting look at the retrospective creative work of the early modern period, and what it can tell us about the society as a whole.<sup>84</sup> This, in particular, is useful when considering William Cavendish, who clearly spent a great deal of time involved with the creative side of early modern society. By understanding the world that he operated in, we are able to understand the actions that William took throughout his life. Books such as Ronald G. Asch and Adolf M. Birke’s edited *Princes, Patronage and Nobility: The Court at the Beginning of the Modern Age*, Linda Levy Peck’s *Consuming Splendour: Society and Culture in Seventeenth-Century England* and Lawrence Stone’s *The Crisis of the Aristocracy, 1558-1641* provide detailed accounts of the lives of the aristocracy during this period and help us to navigate the world in which William found himself.<sup>85</sup>

Certainly, in the same way that understanding each of the environments that the subjects of this thesis lived in helps us as twenty-first-century researchers understand the motives behind their actions, so too is the case with the final two subjects researched in this thesis: Jane and Elizabeth Cavendish. The daughters of William Cavendish who, at a time of unrest and uncertainty, decided that the way to deal with their situation was to create a new world for themselves in verse and prose, using the methods taught to them by both their father and their strong female line, and thus envisioned and became the strong and forceful women needed to ensure the continuance of their family. It is with the Cavendish sisters that we see an

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<sup>83</sup> See Anne Barton, “Harking Back to Elizabeth: Ben Jonson and Caroline Nostalgia,” *ELH*, Vol. 48, No. 4 (1981).

<sup>84</sup> See David Howarth, *Images of Rule: Art and Politics in the English Renaissance 1450-1649* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1997).

<sup>85</sup> See Ronald G. Asch and Adolf M. Birke, ed., *Princes, Patronage, and the Nobility: The Court at the Beginning of the Modern Age c. 1450-1650* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), Linda Levy Peck, *Consuming Splendour: Society and Culture in Seventeenth-Century England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005) and Lawrence Stone, *The Crisis of the Aristocracy, 1558-1641* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1966).

accumulation of the work and the struggles of the generations that preceded them. However, female writers, though not unheard of, were a rarity during this period. S. P. Cersano and Marion Wynne-Davies compiled and edited a collection of drama by women in *Renaissance Drama by Women* and also edited an accompanying collection of critical essays, *Readings in Renaissance Women's Drama: Critical, History and Performance, 1594-1998* in which they analyse not just the Cavendish sisters but their contemporaries as well, discussing the implications and reactions to the female pen.<sup>86</sup> This theme is continued in Danielle Clarke's *The Politics of Early Modern Women's Writing* as well as Nancy Cotton's *Women Playwrights in England 1363-1750*<sup>87</sup>.

However, like their father, there has been a great deal of interest in the Cavendish sisters over the years, particularly since the first edited and printed edition of *The Concealed Fancies* by Nathan Comfort Starr. Many scholars have paid closer attention to the sisters' play *The Concealed Fancies*, rather than the other masques and poems found in their manuscript collection. Catherine Burroughs' "'Hymen's Monkey Love': The Concealed Fancies and Female Sexual Initiation" in *Theatre Journal*, discusses the play as a way to understand the teenagers' interest and curiosity of their sexuality and the interesting role that, according to Burroughs, their father plays in that, based on his believed representation in the play.<sup>88</sup> Jane Milling's "Siege and Cipher: The Closet Drama of the Cavendish Sisters" in *Women's History Review*, uses the play as a way of analysing the sisters' thoughts and fears in regards to the Civil War that surrounded them, and the way they used their drama as a

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<sup>86</sup> See S. P. Cerasano and Marion Wynne-Davies, ed., *Renaissance Drama by Women* (London: Routledge, 1996) and S. P. Cerasano and Marion Wynne-Davies, ed., *Readings in Renaissance Women's Drama: Critical, History and Performance, 1594-1998* (London: Routledge, 2005).

<sup>87</sup> See Danielle Clarke, *The Politics of Early Modern Women's Writing* (Harlow: Longman, 2001) and Nancy Cotton, *Women Playwrights in England 1363-1750* (London: Associated University Press, 1980).

<sup>88</sup> See Catherine Burroughs, "'Hymen's Monkey Love': The Concealed Fancies and Female Sexual Initiation," *Theatre Journal*, Vol. 51, No. 1 (1999).

means of not only escaping the horrors but coming to terms with them, a sentiment shared by Kamille Stone Staunton in “The Domestication of Royalist Themes in *The Concealed Fancies* by Jane Cavendish and Elizabeth Brackley” in *Clio*.<sup>89</sup> While Deanne Williams’ “Perpetual Girlhood in *The Concealed Fancies*” in *Shakespeare and the Performance of Girlhood* simply looks at it from the perspective of how women portrayed their own lives in ink, an issue discussed more widely in the Elspeth Graham, Hilary Hinds, Elaine Hobby and Helen Wilcox edited collection *Her Own Life: Autobiographical Writing by Seventeenth-Century English Women*.<sup>90</sup> However, those who looked at *The Concealed Fancies* from the perspective of understanding, not just the collaboration of female writers, but the play as a form of women in conversation, a topic of great importance as indicated by Katherine R. Larson in *Early Modern Women in Conversation*, indicate that women were capable of demonstrating a female consciousness of their shared condition through this medium, with the likes of Alison Findlay exploring the sister relationship in “Sisterly Feelings in Cavendish and Brackley Drama” in *Sibling Relations and Gender in the Early Modern World: Sisters, Brothers and Others*.<sup>91</sup> That idea of the importance of sibling relationships is discussed widely, by the likes of Marion Wynne-Davies in *Women Writers and Familial Discourse in the English Renaissance*, Naomi J Miller and Naomi Yavneh in their introduction to their edited *Sibling Relations and Gender in the Early Modern World: Sisters, Brothers and Others*, “Thicker than Water: Evaluating Sibling Relations in the Early Modern Period”, as

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<sup>89</sup> See Jane Milling, “Siege and Cipher: The Closet Drama of the Cavendish Sisters,” *Women’s History Review*, Vol. 6 No. 3 (1997) and Kamille Stone Staunton, “The Domestication of Royalist Themes in *The Concealed Fancies* by Jane Cavendish and Elizabeth Brackley,” *Clio*, Vol. 36, No. 2 (2007).

<sup>90</sup> See Deanne Williams, *Shakespeare and the Performance of Girlhood* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014) and Elspeth Graham, et al, ed., *Her Own Life: Autobiographical Writings by Seventeenth-Century English Women* (New York: Routledge, 2005).

<sup>91</sup> See Katherine R. Larson, *Early Modern Women in Conversation* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011) and Alison Findlay, “Sisterly Feelings in Cavendish and Brackley Drama,” in *Sibling Relations and Gender in the Early Modern World: Sisters, Brothers and Others*, ed. Naomi J. Miller and Naomi Yavneh (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006).

well as Barbara J. Harris in “Sisterhood, Friendship and the Power of Aristocratic Women, 1450-1550” in James Daybell’s edited *Women and Politics in Early Modern England*.<sup>92</sup> Yet, as pointed out before, the idea of collectiveness and familial relationships is only considered in one generation. While certainly Margaret J. M. Ezell in ““To Be Your Daughter in Your Pen”: The Social Functions of Literature in the Writings of Lady Elizabeth Brackley and Lady Jane Cavendish” in *The Huntington Library Quarterly* and Helen Payne in “Aristocratic Women, Power, Patronage and Family Networks at the Jacobean Court, 1603-1625” in James Daybell’s *Women and Politics in Early Modern England* consider wider members of the family unit, again, their range is only one or two generations of a single family, meaning the wider scope of what female familial relationships could have been achieving over a longer period of time, has been overlooked.<sup>93</sup>

At its heart this thesis is arguing against the fundamental idea that women during this period were chaste, silent and obedient. Thanks to behavioural books such as Thomas Bentley’s *The Monument of Matrones*, it has been easy to believe that most women during this period subscribed to this trinity of ideals and that the women discussed in this thesis are a rarity and an exception to the rule when it came to female behaviour.<sup>94</sup> These behavioural books of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries told women ways that society deemed it

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<sup>92</sup> See Marion Wynne-Davies, *Women Writers and Familial Discourse in the English Renaissance* (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2007), Naomi J. Miller and Naomi Yavneh, “Thicker than Water: Evaluating Sibling Relations in the Early Modern Period,” in *Sibling Relations and Gender in the Early Modern World: Sisters, Brothers and Others*, ed. Naomi J. Miller and Naomi Yavneh (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006) and Barbara J. Harris, “Sisterhood, Friendship and the Power of Aristocratic Women 1450-1550”.

<sup>93</sup> See Margaret J. M. Ezell, ““To Be Your Daughter In Your Pen”: The Social Functions of Literature in the Writings of Lady Elizabeth Brackley and Lady Jane Cavendish,” *The Huntington Library Quarterly*, Vol. 51, No. 4 (1988) and Helen Payne, “Aristocratic Women, Power, Patronage and Family Networks at the Jacobean Court 1603-1625”.

<sup>94</sup> Thomas Bentley, *The Monument of Matrones: conteining seuen seuerall Lamps of Virginitie or distinct treatises...complied for the necessarie use of both sexes out of the sacred Scriptures, and other approued authors, by T. Bentley. B.L.* (London: H. Denham, 1582).

acceptable for them to behave, compelling them to “reform the manners of thine handmaid, and make me in my conversation modest, and honest; make me in visage shamefast; in words temperate; in wit, wise; in going, sober; in conversation, meeke.”<sup>95</sup> Richard Braithwaite suggests that women should place others above themselves when he writes “no, so little doth shee favour her selfe, as shee preferres others censures before her owne.”<sup>96</sup> While certainly such behaviour could be considered as being that of a good Christian, the fact that the advice finds itself in a book entitled *The English Gentlewoman* and not ‘The English Christian’ makes the distinction that advice for men and women would be different and clearly, this instruction was deemed appropriate for women alone.

Conduct books held power over society as they were founded in Christian teachings. Thomas Bentley’s *The Monument of Matrones* states that it is filled with “Christian praiers and meditations to be used of and for all sorts and degrees of women, in their severall ages and callings.”<sup>97</sup> These books contain examples of how women could become good and righteous by subscribing to the ideals of the chaste, silent and obedient model, a model created, in large, thanks to Eve and the Fall of Man. Behavioural instruction books emphasised to women the importance to repent for the acts of Eve in the Garden in the book of Genesis. In *The Monument of Matrones* one of the first prayers is in relation to the Eve situation:

But alas, deere God, I confesse the corruption of my nature, polluted in the first woman Eve in Paradise, is such and my weakness and unableness to stand in temptation is so much, and the custome of sinne hath gotten such dominion over me, that I am not able

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<sup>95</sup>Thomas Bentley, *The Monument of Matrones: Conteyning Seven Severall Lamps of Virginitie*, 69.

<sup>96</sup> Richard Braithwaite, *The English Gentlewoman drawne out to the full body: expressing what habiliments doe best attire her, what ornaments doe best adorne her, what complements doe best accomplish her* (London: 1631), xiii.

<sup>97</sup> Thomas Bentley, *The Monument of Matrones: Conteyning Seven Severall Lamps of Virginitie*, 1.

to my selfe so much as to thinke a good thought, much lesse to do anie thing that is good and acceptable in thy light.<sup>98</sup>

In fact, Gloria Kaufman demonstrates how Juan Luis Vives, tutor to Princess Mary (later Mary I) in his treatise *The Instruction of a Christian Woman*, supports his arguments against the education of women through Bible teaching, including Eve's betrayal of God. She states:

Even more important than his attitude toward women teachers, however, is Vives's attitude toward Eve. His argument parallels that of the patristics and of numerous popular anti-feminist tracts. Adam was incorruptible, but the 'Devil caught [Eve] with a light argument.' Although Adam also ate the apple, he is not blamed." She goes on to highlight his use of Jerome on the teaching of Paula "Let her learn to hear nothing, nor speak but it that appertaineth unto the fear of God."<sup>99</sup>

Sara Mendelson and Patricia Crawford go so far as to suggest that women's exclusion from the political sphere was thanks to the portrayal of women in The Bible: "writers on legal topics, for example, borrowed from theology to justify female exclusion from the political realm."<sup>100</sup>

It was, however, not just within conduct books that these behaviours for Christian women were suggested. Mark Breitenberg describes how "a number of Anglican and Puritan clergy, perhaps influenced by Calvin's severe admonishments against adultery, declaim from the pulpits the necessity of wifely duty and subjection."<sup>101</sup> William Gouge, the minister and preacher at St Ann's Church in Blackfriars for 45 years, stood from his pulpit "expecting formal rituals of reverence and obeisance by wives to husbands and for his demand for them to show complete submission, in a humble and cheerful manner, even when a husbandly reproof was manifestly unjust."<sup>102</sup> Gouge had such belief in his ideas that he went to on to

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<sup>98</sup> Thomas Bentley, *The Monument of Matrones: Conteyning Seven Severall Lamps of Virginitie*, 7.

<sup>99</sup> Gloria Kaufman, "Juan Luis Vives on the Education of Women," *Signs*, Vol 3, No. 4 (Summer 1978): 894.

<sup>100</sup> Sara Mendelson and Patricia Crawford, *Women in Early Modern England*, 33.

<sup>101</sup> Mark Breitenberg, "Anxious Masculinity: Sexual Jealousy in Early Modern England," *Feminist Studies*, Vol. 19 No. 2, Women's Bodies and the States (Summer 1993): 378.

<sup>102</sup> Anthony Fletcher, "Men's Dilemma: The Future of Patriarchy in England 1560-1660," *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, Vol. 4 (1994): 74.

publish his sermon as the treatise *Of Domestic Duties*, in which the preacher claimed such behaviours as “when in the company of her husband, a wife’s ‘words must be few, reverend and meeke’, for in silence ‘implieth a usurpation of authoritie’” were necessary<sup>103</sup> His words were so impactful that Nehemiah Wallington, after buying the treatise shortly after his wedding, wrote in his diary “Every one of us may learn and know our duties and honour God everyone in his place where God has set them.”<sup>104</sup> Wallington went on to draw up a list of ‘31 articles for my family for the reforming of our lives’, consisting of similar sentiments to those found in Gouge’s work, which he had the adult members of his household, including his wife, sign.<sup>105</sup>

For women of a more literary nature, the only texts that were acceptable for them to delve into were meditational works and translations of Psalms. The emergence of the Church of England and the need to translate Latin texts into English meant that these forms of activities were vital to further the new Church's teachings to the wider English speaking audience. This, therefore, meant that women who translated these were at the constant mercy of texts that spoke about the betrayal of Eve and passages such as the one mentioned above about Jerome's teaching of Paula. Women were not only hearing these things from the pulpit anymore; they were integral parts in furthering those teachings onto other of Christian women. As Mendelson and Crawford point out “during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the religious establishment was perhaps the most powerful medium through which theories about human nature and society were disseminated to the general population.”<sup>106</sup> The churches view on things were literally gospel, and in a society in which the church's

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<sup>103</sup> Jenifer Richards and Alison Thorne, ed., *Rhetoric, Women and Politics in Early Modern England* (New York: Routledge, 2007), 6.

<sup>104</sup> P.S. Seaver, *Wallington's World: A Puritan Artisan in Seventeenth-Century London* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1985), 79.

<sup>105</sup> P.S. Seaver, *Wallington's World: A Puritan Artisan in Seventeenth-Century London*, 79.

<sup>106</sup> Sara Mendelson and Patricia Crawford, *Women in Early Modern England*, 31.

teachings were such an integral part of informing people how to live their lives, church preaches were lived to by the letter. Contemporary interpretations of the scriptures, particularly those regarding women, put emphasis on the idea of Eve being made from Adam and thus being secondary in creation and secondary in importance. While Christ saved both the souls of men and women by sacrificing himself, with Galatians confirming this when it states "in Christ there is neither Greek nor Jew, slave nor free, man nor woman" [Galatians 3:28] that did not mean that, in life, women were equal to men. Eve was still made secondary to Adam, and as such, in life, women would always be secondary to men. These ideas and ideologies, now available to women in their mother tongue and translated by them, were, of course, going to take a hold and make them more susceptible to continue living in accordance with such notions.

Yet we begin to see a big shift in behaviour around the middle of the seventeenth century in which women did not behave in accordance with the advice in behavioural books and scriptural teachings. Mendelson and Crawford suggest that this change in opinion on female ability began with "changing intellectual climate of the late seventeenth century."<sup>107</sup> Jacqueline Eales suggests the same thing when she declares that "from the mid-seventeenth century, women began to argue that the restraints imposed on them originated not from any innate inferiority of the female sex, but from society's understanding of constructions of what was appropriate male and female behaviour: in other words from nurture rather than from nature."<sup>108</sup> The behavioural books were not as influential on female behaviour as they were intended to be.

The shift of the mid-seventeenth century indicates a new tide of women, who did not function within the boundaries set out in the behavioural books and the teachings of the church, was coming, and perhaps it was because of those kinds of women that behavioural

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<sup>107</sup> Sara Mendelson and Patricia Crawford, *Women in Early Modern England*, 34.

<sup>108</sup> Jacqueline Eales, *Women in Early Modern England, 1500-1700* (Oxon: Routledge, 2005), 4.



books continued to be written and published. One such example is Mary Boyle Rich, Countess of Warwick. Not only did she refuse to marry the man her father had chosen for her, she told her father that she would refuse to marry unless he agreed to the man she had chosen for herself: “I made this resolute, but ill and horribly disobedient answer, that I did acknowledge a very great and particular kindness for Mr. Rich, and desired them, with my humble duty to my father, to assure him that I would not marry him without his consent, but that I was resolved not to marry any other person in the world”.<sup>109</sup> As Sara Mendelson points out, Mary knew how to bend societal pressures to her own agenda: “Mary had only one trump card, the knowledge that no marriage could be consummated without her consent. She must have been aware, too, that time was on her side. Her matrimonial prospects would be equally good for at least another five years.”<sup>110</sup>

The need for behavioural books suggests that the actions of Mary Boyle Rich were not singular. Indeed, with women such as Mary Sidney Herbert, Countess of Pembroke, Lady Anne Clifford and Lucy, Countess of Bedford all having similar behavioural traits to Mary Boyle Rich, it would seem as if these women could be viewed more as models of women during this time rather than all being exceptions to the rule.<sup>111</sup> Books during this period were not only expensive to produce, but were expensive to buy, and it seems unlikely that production of materials addressing the ways in which women should behave would be

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<sup>109</sup> Charlotte F. Otten, ed., *English Women's Voices 1540-1700* (Miami: Florida International University Press, 1992), 165.

<sup>110</sup> Sara Mendelson, *The Mental World of Stuart Women: Three Studies*, 69-70.

<sup>111</sup> For Mary Sidney: see for example Margaret P. Hannay, *Philip's Phoenix: Mary Sidney, Countess of Pembroke* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990). For Lady Anne Clifford: see for example Karen Hearn and Lynn Hulse, ed., *Lady Anne Clifford: Culture, Patronage, and Gender in 17<sup>th</sup> Century Britain* (Leeds: Yorkshire Archaeological Society, 2009) For Lucy, Countess of Bedford: see for example Jennifer Reynolds Taylor, *Lucy Countess of Bedford, Jonson, and Donne* (Hamilton: McMaster University Press, 1979) and Nadine Akkerman and Birgit Houben, ed., *The Politics of Female Households: Ladies in waiting across Early Modern Europe* (Boston: Brill, 2014).

required, should there only be a few isolated incidences where women were able to defy the wishes of their family and of society as a whole. Mary Boyle Rich was not only defiant to her father's wishes; she also used societal pressures, the very things that were designed to ensure her co-operation, to her own advantage. What's more, she did not simply defy her father; she cleverly plotted her way to success. It, therefore, calls into question whether behavioural books were simply written as reminders of how women should behave, or whether they were, in fact, a way to bring society back into order. The production of such materials points to the latter and rather than considering women like those mentioned above and analysed in this thesis as being exceptions to the rule, it might be time for scholars and the wider community to begin to consider that these are simply examples of the ones who were able to leave evidence behind and whose legacies were interesting enough to be explored. Rather than assuming that such women simply ignored behavioural books, it would be more appropriate to consider them as the reason such behavioural books were thought to have been needed. In her article "Studies in Shakespeare: Strategies for a Feminist Pedagogy", in *Feminist Teacher*, Torri Thompson states "if a person can be taught to behave in a fashion particular to one gender, then it is obvious that such behaviour is not 'natural' or biologically inherent."<sup>112</sup> Women were not born to be chaste, silent and obedient; they were taught and made to be as such. Behavioural books are most likely the result of women living in such a way that didn't adhere to those mantras.

With the knowledge that women in sixteenth and seventeenth-century England were not necessarily the same as those described in conduct books, it is therefore not difficult to believe that women such as those discussed above could, and were, orchestrators behind their own political fate. By using a variety of means, patronage as one example, women were able to place themselves within patriarchal spheres and be the type of influencers that Reformation

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<sup>112</sup> Torri Thompson, "Studies in Shakespeare: Strategies for a Feminist Pedagogy," *Feminist Teacher*, Vol. 8 No. 2 (Fall/Winter 1994): 70.

England, with its fear of the persuasive abilities of Eve and her betrayal of God, would in all right find difficult to settle.

With the exception of Elizabeth I, women were not seen as fit to hold positions of immense political power. Those positions were reserved for the male gentry. However, even though women of gentry families were not able to take an active role in the early modern patriarchal spheres, simply by being born or married into such a family, gave them access to such environments. This, therefore, meant that they were capable of navigating these patriarchal spheres in a way that was beneficial to them. One such example is the patronage relationship between John Donne and Lucy, Countess of Bedford. In a letter from Donne to Sir Henry Goodere, Donne questions whether the Countess of Bedford could be considered as a “proper Mediatrix” when connecting him with his desired associates.<sup>113</sup> The term mediatrix comes from the Catholic Catechism for the role of mediator held by the Virgin Mary, between God and man. In her book, *Mediatrix*, Julie Crawford suggests that Donne’s use of this word in reference to Lucy Russell, during the time that he was trying to claim her as a patron, gives the impression that he saw Russell as an “influential go-between in early Jacobean political and literary circles, and thus her ability to serve as an intermediary on his behalf.”<sup>114</sup> This interaction suggests that, while on the grander scale of Tudor and Stuart politics women had little influence, their place within society itself made them crucial. Their ability to navigate their way through men of political importance, perhaps, fathers, brothers, cousins, brothers in law, gave them importance and made them worthwhile to men like Donne, who saw them as a door into a whole array of potential powerful, male patrons.

While the Countess of Bedford, as an aristocratic woman, cannot be used as a fitting example for the wider set of women in English early modern society, her activities demonstrate the potential women had. Her position as a mediatrix gave her bargaining chips

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<sup>113</sup> John Donne, *Letters to Several Persons of Honor* (Hildesheim & New York: Georg Olms Verlag, 1974), 193.

<sup>114</sup> Julie Crawford, *Mediatrix: Women, Politics and Literary Production in Early Modern England*, 1.

that would not be available to her in any other form. Whether it simply granted her with beautiful forms of verse dedicated to her name, or whether it brought her into situations where she was able to obtain information simply because of her presence in the room, the possibilities were endless when it came to the potential of what could be achieved by recommending a writer to men of established genuine power. The Countess of Bedford's role as a mediatrix again demonstrates the likelihood that it is not necessarily a question of whether women were integral parts of early modern society's political spheres, but what their function within those spheres would have looked like.

Yet, as was the case with Donne and the Countess of Bedford, one activity in which the very nature of it generally ensured that women's names were recorded, was patronage. Mendelson expands on Maczak's idea that "early modern Europeans were prone to take clientage for granted. It was their medieval heritage, a somewhat softened and usually less ceremonial form of vassalage. It corresponded to the medieval and early modern idea of society as consisting not of a sum of individuals, but rather a structure based on hierarchy, kinship, and corporation."<sup>115</sup> Griffin's statement that patronage was a way of taking "control of high literary culture" highlights that patronage was not just an aristocratic tradition; it was a form of aristocratic control.<sup>116</sup> The control of high literary culture could also translate itself to high political power. The more poems, plays, and books dedicated to an individual, the more it indicates their importance, and the more important an individual is, the more a writer could hope to gain from that association, especially if the dedication becomes an on-going patronage relationship. But, it can also work in the opposite way. The more dedications that an individual receives, gives the view that an individual is perhaps more important than they necessarily are, and thus are able to assert that newfound importance to create more political

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<sup>115</sup> Ronald G. Asch and Adolf M. Birke, ed., *Princes, Patronage, and the Nobility: The Court at the Beginning of the Modern Age c. 1450-1650*, 316-317.

<sup>116</sup> Dustin Griffin, *Literary Patronage in England 1650-1800*, 13.

prestige for themselves. Patronage had the ability to make a nobody into a somebody.

Yet, despite this activity that understood the importance of a hierarchal system, one in which women were not usually placed highly, some women still flourished. David Bergeron declares that in “a male-dominated culture, women nevertheless functioned effectively and compellingly in drama’s textual economies by offering support for the arts specifically for drama and playwrights. Dramatists thus could and did tap into a well-established system of traditional patronage, albeit one controlled by a woman.”<sup>117</sup> Within this practice, women, like the Countess of Bedford, were able to place themselves within the political sphere and their efforts were recorded in the form of literary dedications.

While certainly to the untrained eye the act of patronage is simply an exchange of money for dedications, as David Bergeron explains:

writing a play and dedicating it to a patroness in hope of some immediate financial reward does not seem to have ranked very high on the list of purposes. There are several other themes that run through the dedications. In some instances, the dramatists wished to become known to the woman, with the implied expectation of some benefit. But many dramatists simply sought recognition, hoping that the patroness' name would lend a kind of luster to their effort.<sup>118</sup>

Despite the fact that women were unable to act directly on behalf of those they supported, in any political sense, aristocratic women were clearly sought after patrons, thus suggesting that their reaches were somehow widespread. We see this interest in them again in French R. Fogle's examination of the patronage given by Lady Alice, Countess of Derby. Even though he acknowledges that "one may suppose that the Countess Dowager's attractiveness as a literary target only increased by her alliance with Lord Ellesmere," he goes on to say that "after his death in 1617 she maintained her close ties with the social and literary worlds in

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<sup>117</sup> David Bergeron, *Textual Patronage in English Drama 1570-1640*, 74.

<sup>118</sup> David Bergeron, “Women as Patrons in the Renaissance,” in *Patronage in the Renaissance*, ed. Guy Fitch Lytle and Stephen Orgel (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981), 278.

which she had been so active."<sup>119</sup> Firstly, this suggests that writers saw that the easiest way to access a powerful man was through a woman that he was associated with. This, therefore, confirms that, just through sheer association, women had the ability to place themselves in influential positions thanks to their patronage activities. However, these relationships continued after Lord Ellesmere's death, which also suggests that writers were able to continue benefiting from the Countess of Derby separate to any benefits they received thanks to her immediate association with Lord Ellesmere. That 'luster' could itself suggest that women had a greater place and importance in society than has previously been considered. Given the law of coverture, with all of a woman's possessions, including money, legally owned by her father or her husband, with the exception widows, it is unlikely that women were seen as profitable patrons thanks to their financial viability. While in the case of the Countess of Derby, the death of Lord Ellesmere would have made her a widow and therefore financially beneficial to any potential client, there are a number of examples of women who did not have the financial freedom of widowhood to make them sought after patrons. These examples, again suggest that women were able to contribute more to these patron/client relationships than has previously been considered.

In 1972, Joan Kelly-Gadol began to ask the question "did women have a Renaissance?" in which she discusses and analyses the differences in male and female life during the Renaissance; one in which she concludes women did not experience the same period of enlightenment that was had by their male counterparts.<sup>120</sup> Yet it cannot be denied, when looking at women such as the Cooke sisters, Lady Mary Sidney Herbert and Lady Anne Clifford that some women certainly had a place in, and benefited from, the Renaissance.

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<sup>119</sup> French R. Fogle, "'Such a Rural Queen': The Countess Dowager of Derby as a Patron," in *Patronage in Late Renaissance England*, ed. French R. Fogle and Louis A. Knafla (Pasadena: The Castle Press, 1983), 23

<sup>120</sup> Joan Kelly-Gadol, "Did Women Have a Renaissance," in *Becoming Visible: Women in European History*, ed. Renate Bridenthal, et al. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1998), 175.

These women were testaments to the idea that with humanist teachings and education women were able to secure a life for themselves that allowed them to prosper and progress through society by not only obtaining political positions in society but also by thriving in those positions as well. Yet despite education providing them with the possibility of independence and giving them the tools to navigate their own way through society without male help, it could be argued that within their own familial settings women appear even more subordinated by the very people who gave them those tools to achieve that state of independence. Therefore, rather than their education being a means of cultivating a female-educated elite, these women appear to have used their education as a way of fulfilling familial male needs.

In *Historical Study of Women*, Amanda Capern suggests that “it is possible to argue, then, that instead of the Renaissance leading to a long line of learned women, it led to women who were more completely socialised into a subordinate role within marriage.”<sup>121</sup> Mary Sidney Herbert is a perfect example of this form of thinking. While on the one hand she could be perceived to also adhere to the type of woman who is more educated and therefore had the ability to lead a life of greater independence, there are many aspects of her literary life that suggest that she was in fact subdued into patriarchal subordination. Not only, in her writing, does she refer to herself in relation to her brother, “sister of Sir Philip Sidney” but uses her literary talent to continue her brother’s work, rather than creating anything original herself: “She attempted to carry on her brother’s work for the Protestant cause through patronage, translation, publication of Philip Sidney’s works and her own writing.”<sup>122</sup> In fact, an argument could be made that the only reason why Mary Sidney Herbert, when finishing her

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<sup>121</sup>Amanda Capern, *The Historical Study of Women: England 1500-1700* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2008), 262.

<sup>122</sup>Margaret P. Hannay, “‘Unlock my lipps’: the *Miserere mei Deus* of Anne Vaughn Lok and Mary Sidney Herbert, Countess of Pembroke,” in *Privileging Gender in Early Modern England*, ed. Jean R. Brink (Kirkville: Sixteenth Century Journal Publishers, 1993), 22-23.

brother's work after his untimely death, went on to translating and writing Psalms was thanks to Philip Sidney stipulating "the importance of the Psalms in his *Defence of Poetry*."<sup>123</sup> This, therefore, suggests that women who partook in "male" activities were only allowed to do so because their male kin permitted it. In essence, women were finding themselves in a position that, from the outside, looks to be one of freedom, but in reality they were still subordinate and being controlled by the patriarchy.

Yet, despite Sidney's activities being an example that are consistent with Kelly-Gadol's thesis, there are a number of examples of women whose behaviours and activities would counter Kelly-Gadol's view. While certainly, it would be folly to suggest that women did share quite as significantly in the achievements and progressiveness of the English Renaissance as men, to completely deny their place within the full scope of early modern England's political and cultural spheres would be naive. While women not only thrived within patriarchal dominated circles, what truly distinguishes their participation in the advantages of the Renaissance is that, when unable to insert themselves within the patriarchal spheres, they created their own female-orientated ones. Indeed, these spheres could perhaps be described as more powerful than their male equivalent, as they were able to exist without any interest from the male gaze, and thus were able to operate ungoverned, unsupervised and unlimited. While under the male eye women's activities were governed as to what was deemed suitable by their male kin, female spheres held a freedom and potential that could not be found anywhere else.

Yet, scholars such as Kelly-Gadol and Capern paint a picture in which women during this period are seen to be unknowing victims of the early modern patriarchal system that surrounds them, finding themselves more and more subordinated by the men who appear to be granting them a route out of subordination. It could even be said that women who appear

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<sup>123</sup> Margaret P. Hannay, "'Unlock my lipps': the *Miserere mei Deus* of Anne Vaughn Lok and Mary Sidney Herbert, Countess of Pembroke," 22-23.



to be living a life away from patriarchal restrictions thanks to their education, patronage, and writing, such as Lady Mary Sidney Herbert, are in fact only partaking in these past times as a way of glorifying their male relatives. Gadol and Capern's arguments that women during this period only acted with their male kin in mind and never considered their own needs and desires, is similar to the ideal female behaviours set out by the likes of Braithwaite. However, scholars such as Crawford, Mendelson, and Eales see the situation in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries very differently. While they concede that there were, of course, a number of women who did behave and live their lives in accordance with Braithwaite's ideals and as Kelly-Gadol and Capern suggest, they have presented evidence that suggests that such attitudes and behaviours were not universal to all women of the period. While I shall not endeavour to replicate the deep and meticulous analysis into this area that they have already done, their work does create a good starting point to explain the theory behind the actions of the Cavendish women, and why the study and understanding of their activities in patronage and female familial influence is so vital for us to begin to understand the importance of the multi-generation spanning relationships that women had with one another.

As with all history, what we know of the sixteenth and seventeenth century England we know through the writings of the victor, for surely when looking at the period it is the men who come out on top. In her study of three important, position defining women of the seventeenth century, Sara Mendelson begins her introduction with a couplet chanted by rebels in 1381: "When Adam delved and Eve span/Who was then the gentleman?" stating that

an economy based on the sexual division of labour seemed so natural to Englishmen that they found it difficult to conceive of any society, however inchoate, in which gender domains did not exist. In early seventeenth-century England, the boundaries defined by gender were as fundamental to the ordering of everyday life as those dictated by class.<sup>124</sup>

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<sup>124</sup> Sara Heller Mendelson, *The Mental World of Stuart Women: Three Studies*, 1.

In the same way, we have little contemporary evidence documenting the lives of the poor, so too is the case with the lives of women. The documenting of the lives of subordinate classes was not something that was seen to be necessary. In addition, given that on a wide scale, women were mainly taught to read and not write (enabling them to study the scriptures but not write any commentary on them) contemporary documents about women written by women are few and far between.

Samuel Pepys demonstrates our understanding of women from the male perspective time and time again in his diary. In one extract he refers to his time at a christening and his questioning of the women in attendance on the begetting of children.<sup>125</sup> On the surface, this could indicate to the reader that when in a collective women spoke about sex and childbirth, however, the conversation itself was not only instigated by a man but also recorded by a man. While Pepys could be giving us, as a modern reader, vital information about female conversation during the early modern period, there is nothing authentic to the conversation, as every aspect of it has been influenced by male thought and male interpretation. Pepys even took steps to extinguish the female recording of female life on the discovery that his wife, Elizabeth, kept a memoir documenting the unpleasantness of her life with him. After she refused to destroy it, as he had commanded, he took her papers “and tore them all before her face.”<sup>126</sup>

Here we have two instances where Pepys, one of the most prolific diarists and recorders in English history, demonstrates how the female voice has been altered by male motive and silenced for male motive. While certainly Pepys’ actions cannot be assumed to be universal male behaviour during this period, his unreserved inclusion of it in his diary

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<sup>125</sup> Samuel Pepys, *The Diary of Samuel Pepys: Volume 5, 1664*, ed. R Latham and W. Matthews, 11 vols. (Berkeley: University of California, 1970-83), 222.

<sup>126</sup> Samuel Pepys, *The Diary of Samuel Pepys: Volume 4, 1663*, ed. R Latham and W. Matthews, 11 vols. (Berkeley: University of California, 1970-83), 9-10.

suggests that this female silencing was common place. He wanted the memoir of his cruelty toward his wife destroyed but was happy to document in his own diary, not only the theme of her memoir, but also his destruction of it. This, therefore, suggests that it was not the cruelty that he was trying to hide, but his wife's recording of it – the female voice in public society. This then leads us to the conclusion that all female conversations during this period in which men play any role, either as instigators of conversation or recorders, is of little consequence to us as modern readers as it adds no substance to our knowledge of authentic female conversation. Female conversation thrived in oral culture yet the only way that it can be recorded is by writing it down. Given that the majority of literate people were male, female conversation is rarely recorded in its purest form, and thus we shall forever continue to be at a loss when understanding the content and context of widespread female conversation. Even if there were texts of recorded female conversation written by women, Pepys' destruction of Elizabeth's diary is the perfect example of why we are not inundated with documents detailing women's acknowledgment of their subordinated position in society. History is written by the victors, and given our lack of understanding of female conversation, my previous statement about men being the victors of history clearly stands. Yet, while we do not have evidence from the societal documentation that suggests that women were not only aware of their position but trying different methods to get out of subordination, the evidence certainly exists from outside of the public eye and behind closed doors that do suggest their collective awareness of it.

In her piece regarding the Barcelona uprisings between 1910-1918, Temma Kaplan refers to the idea of the “female consciousness” in which women work together to achieve a collective female goal.<sup>127</sup> Mendelson and Crawford state “the evidence that does survive allows us to argue that women had a strong sense of a shared condition”, going so far as to

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<sup>127</sup> Temma Kaplan, “Female Consciousness and Collective Action: The Case of Barcelona, 1910-1918,” *Signs*, Vol. 7, No. 3, Feminist Theory (Spring 1982): 545.

suggest that “they evolved ways of working together, from which they gained a degree of collective power.”<sup>128</sup> While of course, the world of turn of the twentieth century Spain and sixteenth and seventeenth-century England are two very different places, the idea of women working together and being aware of their ‘shared condition’ in differing patriarchal societies could be argued, as Mendelson and Crawford do, to be a timeless concept. This thesis demonstrates that there is clear evidence to suggest that the female consciousness that Kaplan refers to in regards to the 1910-1918 Barcelona uprising, was just as prevalent during the early modern period.

Mendelson and Crawford suggest that women “created their own culture, in part, by demarcating and controlling their own space. When special female concerns were at stake, groups of women constructed private spaces from which they excluded men. Women might also exercise spatial and cultural dominance in spheres which were under men’s nominal authority, such as the household or market.”<sup>129</sup> This, therefore, advocates the idea that women were fully aware of the patriarchal societal structure that surrounded them and rather than simply adhering to it, developed ways in which they could function within it, or even, outside of it. As Mendelson and Crawford state, they created a world alongside the already existing patriarchal world in which they could find a place where, collectively, they were able to live away from the prying and intruding eyes of their male kin and countrymen.

This awareness of a shared condition allows us to consider that Kelly-Gadol and Capern’s analysis, of women being primarily concerned with the interests of their male kin, is misguided and missing the wider scope of what female activity was achieving during the period. The expedition of Lucy Russell, Countess of Bedford’s ride to Scotland after King James I accession to the English crown is the perfect example. Russell, against all protocol and propriety, rode up to Scotland to escort Queen Anne to London after James was made

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<sup>128</sup> Sara Mendelson and Patricia Crawford, *Women in Early Modern England*, 231.

<sup>129</sup> Sara Mendelson and Patricia Crawford, *Women in Early Modern England*, 205.

King of England.<sup>130</sup> Certainly, it could be read that this was a woman trying to help her husband out of the sticky situation he found himself in after he rode with the Earl of Essex during the Essex Rebellion of 1601. There is, however, also another argument to be made, that this feat was executed to protect, enhance and secure her own position in the Royal Household. After her husband's debacle it would be a fair argument to suggest that Russell came to the decision that her husband was not to be trusted in securing prosperous positions for them at court, after all, it was thanks to him that they found themselves in their current predicament. Russell's decision worked in her favour.

Not only did she repair her husband's reputation, but it put her and her family back on the favourable side of the crown, which was perhaps her intention all along. Most importantly, however, her part in the first unofficial English welcoming party to Queen Anne landed her the position of Lady of the Bedchamber, which in turn gave her direct access to the Queen and allowed her to play the role of the Queen's confidant. Not only did her trip manage to restore her husband's, her family's and her own reputation, it put her in a position of extreme power and importance. Her awareness of the female collective consciousness and the importance of female relationships led her to the advantages of being the confidant to the most powerful woman in the country, who in turn was the confidant to the most powerful man. While her position as Lady of the Bedchamber not only placed her in an important position in Court, it also asserted her position as the member of her family who held the most influence.

Lucy Russell's behaviour demonstrates that, while she was considering her own ambitions with her actions, she was also thinking about her family. While certainly, she benefitted the most from her actions, she still restored her family's reputation and ensured them a place back in the echelons of society. This ensuring of familial interest by women is a model seen often

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<sup>130</sup> Helen Payne, "Aristocratic Women, Power, Patronage and Family Networks at the Jacobean Court," 173.

with women who find themselves in positions of power and helps to demonstrate my thesis that the Cavendishes were not simply the exception to the rule. However, what is evident within the women of the Cavendish family, which is not something that has been explored in detail before, is that while, like Russell, they concerned themselves with their own and their family's place within society, what we see with the Cavendishes is that their concern is not only for their direct family, but encompasses future generations, and in particular, their female descendants.

The fruits of this type of generational concern can be found in the close of this thesis when I look at the lives of Jane and Elizabeth Cavendish who represent the culmination of almost a century's worth of work into the furtherance of the female consciousness and working towards a female agenda. However, we also see them adopting similar behaviours as some of the women used as models in this introduction. Like Mary Boyle Rich, Jane Cavendish chose her own husband. While their circumstances and reasons differed vastly (Jane had to find her own husband as her mother had died and her father was in exile after the end of the English Civil War) Jane went against societal pressures and married a man who had no title and little position. What did attract Jane to Charles Cheyne was the fact that he was one of the few royalists left in England during the Interregnum, and as a family of staunch royalists, this meant more to her than any title or position.

The sisters also took up the act of writing, a past time that was handed down to them by their father, and like Mary Sidney Herbert, could be viewed as an activity adopted not because of their own love of it, but as a homage to their male relative - the idea being that writing created an embodiment of him while he was in exile. However, their subject matter tells a very different story. Like Lucy Russell's actions, the sisters' work shows an awareness of the female condition and the importance of the female collective. Their manuscript documents an acknowledgement of the importance of women working together and their

shared goals of a life in which they were seen as equal to men. The manuscript also acts as an example of women in conversation, away from the influence of men, in its undiluted and pure form. Through their writing, not only do we see the collaboration between sisters, but their content, both the manuscript and Jane's solo poems, also emphasise the importance of female influences on one another.

The concept of women influencing other women was not exclusive to the Cavendish family and this further demonstrates the existence of the acknowledged female collective consciousness. In her translations of David's Psalms, there are clear indications that Mary Sidney Herbert had read Anne Lok's translation of the same psalm and used it as inspiration when conducting her own translation. As Margaret Hannay demonstrates "first is the repetition of one exact phrase 'O God, God of my health.'... The second hint is a verbal echo. The countess's 'filthie fault, my faultie filthiness' seems to be an adaptation of Lok, 'my filth and fault.' The third hint is repeated rhymes, 'so/snowe' and 'wall/fall,'" <sup>131</sup> Mary Sidney Herbert would have "consulted virtually every Protestant psalm version in English, French or Latin;" therefore her choice to take inspiration from one written by a woman suggests she had a greater appreciation of the female voice in psalms' translations and that her interest in writing did not necessarily solely stem from a wish to complete her brother's work. <sup>132</sup> While her reasoning behind writing in this genre could be accredited to her brother, it would appear that while doing so, she sought the help of other female writers above men. This could allow her actions to be read as a form of solidarity between female writers and an example of the female collective consciousness, perhaps as an attempt to establish the importance of feminine craft.

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<sup>131</sup> Margaret P. Hannay, "'Unlock my lipps': the *Miserere mei Deus* of Anne Vaughn Lok and Mary Sidney Herbert, Countess of Pembroke," 24.

<sup>132</sup> Margaret P. Hannay, "'Unlock my lipps': the *Miserere mei Deus* of Anne Vaughn Lok and Mary Sidney Herbert, Countess of Pembroke," 23.

The Cavendish sisters certainly had a number of examples in their own family to take influence from. Their great-grandmother was the Elizabeth Hardwick Barley Cavendish St Loe Talbot, whose ultimate goal was forming a great familial legacy and ensuring her name and her family became one of the most important in England. When discussing her as an architectural patron, Alice Friedman analyses the role of the female patron in the creation of the early modern country house and considers the influences that women had on the final appearance of the new range of country houses that appeared during this period. She argues that Hardwick Hall “was built for a woman whose status as the head of her own household marked both her and it as unconventional and whose very role as an architectural patron transgressed the values and gender categories of her time.”<sup>133</sup>

Jane and Elizabeth’s grandmother, Katherine Ogle Cavendish, and great-aunt, Jane Ogle Talbot, appear to be the instigators of the patron-client relationship that formed their father’s own literary endeavours, as well as being women who fought to secure their title and position in society - setting the path for their female descendants to prosper from their positions. And while much emphasis, especially in terms of the influencer of their writing, comes directly from their father William Cavendish, 1<sup>st</sup> Duke of Newcastle, an argument could be made that, like much of the female activity done by women during this period that is not documented, the sisters also had a great amount of influence from their mother, Elizabeth Bassett Cavendish, who appears to have been the Cavendish children’s main parent when William was away trying to secure a prosperous position at court. It is in Jane and Elizabeth that we see the culmination of all of these women’s works and indeed a culmination of a century’s change in society. While it is true that there was an influx of strong, determined and mindful women at the end of the Civil War, Jane and Elizabeth developed these attributes before the war had even begun. This, therefore, means that rather than simply understanding

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<sup>133</sup> Alice T. Friedman, “Architecture, Authority, and the Female Gaze: Planning and Representation in the Early Modern Country House,” *Assemblage*, No. 18 (August., 1992): 41.



Jane and Elizabeth as members of an enlightened sex who allowed their past experiences to help inform and improve their future, they were trailblazers who acted in such a way before society deemed it appropriate at all.

In chapter one, I shall look at the role of Bess as the great matriarch of the Cavendish family and the person who laid the foundations for the great Cavendish dynasty. Perhaps best known for her architectural patronage, Bess' pride and joy was her renovation of Hardwick Hall, her own childhood home. Understanding the reasons for purchasing this estate are complicated. On the one hand, an argument can be made that it was an act of charity towards her brother as a way of helping him out of a potentially embarrassing financial mess, but on the other, a much more personal motive could have been at hand. The roof of Hardwick Hall could provide us with the answers to this question. Built with a display of her initials all over the top of the building, one might see this as a way of ensuring that she and her name would forever be tied to the building and its inhabitants. Yet it is the choice of the initials used that is most telling about the character of the woman who built the structure.

Chapter two will illuminate Bess' importance to the family evolution, through the study of the women she had direct influence over: Mary Cavendish Talbot, Countess of Shrewsbury, Bess' daughter, Arbella Stuart, Bess' granddaughter and Katherine Ogle Cavendish and Jane Ogle Talbot, Bess' daughter and step-daughter in law. These four women demonstrate the beginning of the evolutionary cycle of powerful and independent-thinking Cavendish women. This chapter will show the consequences of the actions associated with the collective female consciousness which were not apparent in the study of Bess. We see the downfall of Arbella and Mary and the theft of position from Katherine and Jane. And yet, despite these negatives, we still see the influential behaviours of Katherine and Jane who, despite the odds, managed to fulfil their ultimate goal of attaining the title that was rightfully theirs.

Chapters three and four will focus on the Newcastle Cavendishes and the ways in which they manipulated the Cavendish legacy to create something different from their predecessors. Chapter three will look at the marriage of William Cavendish and his first wife, Elizabeth Bassett, the woman that history almost forgot. It will examine the way that the previous generations of women influenced William and how he then, in turn, went on to use that influence to inspire the next generation of women in his family. Though this thesis primarily looked at the women of the Cavendish family, to overlook the influence that William had on Jane and Elizabeth Cavendish would be negligent, especially when one considers the almost hero-worship like status he held over his daughters, not only in life but in their writing. William is by far the most prolific patron of this study, being a patron to men of literature, science, architecture, art, and music, but it can be argued that these sizable patronage endeavours came from a desire to replicate the activities of his female predecessors. While chapter three will analyse how he and his wife were integral to the formation of their writing daughters, it will also analyse how much the women who came before him, Bess, Mary, Arbella and his own mother and aunt Katherine and Jane, were an influence on him and his life's activities. While William is the only man to be studied in this thesis, his dependency on his female relations during his life, positions him as one member of the family who was both the most inspired and most inspiring to the idea of female power and the female collective consciousness. His awareness of it, despite being a man, displays the important part it played in the running of the family.

The important role that women had on the development of William means that understanding the relationships between William and his first wife Elizabeth is of great interest. Elizabeth certainly had a lot of influence within her family home and had a great purpose within the family dynamic. When William is away at Court he writes detailed letters informing her of the Court goings-on, reminiscent of Bess' newsletters. The rearing of the

Cavendish children was also overlooked by Elizabeth, including their education. Elizabeth's position in society and her actions in life allow us to create a model for women of a similar position during this period. By examining the types of women who were of a similar standing as Elizabeth who we have more details about, and taking that examination and using it to examine the small amount of details we have about Elizabeth, it allows us to understand Elizabeth as well as the greater society of women of a similar rank to Elizabeth whom we have no details about. One of the main arguments of this thesis is that just because there is no documental evidence, does not mean that women's lives were inconsequential during this period and therefore of little interest of study. It simply means that to have a true understanding of what occurred is that little harder.

By examining Elizabeth in this way we're able to analyse what really constituted as education for women during this time, not only the education that she might have had herself, but the education that she imparted upon her children. Given the extended periods of time that William would have been away from the family home, and given that there is no evidence or suggestion that the Cavendish daughters had a tutor of their own, it is a fair assumption to make that the education of the Cavendish daughters came from Elizabeth. Due to the extent that the girls were capable in the art of composition and rhetoric, one can argue that this, therefore, means that Elizabeth herself would have also been proficient in these skills. Chapter three will provide an argument that states that Elizabeth Bassett should be as celebrated for her female achievements as William's second wife, Margaret Lucas Cavendish, as well as being celebrated as another important spoke in the Cavendish female evolutionary wheel.

It is important to study Elizabeth and William in this way as it allows us to understand their role in cultivating the achievements of what came before them, which would then lead to the successes of what came after them. Chapter four will look at the life that the two eldest

Cavendish daughters. The decision the sisters made to become writers rather than continuing the family tradition as patrons is interesting and appears to have formed thanks to the upbringing they received from their parents, as well as being a consequence of the hostile anti-Royalist environment in which they grew up in during and after the Civil War. The lives the two sisters led could be referred to as extraordinary, not only in the sense that they came from this great lineage of women who undoubtedly would have inspired them, but also for the lives they led during the Civil War: left in England alone, without their father and brothers, they were in a constant state of hostility and were often under siege within their own family's country houses while the Royalist and Parliamentary troops took turns in taking possession of their homes. In the way we see them take ownership of their own lives and their family's honour while the men of their family are absent; we also see them take control of their own literary output, solely being writers rather than patrons, something contrary to the family tradition. This then calls into question whether their decision to write rather than follow the family tradition of becoming a patron was thanks to their environment and situation during the Civil War, or whether such a change would have happened regardless of the conflict.

Sara Mendelson and Patricia Crawford suggest that “while elite boys made their escape from the maternal orbit at about age 7, girls remained under their mother's tutelage to complete an education that was increasingly focused on their prescribed gender role as housekeepers, child-bearers, and child rearers.”<sup>134</sup> While there is no evidence to enlighten us on what was taught to the Cavendish daughters, considering their outcome, it is hard to believe that the only thing that their mother taught them was how to be good housekeepers and child-bearers. The progression of empowered women suggests that the mothers of the Cavendish family took this time with their daughters and educated them in such a way that

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<sup>134</sup> Sara Mendelson and Patricia Crawford, *Women in Early Modern England*, 83.

ensured they did not submit to the idealised view of female behaviour during this period.

What this thesis will try to answer is not only why women saw the practice of patronage as a means to further this empowerment but also what this concept of evolutionary female empowerment, of the awareness of the female consciousness, tells us about the state of the idea of women during this period.

# **Chapter 2**

## **Biographical short.**

### **Elizabeth Hardwick – Bess of Hardwick,**

This chapter focuses on the life of Elizabeth Hardwick Barley Cavendish St Loe Talbot, Countess of Shrewsbury, born in 1527 to John Hardwick and Elizabeth Leeke on the Hardwick estate in Derbyshire. Her father died at the age of 40, not long after Bess was born, leaving a male heir, James, who had not yet come of age. At the age of 12 she entered the household of Anne Gainsford, Lady Zouche of Codnor Castle in Derbyshire. It is while in Lady Zouche's household that she met her first husband, Robert Barley or Barlow and they were married in 1543. However, by the December of 1544 Robert had died.<sup>135</sup>

She married her next husband, Sir William Cavendish, in 1547. Cavendish was more than twice Bess' age and already had two daughters from a previous marriage. He had been a member of the Court of Augmentations during the reign of Henry VIII and had made his fortune thanks to the Dissolution of the Monasteries.<sup>136</sup> William was the one husband with whom Bess had any children. They had eight children in total, but only six made it to maturity:

- Frances Cavendish (1548-1632)
- Temperance Cavendish (1549-1550)
- Henry Cavendish (1550-1616)
- William Cavendish (1552 – 1626)
- Charles Cavendish (1553-1617)
- Elizabeth Cavendish (1555-1582)

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<sup>135</sup> Durant quotes a letter written by the Yorkshire antiquarian, Nathaniel Johnson, in 1692, in which he states "I have been informed by some ancient gentlemen that Bess' marriage was accomplished by her being at London Attending the Lady Zouch at such time as Mr Barlow lay sick of a Chronical Distemper." - David N. Durant, *Bess of Hardwick: Portrait of an Elizabethan Dynast* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1977), 9.

<sup>136</sup> David N. Durant, *Bess of Hardwick: Portrait of an Elizabethan Dynast*, 12-14.

- Mary Cavendish (1556-1632)
- Lucrece Cavendish (1556-1556).

It is with William that Bess' interest in property and architectural patronage began, with the pair beginning the building of Chatsworth House together during their marriage.<sup>137</sup> Her marriage to Cavendish was likely the most rewarding, on a personal level, out of all of her unions. Durant states "she and Sir William thought along parallel lines, and their ambitions were united in a way which, had he lived longer, might have given him a greater place in history; a place ultimately reserved for their descendants."<sup>138</sup> Cavendish died in 1557 and left Bess a widow for the second time.

In 1559 Bess married for a third time, this time the Captain of the Guard to Queen Elizabeth I and Chief Butler of England, Sir William St Loe. He owned estates in Gloucestershire and Somerset, as well as Stowey. Upon his death in 1564 they, along with his fortune, were left in their entirety to Bess. It is estimated that her annual income after St Loe's death was around £1,600.<sup>139</sup>

This great fortune was likely the attracting feature that led Bess' fourth wife to her, George Talbot, 6<sup>th</sup> Earl of Shrewsbury. One of the most influential and important aristocrat in Elizabeth's England, the marriage of Bess and George, which took place in 1568, was shared by two sets of their children, with Bess' eldest son, Henry, marrying George's youngest daughter Grace, and Bess' youngest daughter Mary, marrying George's eldest son Gilbert. The pair, already such influential members at court in their own right before their marriage, were given the charge of Mary, Queen of Scots, during her detainment by Queen Elizabeth after the rebellion of the Scottish Lords. The responsibility put a strain on the marriage and

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<sup>137</sup> David N. Durant, *Bess of Hardwick: Portrait of an Elizabethan Dynast*, 18

<sup>138</sup> David N. Durant, *Bess of Hardwick: Portrait of an Elizabethan Dynast*, 12

<sup>139</sup> David N. Durant, *Bess of Hardwick: Portrait of an Elizabethan Dynast*, 53



despite intercessions for Queen Elizabeth herself, the pair became separated and remained estranged until Talbot's death in 1590, when Bess was made a widow for the 4<sup>th</sup> and final time.<sup>140</sup>

After Talbot's death Bess spent the remaining years of her life completing her architectural projects and taking care of her rebellious granddaughter, Arbella Stuart. She died in 1608 at the age of 81 and is buried in All Saints Cathedral in Derby.

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<sup>140</sup> Pamela Kettle, *Oldcotes: The Last Mansion built by Bess of Hardwick*, 12

## **Elizabeth Talbot, Countess of Shrewsbury: The Beginning of the Hardwick/Cavendish**

### **Legacy.**

Phyllis Rackin, in “Misogyny is Everywhere”, makes an interesting observation when she suggests that “reminders that women were expected to be chaste, silent, and obedient probably occur more frequently in recent scholarship than they did in the literature of Shakespeare’s time.”<sup>141</sup> While certainly, this is true it does raise the question as to how modern scholarship perceives and interprets female behaviours during the sixteenth and seventeenth century and how it is this concept of the chaste, silent and obedient woman became such a vital part of its construction. The idea of women following such ideals was certainly discussed in the early modern period, in biblical writings as well as in behavioural texts written by the likes of William Whateley, Richard Braithwaite, and Thomas Bentley. However, the fact that such books exist, suggests that women did not naturally adhere to these prescribed personality traits.<sup>142</sup> For these behavioural books to be written there must have been a demand to imprint these values on women who clearly were not organically inclined to follow the chaste, silent and obedient regime.

One such example of a woman whose activities did not match the ideals set out by Reformation England’s church writings can be found in the life of Elizabeth Hardwick Barley Cavendish St. Loe Talbot. Rising from a lowly gentry family to become the Countess (and

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<sup>141</sup> Phyllis Rackin, “Misogyny Is Everywhere,” in *A Feminist Companion to Shakespeare*, ed. Dymphna Callaghan (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2000), 44.

<sup>142</sup> See William Whately, Vicar of Banbury, *A Bride-Bush; or, a direction for married persons plainly describing the duties common to both, and peculiar to each of them, etc.* (Bristol: 1748), as well as those mentioned above in the Introduction - *The English Gentlewoman, drawne out to the full body: expressing, what habiliments doe best attire her, what ornaments doe best adorne her, what complements doe best accomplish her* by Richard Braithwaite and *The Monument of Matrones:containing seuen seuerall Lamps of Virginitie or distinct treatises...compiled for the neccessarie use of both sexes out of the sacred Scriptures, and other approued authors, by T. Bentley. B.L.*

then Dowager Countess) of Shrewsbury, the activities in her marriages, accumulating her wealth, and her role as a property magnate, are well documented. The role she plays as the Cavendish family matriarch has, however, been less explored.

Growing up in a family that was always just one step away from falling into extinction, during her later years, Bess' behaviours can be explained as the acts of a woman who craved a stability that could only be achieved through creating a lasting legacy that would not only carry her family, but her ideals, for generations to come.<sup>143</sup> She might have built monuments of stone and mortar as physical and lasting testaments to her rise and achievements, but monuments also existed in the shapes of her children, within whom she instilled her ideals and attitudes. As a woman so interested with the idea of legacy and heritage, Bess obviously focused her attention on her son, the male heir to the great empire that she created.<sup>144</sup> Bess' actions, however, whether purposeful or accidental, also created a ripple that formed a female-conscious collective that continued to develop for generations through her female descendants. Her position as a woman of information and politically high standing meant that she achieved notoriety, even in her own lifetime, as a powerful woman of the English Elizabethan court. This, in turn, helped her achieve advantageous and beneficial marriages, not only for herself but for her family and cemented a place for her of influence and respect during Elizabeth's reign.

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<sup>143</sup> David N. Durant, *Bess of Hardwick: Portrait of an Elizabethan Dynast*, 91.

<sup>144</sup> Durant states that "In those eternal and agonising nights when death would not come, Bess' thoughts were on William; it was through him that she would receive some sort of eternity, he was to carry on the dynasty she had founded." David N. Durant, *Bess of Hardwick: Portrait of an Elizabethan Dynast*, 91. She also paid for William's first title, Baron Cavendish - Pamela Kettle, *Oldcotes: The Last Mansion built by Bess of Hardwick*, 25.

## Modern Perceptions of Bess.

Bess' childhood was an unsettling one. As her father's death came before her brother James was of age, the Court of Wards seized the family's assets until such a time as he was able to legally reclaim them. This turbulent time during the formative years of her life appears to have been a driving force behind Bess' tireless work throughout her adult life to ensure this experience was never repeated on her children or their children after them. Her life was dedicated to creating a family dynasty, with her as the matriarch, in a family of wealth and stability. Her need for stability is never more evident than when considering her relationship with her eldest son, and natural heir, Henry Cavendish. She arranged a marriage for him to Grace Talbot, his step-sisters; an affluent marriage to a prosperous and respectable family. But as Henry had children, none of which with his wife, and therefore created no legitimate heirs, while squandering his life living off the position that Bess had given to him and not achieving anything of significance for himself, Bess disinherited him from her will and her legacy. While, as the heir apparent to Chatsworth House as his father's son, he received the estate after his father's death, he inherited nothing but an empty shell, as Bess had stripped it of all of her own furnishings, which made up the bulk of the internal aesthetics.<sup>145</sup> She took them all to Hardwick, where she was building a new estate for her second son, William, the stable son who did as he was told. After Bess' death, unlike Henry, William was gifted not only Hardwick Hall, but all the furnishings came included.<sup>146</sup> This act was Bess making clear that her dynasty would only include those she thought were worthy and capable to continue the work that she had started, and Henry, with his behaviour, did not fit into those requirements.

In order to cement her family's dynastical aspirations, Bess created her great

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<sup>145</sup> David N. Durant, *Bess of Hardwick: Portrait of an Elizabethan Dynast*, 218.

<sup>146</sup> Philip Riden and Dudley Fowkes, *Hardwick: A Great House and Its Estates*, 37.

Cavendish property empire, as well as advantageous marriages for herself and her children. Perhaps the best description of Bess' life was written by Horace Walpole in his copy of Arthur Collins' *The Historical Collection of the Noble Families of Cavendishe, Holles, Vere, Harley, and Ogle*. In the margins of the chapter about Bess he wrote:

Four times the nuptial bed she warmed  
And every time so well performed  
That when death spoiled each Husband's billing  
He left the Widow every shilling  
Sad was the Dame, but not defected  
Five stately mansions she erected  
With more than Royal pomp, to vary  
The prison of captive Mary  
When Hardwicke's Tower shall bow their head  
Nor Mass be more in Worksop said  
When Bolsover's fair frame shall tend,  
Like Oldcoates, to its destined end  
When Chatsworth known no Cavendish  
bounties,  
Let fame forget this costly Countess.<sup>147</sup>

Written by Walpole in 1760, he describes Bess in the same way she is considered today. While his description of her as someone who 'so well performed' could be read as a reference to her role in the bedroom, it could also be read in a more favourable way, commending her role as the dutiful wife, yet still achieving her intended goals. This reading of the text is further supported with his description of her as being sad after her widowhoods yet never defected; never steering away from her ultimate goal despite the hardship of widowhood and having to start again - her drive and sense of purpose never tarnishing. The loss of husbands did not stop her from fulfilling her goal of creating a stable dynasty.

This then brings us to the second half of the poem, where Walpole refers to each of the houses that were in the possession of at least one branch of the Cavendish family: Hardwick, Oldcotes, and Chatsworth (William bought Chatsworth from Henry after Henry hit financial

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<sup>147</sup> Horace Walpole, "Margin Notes: Epitaph on Elizabeth Talbot, Countess of Shrewsbury," in Arthur Collins, *The Historical Collections of the Noble Families of Cavendishe, Holles, Vere, Harley and Ogle, with the lives of most remarkable Persons* (London: Edward Withers, 1752), 10.

difficulty) belonged to the Devonshire Cavendishes, and Worksop and Bolsover belonging to the Newcastle Cavendishes. Here Walpole demonstrates how vastly spread the Cavendish empire still was over 150 years after the death of its founder. Even at the time of the poem's composition, Bess's memory still remains so closely associated with the family's fame. Walpole's epitaph demonstrates the importance of buildings to Bess' legacy, and that only when the last brick has fallen and no family member remains within their halls, may this lady be forgotten. The family estates are solid, constant emblems of the family's importance and power and long after the families have died out the buildings would remain as testaments to the great family that once lived there, with her name forever associated as the matriarch of it all.

It is because of this important position that she held within the family that we see generations of women trying to emulate the life that Bess lived. Her memory allowed them to understand that they did not need to live within the constant constraints of sixteenth and seventeenth century England's patriarchy, set out to them by the medium of church teachings, but could follow a different route. Bess' life, in general, can be read as an exception to the rule. Her activities, whether they be building, news-sharing or social climbing, gives the impression of a woman who lived outside of the constraints of early modern patriarchal England. For Bess, marriages, patronage, and gossip were her tools to create a longing impression: the headstrong, politically motivated, dynastically obsessed Derbyshire woman with red hair and small, black, calculating eyes.

#### A Woman's World: Women's Processes to Rising Up The Ladder.

Kelly-Gadol states:

a new division between personal and public life made itself felt as the state came to organize Renaissance society, and with that division, the modern relation of the sexes made its appearance, even among the Renaissance nobility. Noblewomen, too, were increasingly removed from public concerns – economic, political, and cultural – and

although they did not disappear into the private realm of family and domestic concerns as full as their sisters in the patrician bourgeoisie, their loss of public power made itself felt in new constraints placed upon their personal as well as their social lives.”<sup>148</sup>

In a society where such importance was placed upon bible teachings, it is unsurprising that women were kept away from matters of importance. Eve’s part in the expulsion of man from the Garden of Eden would explain why men felt it necessary to strip women of any important or powerful responsibility. As Sara Mendelson and Patricia Crawford suggest “writers on legal topics, for example, borrowed from theology to justify female exclusion from the political realm.”<sup>149</sup> The new form of humanist teachings and learning in England during this period, however, was beginning to alter people’s perspective of the female ability. Mendelson and Crawford suggest that this change in opinion began with the “changing intellectual climate of the late seventeenth century.”<sup>150</sup> The same thing is proposed by Jacqueline Eales who declares that “from the mid-seventeenth century, women began to argue that the restraints imposed on them originated not from any innate inferiority of the female sex, but from society’s understanding of constructions of what was appropriate male and female behaviour, in other words from nurture rather than from nature.”<sup>151</sup> However, like her granddaughters after her, Bess’ activities come before the universal changing of the tide and began taking strides outside of the confines of patriarchal England from the mid- to late sixteenth century.

For women, especially within the aristocracy, the model for success and placement normally came through only one route – marriage. Should a woman have aspirations for herself and her family, it was generally achieved by marrying her way there, and thus, the foundations of female empowerment found itself reliant upon men. This, however, does not

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<sup>148</sup> Kelly-Gadol, “Did Women have a Renaissance?,” 160.

<sup>149</sup> Sara Mendelson and Patricia Crawford, *Women in Early Modern England*, 33.

<sup>150</sup> Sara Mendelson and Patricia Crawford, *Women in Early Modern England*, 34.

<sup>151</sup> Jacqueline Eales, *Women In Early Modern England, 1500-1700*, 4.

mean that all women with aspirations stopped when they secured a prosperous marriage.

While an education on par with men was not generally deemed appropriate for women that does not mean that it did not happen. Of the few women who were given a wider syllabus to learn from, they were mainly found within aristocratic families, whose parents believed that to obtain a suitable and affable match, girls required some knowledge of diplomacy, philosophy, and languages. Amy Louise Erikson suggests that Daniel Defoe's aim in proposing education for women "was to make them fit companions for men, and his proposed curriculum was less rigorous than those proposed by the likes of Mary Astell in her *Serious Proposal to the Ladies*."<sup>152</sup>

This idea of 'fit companions for men' was adopted by Sir Anthony Cooke. The education that he gave to his daughters served them well when it came for them to marry. His eldest daughter, Mildred, married William Cecil (later Lord Burghley) the man who would go on to be one of Queen Elizabeth's most trusted advisors. Stephen Alford has examined the importance of Cecil's own education as a factor to his success but, as Gemma Allen suggests, "the need for that approach [should] be extended to women, by demonstrating the centrality of the Cookes' linguistic skills to their political agency."<sup>153</sup> Cecil certainly had aspirations of greatness and it is unlikely that he would have chosen a wife who would not be able to help him attain that, as such, the education that Anthony Cooke gave to his daughter could have been a decisive factor in the Cecil-Cooke union. It certainly was not a deterrent in the marriage, with Cecil describing Mildred on her funeral monument in Westminster Abbey as 'dearest above all.' When it came to his political career, Mildred's education was of a great service to both him and her.

With Bess, however, there is no evidence of a robust education in the same vein as Mildred's, yet she achieved just as advantageous marriages and achieved the same placing on

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<sup>152</sup> Amy Louise Erikson, *Women & Property in Early Modern England* (London: Routledge, 2002), 13.

<sup>153</sup> Gemma Allen, *The Cooke Sisters: Education, piety and politics in Early Modern England*, 11.



the political scale as Mildred. While Mildred achieved position and influence separate from William, Mildred's achievements were in pursuance of her husband's goals; she was indeed taught to be a 'fit companion' for her husband. Yet Bess represents herself separate from her various husbands. Never is that more obvious than when looking at Hardwick New Hall and seeing the giant concrete structures upon the roof comprising of the letters "ES". Bess did not simply want to be known as Elizabeth, Countess of Shrewsbury, wife of George Talbot, the Earl of Shrewsbury; she wanted to be known as Elizabeth Shrewsbury (ES) a title she had to obtain by her own right. Obviously, to completely disassociate herself from her marital links was difficult. It was uncommon and highly unlikely that she would be granted a title independently from a man and indeed she gained her Shrewsbury title through her husband, but that, for Bess, would have been a considerable achievement. To have found herself in the position to be a suitable match for the 6<sup>th</sup> Earl of Shrewsbury was entirely of her own making. And therefore, Bess symbolised in stone that she did not want to be remembered as the wife of an important man but the equal of an important man. She wanted to be known in her own right, through her own merits, as the woman who rose to become Elizabeth Shrewsbury. Bess' achievements in her life meant that she was often as highly regarded, if not more so, as her husbands, and not just because of her marriages. She wanted her elevation from her more humble beginnings to be remembered, cast in stone, to ensure her legacy would always be remembered.

### The Role of a Political Force

While her work in securing a dynastic legacy and the foundations in building she used to do this are the most imperative aspects of Bess life to this thesis, to understand who she was and understand how she got to the positions she achieved, helps to explain why her legacy was so long-lasting and influential to the women who came after her. One aspect was her role as an intelligencer; the distributor of gossip and news. Like the female gossipers of England's early

modern court, Bess understood the power of news and developed for herself a "sophisticated intelligence network" that enabled her, in some cases, to be one of the most informed people in the country.<sup>154</sup> Sara Jayne Steen points out that her network was so vast and of such ability that "she knew the articles of peace concluded with France before English translations were available, was given details of treason trials, and was updated on foreign news circulating court."<sup>155</sup> Daybell describes how she received word of the assassination of the French King, Henri III in "all its macabre details."<sup>156</sup> The newsletters that the Countess received signified her status as an intelligencer. While most of the correspondence she received was written in a formality that suggested they were intended for a larger audience than just herself, they were primarily addressed to her, insinuating that the news was intended initially for her, but then to be released to whomever she wanted. In fact, while some letters were addressed to both her and George Talbot, 6<sup>th</sup> Earl of Shrewsbury, she still received numerous newsletters addressed solely to her, even when she and the 6<sup>th</sup> Earl were together.<sup>157</sup> Indeed, after Bess and George separated he found it hard to find people to take into his household, as he knew many people were regularly reporting to his estranged wife: "I have too many spyes in my howse alreedy."<sup>158</sup> If this is true, the fact that Bess had people within the Earl's own household reporting to her instead of her husband shows how politically weighted she had become. Even if it wasn't true, the fact the Earl of Shrewsbury was so concerned that his wife had people in his home reporting back to her, demonstrates his belief in her influence and how far her

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<sup>154</sup> Sara Jayne Steen, "The Cavendish-Talbot Women: Playing a High Stakes Game," 155.

<sup>155</sup> Sara Jayne Steen, "The Cavendish-Talbot Women: Playing a High Stakes Game," 149.

<sup>156</sup> James Daybell, "'Suche newes as on the Quenes hye ways we have mett': the News and Intelligence Networks of Elizabeth Talbot, Countess of Shrewsbury (c. 1527-1608)," in *Women and Politics in Early Modern England*, ed. James Daybell (Hampshire: Ashgate, 2004), 127.

<sup>157</sup> James Daybell, "'Suche newes as on the Quenes hye ways we have mett': the News and Intelligence Networks of Elizabeth Talbot, Countess of Shrewsbury (c. 1527-1608)," 118.

<sup>158</sup> Sara Jayne Steen, "The Cavendish-Talbot Women: Playing a High Stakes Game," 149.

network spread.<sup>159</sup>

Bess achieved this as a woman who lived separately from the court.<sup>160</sup> James Daybell explains how “in fact, women at court were at the very centre of where news was exchanged: Anne Talbot thought the court a place to ‘learn’ news ‘worthey they wrytngē’”.<sup>161</sup> Female courtiers were also themselves a forum for news: “conduits to the monarch, courtiers, and officials, and purveyors of intelligence more generally, intelligence that found its way into the counties through correspondence and by word of mouth”.<sup>162</sup> Considering general female influence in early modern society, it might seem highly contradictory that women were allowed to be so knowledgeable of court news. However, their position of being inconsequential in political matters actually made them the best conduits of information. Matters discussed between women were generally deemed as unimportant gossip and men generally found no interest in matters that they discussed: “women are traditionally seen as ‘gossips’, peddlers of ephemeral and trifling tittle-tattle, men are described as ‘intelligencers’, suppliers of information of serious import.”<sup>163</sup> It was because of this misconception of what women discussed that women, in fact, became vital to the intelligence exchange process. Given that men considered matters discussed between women nothing more than mere ‘tittle-tattle’ women’s letters were less likely to be intercepted en route to their intended audience. As demonstrated by the way Bess received letters addressed to her instead of her husband, it is clear that women were inadvertently permitted into the male political sphere because their

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<sup>159</sup> James Daybell explains how her collection of over 200 letters were sent to and from over 60 correspondents. James Daybell, “‘Suche newes as on the Quenes hye ways we have mett’: the News and Intelligence Networks of Elizabeth Talbot, Countess of Shrewsbury (c. 1527-1608),” 117.

<sup>160</sup> Sara Jayne Steen, “The Cavendish-Talbot Women: Playing a High Stakes Game,” 148.

<sup>161</sup> James Daybell, “‘Suche newes as on the Quenes hye ways we have mett’: The News and Intelligence Networks of Elizabeth Talbot,” 115.

<sup>162</sup> James Daybell, “‘Suche newes as on the Quenes hye ways we have mett’: The News and Intelligence Networks of Elizabeth Talbot,” 115.

<sup>163</sup> James Daybell, “‘Suche newes as on the Quenes hye ways we have mett’: The News and Intelligence Networks of Elizabeth Talbot,” 116.

involvement within it was deemed to not be a threat.

Their very lack of importance to the political sphere, allowed them to generate an important role within it as passers of news. It allowed them to create a space in which they could operate within the political sphere in the shadows, cultivating political power without anyone taking any particular notice. They were able to create leverage over those they had information on or indeed whom they decided to pass information on to. Bess is sent even news as a token of apology, as George Chatworth writes “these are to desyre your honors pardon for the last letters I sent you.”<sup>164</sup> Daybell describes her interest in news as a “need to be informed.”<sup>165</sup> Her awareness that information meant power and importance demonstrates her knowledge of how the inner workings of a political system worked. The more knowledge an individual had the greater advantage they could hold over others. The same could be said when considering the lack of education granted to women by men. This acknowledgement that educated men would always have an advantage over women because of their lack of knowledge was also the very thing that allowed Bess, and other women, to use the news as a way of attaining some form of political power for themselves. By assuming women were incapable of much, because of their lack of education, they allowed a space to be created within the political sphere where women were the purveyors of news to be created. Bess took full advantage of the opportunities available to her as an intelligencer, demonstrated by the Earl of Shrewsbury's suspicions over her spies. The manipulation of her role as intelligencer and peddler of news allowed Bess to not only obtain a position of authority above Shrewsbury, as her husband, but above that of one of the country's most important Earls. Her role as an intelligencer was an early example

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<sup>164</sup> The Letters of Bess of Hardwick, Letter from George Chatworth to Bess of Hardwick dated 13<sup>th</sup> February 1606/7. <https://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=14>.

<sup>165</sup> James Daybell, “‘Suche newes as on the Quenes hye ways we have mett’: The News and Intelligence Networks of Elizabeth Talbot,” 127.

of her demonstrating that women could operate outside the normal restraints of patriarchal England that her female descendants could take influence from.

### The Importance and Prestige of a Property Empire.

Bess might have obtained a position of power and influence through her role as an intelligencer and purveyor of news, but they were aspects of her influence that were intangible. Her position could be easily taken away at the smallest mistake and her life's work would be null and void. In order to secure her legacy, Bess had to find another way to demonstrate how far she had risen through early modern society. Possibly one of her greatest achievements was the creation of her property empire. The concept of house building embodied the lasting reputation that she desired, allowing her to put emphasis on the important factors of her life that she wanted the world to be aware of. When discussing the change in aristocratic houses between the late fifteenth century and the end of the seventeenth century Cooper notes that by:

developing new plans and in adopting new styles of buildings, owners and builders were responding in ways that they felt appropriate to the changing demands of family and community, fashion and class. In building fine houses, the gentry were fulfilling what they saw as their duty to society and to themselves. In the decoration of their houses, they showed their taste, in the plans of their houses they provided for new standards of living, and both layout and appearance expressed the status and the evolving manners of the governing class.<sup>166</sup>

Buildings, houses, and estates were used for more than simply housing possessions and using as a roof over one's head. What the gentry and aristocracy of this period realised was their homes could now be used as forms of expression. Buildings, especially familial seats, could be used as a way of demonstrating one's worth and position. Cooper continues, "the many attempts to control other kinds of displays indicate clearly the extent to which appearance was taken as the indication of the well-ordered society, and suggests the important place of the

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<sup>166</sup> Nicholas Cooper, *Houses of the Gentry 1480-1680*, 3.

house in that society as an indicator of social worth.”<sup>167</sup> The practicalities of living in the estate came secondary to its display of grandeur. Bess was able to begin to use her estates as examples to display her personality and importance while demonstrating to the world her capabilities.

Bess’ quest to establish herself as the family matriarch is a testament to the idea she did not remain within the structures of early modern regimes. Like Lady Anne Clifford and Alice Thornton, both of whom had to stringently defend their rights to the properties they were fully entitled to, she understood the value and importance of a woman owning her own property.<sup>168</sup> In *Patronage, Culture and Power- The Early Cecils* it is suggested that “contemporaries regarded architecture and buildings as a man’s world, but the provisions of furnishings and domestic comforts as the wife’s.”<sup>169</sup> However, for a woman like Bess, who clearly wanted to be remembered separately from her husbands, an important entity in her own right, she took charge of both the building, the furnishing and domestic comforts.

Amy Louise Erikson suggests that women such a Mary More and Mary Astell were of the belief that “economic dependence on husbands was one of the principal reasons – if not *the* principal reason – for women’s subjugation, and that the constraints of marriage and motherhood could reasonably be compared with slavery.”<sup>170</sup> Though they were writing in the 1670s and 1690s, their ideas could still be considered when thinking about women at the end of the sixteenth century. England after the English Civil War saw women taking greater liberties. If the idea of economic dependence on husbands being thought to be the principal reason female subjugation existed during the end of the seventeenth century, the reality of it at

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<sup>167</sup> Nicholas Cooper, *House of the Gentry 1480-1680*, 15.

<sup>168</sup> Amy Louise Erikson, “Possession – and the Other One-Tenth of the Law: Assessing Women’s Ownership and Economic Rules in Early Modern England,” 371.

<sup>169</sup> Pauline Croft, ed., *Patronage, Culture and Power: The Early Cecils*, 285.

<sup>170</sup> Amy Louise Erikson, “Possession – and the Other One-Tenth of the Law: Assessing Women’s Ownership and Economic Rules in Early Modern England,” 13.

the end of the sixteenth would have been harsher. While it is unlikely that a woman who married four times would be the type of person who would consider marriage as a form of slavery, the idea that property ownership allowed women dependence from their husbands is definitely an ideal that is pursued by Bess. After being subjected to the harsh realities of what happens when a father dies before his heir comes of age, Bess' fear is likely to be the contributing factor that caused her to ensure she and her children always had independence from her husbands. In the way that her mother had to be quick thinking to ensure the survival of her family, Bess knew that if she was going to survive, it had to be because she had secured her own way to do so.

Her partner in the development of her great property empire is a man who has been described as “the most famous of the few Elizabethan architectural designers we know by name”<sup>171</sup> Riden's description of Smythson as “the leading designer of great houses of the late 16<sup>th</sup> century” demonstrates the importance that Bess put on creating the right aesthetic for the message she was trying to make with her building projects.<sup>172</sup> Jeremy Musson states that “country houses have always been about display[,] they were built to be looked at not just to be lived in.”<sup>173</sup> When looking at the various estates that she built, Hardwick in particular, it is difficult not to be filled with a sense of amazement and awe. Her employment of Smythson itself was a way of demonstrating her position. Philip Riden states that Smythson was “at the height of his fame as an architect of great country houses, especially in the region to which Hardwick belonged” when he began working with Bess.<sup>174</sup> Before coming under Bess' patronage Smythson had worked with Sir John Thynne on Longleat House, so Bess would have been aware of his work and fame. Mark Girouard has described the houses Smythson

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<sup>171</sup> Philip Riden and Dudley Fowkes, *Hardwick: A Great House and Its Estates*, 26.

<sup>172</sup> Philip Riden and Dudley Fowkes, *Hardwick: A Great House and Its Estates*, 1.

<sup>173</sup> Jeremy Musson, *How To Read a Country House*, 8.

<sup>174</sup> Philip Riden and Dudley Fowkes, *Hardwick: A Great House and its Estates*, 29.

worked on as “the most magnificent, romantic or ingenious houses in England.”<sup>175</sup> This certainly would have been one of the reasons why Bess decided upon using Smythson. Her homes were her way of announcing her family's arrival and dominance and their continued presence within the upper echelons of the society that she envisioned for her dynasty. While her homes acted as a way of demonstrating her rise up the social ladder, her choice of choosing to build a new Hall at Hardwick, a mere stone's throw away from the old Hall, demonstrates Bess acknowledgment of the importance of lineage, an acknowledgement she certainly passed down through her family.

After her estrangement from the Earl of Shrewsbury and Chatsworth, the house that she had been involved in building with her second husband, William Cavendish, being entailed to Henry, Bess chose her childhood home, Hardwick Hall, as her place of residence. It was never, however, her intention to simply live within the childhood home that had been witness to such a turbulent time of uncertainty in her life. Having reached a position where neither she nor her children would ever find themselves in such circumstances again, Bess designed a way to strip her childhood home of those memories and align them with the important position she now had. In 1583 she paid £9,500 for the Hardwick estates and lands, "buying them in the name of William, her second son" and four years later, in 1587, began the restoration and extension of Hardwick Hall.<sup>176</sup> Her building works were something that she appears to have involved herself in heavily, as evidenced by a letter she sent to Richard Bagott on the 19<sup>th</sup> of September, 1594. She discusses the case of the “lewde workman Tuft whoe haft delt very badly and lewdly with me.”<sup>177</sup> The most interesting mention in this letter is the number of times she refers to herself dealing and hiring these tradesmen “he vndertoke

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<sup>175</sup> Mark Girouard, *Robert Smythson and the Architecture of the Elizabethan Era* (London: Country Life, 1966), 15.

<sup>176</sup> Pamela Kettle, *Oldcotes: The Last Mansion built by Bess of Hardwick*, 12.

<sup>177</sup> Letter from Bess of Hardwick to Richard Bagot, 19<sup>th</sup> September 1594.

<https://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=1>.



and Covenanted to doe great workes for me” and thus leaves us to assume that, while she may have bought Hardwick along with other houses under her son’s name, when it came to the production, the refurbishment, and building of the estates, Bess played a central role.<sup>178</sup>

Another example of Bess’ involvement in her building works comes from a time before she had even reached the position of power that she did by the time she was Hardwick Hall. In a letter written just a year into her marriage to Sir William St Loe she writes to Francis Whitfield in which she discusses the battlements at Chatsworth: “I haue bene att so great charges I thynke yet nott materyall yf the batlemente for the sydes by made thys yere or no for I am sure the batelmente mouste be sett oupe after the porche be couered.”<sup>179</sup> These letters are a clear indication that from at least the time of her marriage to Sir William St. Loe that Bess took an integral part in the completion of her building works. It also suggests that she had a clear understanding of building processes, with the last example demonstrating she was aware of how battlements should be set up before the porch can be covered. She then goes on to suggest her preference of material, commenting “yet of bothe do I lyke batter the creste beyng of the same stone.”<sup>180</sup> Bess was certainly not a woman who merely dealt with the furnishing of the inside of the house like contemporary practice would indicate. Her interactions with the workmen also indicate that she was not troubled by communicating or giving orders to the opposite sex.

### The Important Message of Heraldry Within Her Buildings.

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<sup>178</sup> Letter from Bess of Hardwick to Richard Bagot, 19<sup>th</sup> September 1594.

<https://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=1>.

<sup>179</sup> Letter from Bess of Hardwick to Francis Whitfield, 20<sup>th</sup> October [c. 1560]

<https://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=101>.

<sup>180</sup> Letter from Bess of Hardwick to Francis Whitfield, 20<sup>th</sup> October [c. 1560]

<https://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=101>.

The idea of family and lineage were very important to Bess' idea of success and legacy and this can be seen throughout her various houses, Hardwick, the beginning of her own story, is the shining example of her acknowledgement of heraldic importance. The differing reasons behind Bess' acquisition of Hardwick are conflicting. Before Bess acquired Hardwick, through the help of her son William, Hardwick had belonged to her brother James Hardwick who had fallen on hard times financially when he accrued substantial debt trying to renovate Hardwick Hall himself. In 1565 he sent a letter to Bess asking whether she could be of help to him with his finances, asking to borrow money from his sister: "I do nat beleev that mean your lettr I shall receve enye money of Master Clerke and streghte I beseche you yf yn any wysse can to helpe me wyth one handrythe poundes or yf ye can nat helpe me to so mucche to helpe me to fyfye poundes."<sup>181</sup> Ultimately with a number of creditors requesting money from him, James was unable to repay his debts and was imprisoned and died in The Fleet, the debtors prison, at which point Bess bought the estate, in William's name, "from the Lord Chancellor and auditor acting for the bankrupt estate of her deceased brother."<sup>182</sup> As part of the agreement of sale, William had to "satisfy Hardwick's remaining creditors and make some provision for John Hardwick"<sup>183</sup> Bess had spent a substantial amount of time and energy over the last few decades trying to create an idea of the importance of her family, and her brother's bad debts would certainly have been a besmirching incident to the contrary of that idea. Her family dynasty could have hardly been founded on secure ground if the matriarch's own ancestral family home had been lost in a cloud of misjudgement and debt.

On the other hand, however, actions throughout her life also indicate that family, or at least the idea and concepts that come along with family, meant a great deal to her. With this

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<sup>181</sup> Letter from James Hardwick to Bess of Hardwick, 20<sup>th</sup> January 1565, <https://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=31>.

<sup>182</sup> Pamela Kettle, *Oldcotes: The Last Mansion built by Bess of Hardwick*, 12.

<sup>183</sup> Philip Riden and Dudley Fowkes, *Hardwick: A Great House and its Estate*, 18.

knowledge, we are able to create a picture of Bess acquiring Hardwick, not only as a display of familial and heraldic symbolism but also out of familial obligation. Upon the acquisition of the property, provisions were made for John Hardwick, James' son, which indicates that Bess had an interest in the outcome of her nephew and her brother's heir. It would also have stirred up unwelcome memories of what she and her mother and brother had to go through after the sudden early death of her father, and, now given she found herself in a position where she could help, ensured that a similar fate did not befall the Hardwick family again.

This idea of thinking is supported by the interest in family that is seen throughout Hardwick Hall, thanks to the heraldic markings she emblazoned all over the house. As Thomas Woodcock and John Martin Robinson explain "the acquisition of a coat of arms was one of the signs that a family had 'arrived'"<sup>184</sup> and at Hardwick "we are left in no doubt that the local squire's daughter had made spectacularly good."<sup>185</sup> She decorated much of the house with examples of her paternal arms, on both facades on the outside of the house and in the Entrance Hall over the chimneypiece. The Drawing Room has another plasterwork armorial chimneypiece, as well as heraldic imagery embroidered on the furnishings in the house. The Cut-Velvet bedroom has a plasterwork on the over-mantel of the family tree, with the coats of arms of all the different members of the family, both immediate and extended. When walking up the path to the house, the Hardwick coat of arms is built at the top of the building, with two Cavendish stags holding it up. Even the gate has Bess' own personal coat of arms with the countess coronet placed on top of it. The use of heraldic display was not uncommon in the houses of great families, with "the purpose of heraldry always [being], at least in part, show, and pageantry, and it has long had the practical function of distinguishing, differencing and illustrating persons, families, and communities."<sup>186</sup>

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<sup>184</sup> Thomas Woodcock and John Martin, *Heraldry in National Trust Houses*, 10.

<sup>185</sup> Thomas Woodcock and John Martin, *Heraldry in National Trust Houses*, 95.

<sup>186</sup> Thomas Woodcock and John Martin, *Heraldry in National Trust Houses*, 7.

The interesting thing about Bess' use of heraldic imagery, however, comes from the alterations and additions that she made to coats of arms and what they tell us about her own ideas of herself and her place within not just her own Hardwick legacy. Her continual inclusion of her second husband's arms, the Cavendish name, and legacy that would be continued through her children emphasises her awareness of the integral part that he played and would continue to play in her legacy. Having lost the right to Chatsworth, the home she had built with Cavendish, to her son, Hardwick was now, for Bess, the house where her nominated heirs would forever reside.

The idea of the close connection between family and houses was also displayed by one of Bess' neighbours, Sir Francis Willoughby, in his own estate, Wollaton Hall; another one of Robert Smythson's creations. When discussing the existing plans for Wollaton Hall, Alice T. Friedman explains how crucial Sir Francis was to the overall theme and design of the house. She states

Although the writing on the sketch itself is not Willoughby's, the two sides of paper, one with a plan, the other with a family tree, bear witness to two issues which preoccupied him during the 1570s; his ancestral family status and his country house. Indeed, for him, the two were one, and the strength of the metaphoric 'house' of the Willoughby's found expression in the solidity of the real brick and mortar.<sup>187</sup>

Hardwick was to be the great seat of the new, important Cavendish family and Bess ensured that her Hardwick position and the influence of the family, as well as its future aspirations, could be seen throughout the house; her importance to her second husband's family name and all his descendants, forever tied to its walls.

Malcolm Airs observes that "the wealth of initials, dates, heraldic devices and mottoes to be found emblazoned on buildings of Elizabethan and Jacobean date are sufficient testimonies to their builder's motive for immortality."<sup>188</sup> Whether it can be said that Bess was necessarily trying to attain immortality for herself and her name, it can certainly be said she wanted immortality for her achievements and her legacy, and wanted to lay out the significance she had to the future prosperity of her descendants. Certainly, when it came to

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<sup>187</sup> Alice T. Friedman, *House and Household in Elizabethan England: Wollaton Hall and the Willoughby Family*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), 37.

<sup>188</sup> Malcolm Airs, *The Making of the English Country House*, 8.



Over-mantel of the chimney in Hardwick Hall's Entrance Hall



Over-mantel of chimney in Hardwick Hall's Drawing Room



Family tree featuring the family's coats of arms found on the over-mantel of the chimney in the Cut-Velvet Bedroom at Hardwick Hall.



Bess Of Hardwick's coat of arms atop Hardwick Hall.





Bess' E.S. initials atop Hardwick Hall with the Countess Coronet placed upon the top.

her tomb Bess was very much building something that would forever be a reminder of her person and attempted to create immortality through that structure. Her house, however, had a much more important message to it. Heraldry and lineage was never about one single person, they were about the components of a whole family that, together, helped to make a family great, powerful and recognised. This is emphasised in the over-mantel in the Cut-Velvet Bedroom, displaying all the different components that make up the Hardwick-Cavendish family tree. While, surely, as the matriarch, she held the most importance in the formation of the family, the estates were never solely about her but always about the important family “house” that she created.

Seeing Hardwick Hall today, one really begins to get a sense of that longing for a family legacy that Bess was trying to achieve through the house. The sight of the now ruinous Hardwick Old Hall from its windows perfectly displays the continuance of the new “Hardwick” family that she created, within the new image of herself as a woman who was not beaten by the harsh beginnings dealt to her by a patriarchal regime that only allowed property and position to be passed from man to man. The imposing sight of Hardwick New Hall leaving its shadow of the Old Hall ruins continues to tell the story of the daughter who had made spectacularly good. Even within the house, the grand yet faded Tudor arms in the High Great Chamber wither in comparison to the bright, commanding presence of the Hardwick and Cavendish heraldic displays. While the timely fading of the Tudor arms is more down to nature rather than lack of nurture, Bess of Hardwick’s house has left an ultimate testament to its owners desire to demonstrate her family’s legacy one that is apparently longer lasting than a royal one.

Upon each coat of arms within Hardwick, Bess’ presence is continually felt. The two stone carvings of the Hardwick coat of arms on the outside facades of the building suggest

that she was an heiress in her own right. The arms set on the chimneypiece in the Entrance Hall, which should be impaled with the Talbot's coat of arms, instead simply has a coronet upon it (indicating her position as a countess) and supports the arms with two large stags. The use of the stags in this instance is highly significant. The Cavendish arms are represented with three stags. The joining of the stags with her paternal coat of arms indicates the house belongs to the descendants of the children of Elizabeth Hardwick and Sir William Cavendish. The Cavendish stags support the Hardwick arms, suggesting that the power of the family comes from the heart of the arms (Hardwick), helped along by that which supports it (Cavendish). She might have given birth to the Cavendish heirs but they went through their life with Hardwick heart, blood, fight and drive.

Bess' idea of her own individual self-importance is also felt throughout the house. Despite still being married to the Earl of Shrewsbury at the time of construction, there is only one example of the Talbot coat of arms, yet each set of arms does include her countess coronet. This concept is also seen on the roof, where great stone structures of "E.S." with a coronet placed upon the letters, encircled the top of the house. These are further indications that Bess believed she gained her Countess title because she had worked hard to achieve a position where she would be suitable to marry an influential Earl. Her marriage to William Cavendish taught her a lot, such as her shrewd management of household and money, as well as her activities in newsletter sharing and distribution, not to mention her knowledge of the law, which she later displayed most efficiently when fighting her case for the widow's portion she was entitled to from the 6<sup>th</sup> Earl, against her son-in-law/step-son, the 7<sup>th</sup> Earl of Shrewsbury, Gilbert Talbot. She had already been through the same process before, on the death of her first husband, Robert Barlow, and therefore knew what needed to be done. Mary Lovell states, "soon after Robert's death Bess applied to the Barlow family and Sir Peter for some income from the estate. This was refused and in the following year Bess resorted to the

courts to obtain justice. As the case proceeded, it is possible to chart through Bess's responses and decisions a growing confidence, and a determination to obtain what was rightfully hers."<sup>189</sup> Bess had worked tirelessly and relentlessly and these actions granted her the position she found herself in when she began to renovate Hardwick Hall.

While her marriages gave her the means to succeed in the way she did, it was her own abilities that gave her the opportunities to take advantage of those marriages. Judging by the emphasis she placed on Hardwick of her own heraldic past, Bess could be indicating how she placed the men in her life as second to her, allowing us to consider them simply as pawns that she required to achieve her ultimate goal: to create a family legacy. Each man gave her the pieces she needed, but she was smart enough to know what to do with those pieces once she got them. She required children to continue her legacy, which she succeeded in creating with Cavendish. She required position and power to ensure they had the best start to continue the work that she had begun, which she achieved through her marriage to Talbot. She also needed money to secure that legacy, which she attained from all of her husbands, though most significantly her first and third husband: Robert Barlow, whose early death granted her the prestigious role of widow and gave her an extra amount of money to display to potential suitors as her dowry, as well as St. Loe, whose vast wealth she inherited and was likely the most attractive feature of Bess to the 6<sup>th</sup> Earl of Shrewsbury. Bess places her own coat of arms as the prominent part of Hardwick because, in her opinion, the only reason it exists is thanks to her own hard work. The men supported her goal but the standing in society, the power and the money, the foundations of the legacy she created, are all thanks to her, a fact that she most likely would not want her heirs to forget – which as time would tell, they clearly never did.

Hardwick was, of course, the most important architectural structure that Bess would erect and design during her lifetime. As Pamela Kettle explains, “Bess had plans drawn up for

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<sup>189</sup> Mary S. Lovell, *Bess of Hardwick: First Lady of Chatsworth* (London: Abacus, 2005), 26

a new hall at Hardwick which was to be the setting for ‘my jewel, Arbel’”.<sup>190</sup> Given the closeness of Arbella to the English throne, and the importance to family, heraldry, and lineage that Bess felt, Hardwick was inevitably going to be the shining beacon of grandeur and her familial importance to demonstrate Arbella’s eligibility for the throne. Yet, Hardwick was bought for William under his name, and thus, with Bess, Arbella, the workmen performing the works, alongside William and his own growing family, Hardwick began to become somewhat crowded. Bess, therefore, decided to buy the adjoining manors, again in William’s name, for him, to remain close by, but to start bringing up his own family and, indeed, begin to form his own architectural empire. She bought Stainsby, Rowthorne, Heath, and Oldcotes from Sir John Savage for her elected heir and it was at Oldcotes that her architectural patronage continued and flourished.

#### Bess’ Architectural Patronage

The renovation of Oldcotes begins to show the extent to which Bess acted as a patron to members of the building and ‘architectural’ trade. A contract, upon the commencement of works being carried out at Oldcotes, details that the “six principal wallers...were already employed at Hardwick at the time.”<sup>191</sup> These men were Godfrey Plumtree, Reynolds Plumtree, Ralph Plumtree, George Plumtree, Robert Ashmore and John Ward. The continual use of the same workmen on two different structures within the same family indicates Bess’ contribution to the furtherance of skills being developed by these men, while also placing emphasis on the abilities of one family. As we shall see later, with the continued association with the Smythson family after the death of Bess’ main ‘architect’, Robert, and then employment of his son by Charles and William Cavendish, this continual association with a family shows the dedication the Cavendishes had to the continual development of their

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<sup>190</sup> Pamela Kettle, *Oldcotes: The Last Mansion Built by Bess of Hardwick*, 12.

<sup>191</sup> Pamela Kettle, *Oldcotes: The Last Mansion Built by Bess of Hardwick*, 13.

workmen. While this extended use of the same workmen could simply be placed down to convenience on the Cavendishes part, being aware of the work quality and thus knowing what to expect from their employees, between beginning at Hardwick and Oldcotes, John Ward's job title changed from waller to mason.<sup>192</sup> This elevation in profession could indicate that while their builders worked for them, the Cavendishes had a vested interest in the development of their craft. If workers that they knew and trusted were able to progress through their craft then they would be able to have workmen, with whom they had long-standing associations at every level of work required. Bess and William do appear to have been quite hands-on with their building projects, at least by the time they started building Oldcotes, as "there was no architect; Bess and William were firmly in control, while some decisions were left to the man in charge – probably John Ward", who, after being promoted from waller to mason, most likely kept a keen eye on the project for the patrons who had allowed him to progress in his labouring abilities.<sup>193</sup>

The use of architecture to display female influence was certainly not something unique to Bess. Elizabeth V. Chew explains how, after forty years of waiting to take control of her family estates, Anne Clifford "chose architectural patronage, specifically the renovation and publicly-staged reuse of six medieval castles as a means through which to create visible signs of her control."<sup>194</sup>

Another example is Lady Margaret Beaufort, Henry VII mother, who became the patron of Christ's Church College, Cambridge. The idea that medieval colleges were exclusively male spaces is called into question when the "inclusion of a female presence within the precincts of Christ's [is] embodied in its central building and proclaimed on its exterior by the oriel

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<sup>192</sup> Pamela Kettle, *Oldcotes: The Last Mansion Built by Bess of Hardwick*, 16.

<sup>193</sup> Pamela Kettle, *Oldcotes: The Last Mansion Built by Bess of Hardwick*, 16.

<sup>194</sup> Elizabeth V. Chew, "Si(gh)ting the Mistress of the House: Anne Clifford and Architectural Space," in *Women as Sites of Culture: Women's Roles in Cultural Formation from the Renaissance to the Twentieth Century*, ed. Susan Shifrin (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2002), 167.

window which bears [Lady Beaufort's] coat of arms."<sup>195</sup> Despite the fact that, traditionally, Oxford and Cambridge colleges were predominately seen to be male spaces, her position as college patron ensured that she was awarded not only her own rooms within the grounds but rooms that declared her importance above everyone else there. As Durning states "although they were not subject to monastic enclosure, the statuses of the colleges commonly contained injunctions against the presence of women within their precincts" thus inferring that Margaret's position there alone was unusual, let alone having her own dwellings there.<sup>196</sup>

Durning goes on to say:

the significance of this disposition of chambers is that it provided the countess albeit in the limited compass of a college court, with the minimum necessary complement for an aristocratic lodging or apartments: antechamber, chamber, and closet – a sequence of rooms necessary not only for convenience but also for the ritual expression of state...In the new purpose-built lodging at Christ's, she could more efficiently command the kind of dignified spatial setting to which she would have been accustomed in her own houses and palaces.<sup>197</sup>

Despite placing herself in the centre of an all-male sphere, Lady Beaufort ensured her college lodgings were renovated in such a way that upon her visits she was held in the position of greatest importance. Even within the college itself, Lady Beaufort ensured she had total control with "the countess's chambers, visually central to the plan of the court, externally, were also placed at the deepest level of access, a private self-contained zone, beyond the hall dais, protected from easy access by its turret stair, but enabling controlled entry to the antechamber or even great chamber for invited guests of appropriate rank."<sup>198</sup> Beaufort ensured that all within the college could feel her presence by placing her rooms as the centre point of the college, yet, with restricted access to the rooms, continually reminded those

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<sup>195</sup> Louise Durning, "Woman on Top: Lady Margaret Beaufort's Buildings at Christ Church, Cambridge," in *Gender and Architecture*, ed. Louise Durning and Richard Wrigleys (Chichester: John Wiley & Son, 2000), 48.

<sup>196</sup> Louise Durning, "Woman on Top: Lady Margaret Beaufort's Building at Christ Church, Cambridge," 46.

<sup>197</sup> Louise Durning, "Woman on Top: Lady Margaret Beaufort's Buildings at Christ Church, Cambridge," 49.

<sup>198</sup> Louise Durning, "Woman on Top: Lady Margaret Beaufort's Buildings at Christ Church, Cambridge," 49.

surrounding her that while all could see her, only the select few were actually able to access her. She had overall control of the happenings at the very heart of the college.

The advantages of the use of architecture as a means of display of female empowerment are obvious. There is security in bricks and mortar that is difficult to destroy. Whereas reputations can be tarnished with foul words, or forgotten through time, especially the reputations of women, architectural displays are something fixed and long-lasting. The heraldry displayed within buildings "signify the prestige and power of the family" while "the history of the family plays a vital part in the story of the house itself" suggesting that these structures did more than simply house its occupants and their belongings, they told the story of the family and indicated to visitors what they deemed most important or at least what they wanted to be seen.<sup>199</sup> Where a reputation is generally created, or at least spread, by others, through buildings, women were able to display their own personality, highlight the aspects of their life they wanted to be highlighted and eradicate or omit the parts they did not. The lives of Lady Margaret Beaufort, Bess of Hardwick and Anne Clifford, on the surface, may appear very different, yet they all have one very important thing in common. Lady Margaret Beaufort may have been the Queen Mother, Anne Clifford may have been born into aristocracy and all the wealth and privilege that comes along with it, and Bess of Hardwick may have been born into the family of a low gentry knight, but each of these women worked relentlessly, for great portions of their life, to achieve the life they believed they deserved. Margaret Beaufort schemed and plotted to see her son Henry as the King of England. Anne Clifford campaigned and fought relentlessly in court to obtain the family estates that were taken away from her when her father George, 3<sup>rd</sup> Earl of Cumberland, disinherited her on his death in 1605, naming her male cousin as his heir. And Bess, through her marriages, through her newsletters, and through her own court battles to ensure she received the right amount from her various

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<sup>199</sup> Jeremy Musson, *How To Read a Country House*, 8-9.



widow entitlements, went from a low gentry maid to the Countess of Shrewsbury. History could have easily forgotten each of these women, however through their architectural patronage; they ensured that it had to continue paying attention.

Elizabeth V. Chew suggests that Anne Clifford's "architecture of the castles and her autobiographical writings about them reveal her fierce determination to bind herself and her progeny to the legacy of her eminent family."<sup>200</sup> Again we see this connection between land, structures, and buildings alongside the concept of a family legacy. This agrees with Musson's idea that "the commonest ambition in founding a house was not just to impress onlookers but to build a landed dynasty. To get a real sense of the purpose of the country house one needs to imagine the desire to found a 'line' and to maintain it."<sup>201</sup> For these women, who were denied access to their family's legacy, Clifford through disinheritance and Bess through the early death of John Hardwick and the control of the Hardwick estates through the Court of Wards, the idea of establishing a secure line would, of course, have been appealing; cementing it with a great estate was an inevitability. This dependence on a material structure continues with the final 'house' that Bess had designed for her: her tomb

### Final Architectural Design and Lasting Personal Legacy

To the aristocracy of the early modern period building a tomb had two very important uses after death. To begin with, it allowed somewhere for their body to be housed. As John Weever wrote in *Ancient Funerall Monuments* in 1631, tombs could "defend and fence the corps of the defunct, which otherwise might have been pulled out of the graves by the savage brutishnesse of wilde beasts".<sup>202</sup> In the early modern period the belief in life after death was a

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<sup>200</sup>Elizabeth V. Chew, "Si(gh)ting the Mistress of the House: Anne Clifford and Architectural Space," 168.

<sup>201</sup> Jeremy Musson, *How To Read a Country House*, 8-9.

<sup>202</sup> John Weever, *Ancient Funerall Monuments with in the United Monarchie of Great Britaine Ireland and the Ilands adjacent with the dissolved Monasteries therein contained; their Founders and what eminent persons have been in the same interred* (London: Thomas Harper, 1631), 5.

fundamental part of every person's daily life, and in death, those who could afford to preserve their mortal remains ensured that their body was well and truly left to rest in peace. The cost of building a tomb restricted the more elaborate examples to the wealthy. This then gave them the perfect space to display after their death who they were during their life, for what marks out an eternal record of one's reputation during life, than a print of it engraved into stone. We have seen above Bess' incessant need to make a display of herself through the houses that she built. To follow the same practice in death is hardly a surprise. The tombs that were built during this time period could be described as "tank-like" and gave a fixed point of reference to their legacy, ensuring that the power and reputation that they achieved in their own life could be projected into eternity.<sup>203</sup> This type of remembrance would be ideal for a family who saw dynastic development as an important part of the development of the family and Bess' tomb is a clear indication that this idea resonated with her.

During her own lifetime and under her supervision, Bess planned, designed and built the tomb that her remains rest in today.<sup>204</sup> It is housed in Derby Cathedral, just over 20 miles from Hardwick Hall. She put a great deal of time and effort into its construction and built it with her architectural collaborator, Robert Smythson. The placement of it in Derby Cathedral symbolises that she thought that her status was above that of a local parish church, but that she wanted to remain within Derbyshire so as to emphasise not just her importance to the area but also the importance that the area had to her. Her inclusion of materials sourced from local quarries further supports the idea of the importance she placed on her Derbyshire roots. It is the place she had created her dynasty, it is where her legacy lay and where she allowed it to flourish. Bess' obsession with legacy and the importance of the Hardwick family within that

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<sup>203</sup> David Howarth, *Images of Rule: Art and Politics in the English Renaissance 1450-1649*, 153.

<sup>204</sup> Robert Simpson, *A Collection of Fragments Illustrative of the History and Antiquities of Derby compiled from Authentic Sources* (Derby: G. Wilkins and Son, 1826), 340.



Elizabeth Talbot, Countess of Shrewsbury's tomb in Derby Cathedral.

legacy would surely be shattered were she to have decided that she did not want her final resting place to be in the same county as those of her ancestors.

The heraldry upon her tomb is similar in style to that which Bess displayed around Hardwick. The saltire of the Hardwick coat of arms along with the stags of the Cavendish coat of arms can be seen at the top of the tomb, indicating the family that formed Bess' origin and the family that would continue the legacy she created. The inclusion of the Hardwick arms separate to the Cavendish ones also suggests she wanted it to be clear that, despite her legacy continuing through the Cavendish name, she was first and foremost always a Hardwick.

The figure of Bess that lies upon the top of the tomb in prayer has the countess coronet upon her head and even in death; Bess wishes to continue the emphasis she placed in attaining her position as a Countess. There is a fawn resting at her feet as well, likely to be a symbolisation of the stags that make up the Derbyshire coat of arms indicating that her feet always found their home in Derbyshire. John Weever wrote “Sepulchres should bee made according to the qualitie and degree of the person deceased, that by the Tombe every one might bee discerned of what ranke hee was living”<sup>205</sup> Hardwick was the specimen she used, while living, to display her importance and legacy. Her tomb was the specimen she used in death to display the same thing. Both still stand, testaments to the influence she had on her family and those around her.

### The Creation of Lineage through Marriage.

The most important factor in the structuring and outcome of Bess' life was the importance that she placed on lineage, ancestry, and her successors. She had risen through society and had created an important persona for herself and those related and attached to her. Clearly, she had no intention of that familial influence that she had cultivated to end with her. Her

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<sup>205</sup> John Weever, *Ancient Funerall Monuments*, 10.

paternal family, The Hardwicks could trace their descendants to King Edward I and, while at her birth the Hardwicks certainly were not portraying the grandeur that they once held, given Bess' later heraldic imagery of the Hardwick coat of arms around Hardwick Hall, it is likely that she took pride in the fact that she could name herself as a Hardwick. That importance in the idea of family is something that never left Bess. It was her wish to create a powerful dynasty through her descendants and she did everything within her means to ensure that it happened.

As such the Cavendish children were married into some of the most ancient, powerful and politically important families within England and Scotland. Within the marriage agreement between Bess and George Talbot, 6<sup>th</sup> Earl of Shrewsbury, it was also agreed that Bess' eldest son, Henry, would marry Talbot's youngest daughter, Grace, as well as marrying her own youngest surviving daughter Mary to Talbot's eldest surviving son, Gilbert. Bess understood the important place in society that the Talbots held. George was one of Elizabeth I's most trusted advisors. Knowing that she was already past the age where she was likely to conceive another child, Bess would not allow her association with the Talbot name to end with her, but ensured that two separate branches of her family tree would hold Talbot blood within their veins, along with the power and prestige that went along with it.

Her second son, William, married the heiress Anne Keighley, daughter of Henry Keighley. Her third son, Charles, was married to Katherine Ogle, 8<sup>th</sup> Baroness of Ogle, daughter of Cuthbert Ogle, 7<sup>th</sup> Baron Ogle and her eldest daughter Frances married the MP Sir Henry Pierrepont. Through her children's marriages, Bess appears to have been trying to prove that she and her family were in line with the noblest families in the land. Bess also understood the importance of a title, another reason why the majority of her children were married into titled families. Her acknowledgement of the benefits of titles is indicated when she paid around £2000 to create her second son, William, Baron Cavendish of Hardwick. As

Pamela Kettle explains, “In a matter of this sort, money had to be freely spent, and William hated to part with his cash. Bess, who still held firmly to the purse strings, paid willingly because she knew the value of a title for her dynasty.”<sup>206</sup> Bess placed all her faith of the dynasty she created on her second son William, so £2000 was a small price to pay in the grander scheme of things. She wanted to ensure that the work she had carried out in her own life to create such a powerful dynasty was not squandered and therefore placed her family in the best positions possible to try to ensure that her dynasty and legacy lasted.

This was never truer than when it came to the marriage of Bess’ second surviving daughter. Bess showed her true cards for what she expected from her family tree through the match she instigated between her daughter Elizabeth and Charles Stuart, 1<sup>st</sup> Earl of Lennox, Mary, Queen of Scots' brother-in-law. From this marriage came a daughter, Arbella, the granddaughter that Bess thought would be the crowning jewel in her legacy. The cousin of James VI of Scotland and first cousin twice removed from Elizabeth I, Bess saw Arbella as the potential answer to Elizabeth's succession problem. Rather than choosing a foreign king as an heir, judging by her letters and the upbringing she gave Arbella, Bess tried to sell the idea that Arbella, brought up in England, in attendance to the English court and being raised by one of Elizabeth’s trusted friend (Bess herself), would surely be a better fit for the English throne than the current King of Scotland; it would surely only be a matter of time before Elizabeth herself realised this and named Arbella as her heir. Perhaps this wrongful sense of entitlement and importance is ultimately what cost Arbella the English crown, an idea that will be examined in greater detail in the next chapter. However, as history has told us, Arbella refused to pay attention to orders from the Queen and her grandmother, and ultimately Elizabeth gave the crown to James VI of Scotland. The example of Arbella demonstrates just how high Bess believed her family could go, her faith in her children and

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<sup>206</sup> Pamela Kettle, *Oldcotes: The Last Mansion built by Bess of Hardwick*, 25.

their willingness to continue her work being so strong that she instigated that rise through a variety of separate avenues. She was aware of the type of legacy she wanted to leave behind and there was nothing that was going to stop her from achieving that goal.

Her de-facto heir, Henry, was the exception to that rule. He embodied the very opposite of what Bess would have deemed fit for the carrier of her legacy. While Henry had many children, they were all illegitimate and he failed to father one child with his wife Grace. His adultery and gambling meant that Bess could not leave her legacy, the precious idea that she had been cultivating and perfecting her whole life, in the unsafe hands of her eldest son. That did not, however, stop Bess' dream from being fulfilled. Her descendants went on to become the Dukes of Devonshire, Dukes of Newcastle, Dukes of Kingston-upon-Thames and Earls of Bridgewater, among others. Even one of Henry's illegitimate children went on to be given the title of Baron Waterpark.

The truly remarkable thing about Bess is that most of what she achieved was mainly executed through her own actions and on her own terms. Certainly, had she not been married and in the environment of a married woman, her successes would have been very different to what we know them to be now, but regardless, Bess is a figure of female inspiration and proof that women during the early modern period were not the weak vessels that history has portrayed them to be. Yet, the truly extraordinary legacy that Bess left was not her estates, nor the noble families that she helped produce, but the influence that she appears to have had on her female descendants. Her actions in her life caused something of a ripple effect upon the surviving women of the Cavendish family, as well as on the women who married into it. The next three chapters will discuss and examine that influence and how her actions as a politically minded, legacy focused and strong-willed woman caused an effect on the way the women who came after her lived their lives and continued that greatness of the Cavendish name that Bess had originally set out to achieve. While Bess may have created what she did

mostly for the sole purpose of her male heir, she caused a wave of influential, powerful and courageous women in her family who proceeded to mimic and emulate the life that she led, with the same vicious ability and disregard of patriarchal society's rules. It is through this influential nature that Bess fully achieved her dream, for the Hardwick spirit and heart to forever be tied to her and her family. While Bess' legacy lived on through the Cavendish name that her sons carried, it is through her female descendants that her spirit truly lived on.



# **Chapter 3**

## **Biographical Short**

### **Lady Arbella Stuart, Mary Cavendish Talbot, Countess of Shrewsbury, Katherine Ogle Cavendish, Lady Ogle and Jane Ogle Talbot, Countess of Shrewsbury.**

The next chapter focuses on the next generation of women who came after Bess, her granddaughter, daughter, and her two daughters in law.

#### **Lady Arbella Stuart**

Arbella Stuart was the only child of Charles Stuart, 1<sup>st</sup> Earl of Lennox, and Bess' second surviving daughter, Elizabeth. Through her father's line she was the great-great grandchild of Henry VII of England and therefore in line to the English throne. Born in 1575, like her grandmother before her, her father died a year after her birth in 1576, and was raised by her mother Elizabeth, now the Countess of Lennox. However, in 1582 Elizabeth died as well and the seven-year old Arbella was taken in by her Bess. She grew up secluded from aristocratic society and kept at Hardwick Hall by her grandmother.

Arbella's life was filled with intrigue and plot and her close position to the throne did not make her life any easier. Many recognised her position as a Princess of the Blood and looked to take advantage of that through marriage. Queen Elizabeth, ever wary of plots devised to overthrow her, was aware of the numerous plots that surrounded her and was therefore reluctant to find Arbella a match. She also recognised the advantage of offering of Arbella's hand as a "wonderful diplomatic tool."<sup>207</sup> This then caused Arbella to take matters into her own hands and attempted to form a match with Edward Seymour, 1<sup>st</sup> Earl of Hertford, another possible claimant to the throne.<sup>208</sup> Upon discovery of the plot, the pair were questioned and any marital discussions quickly dissolved.

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<sup>207</sup> Sara Jayne Steen, "Introduction," 22.

<sup>208</sup> Sara Jayne Steen, "Introduction," 29.

After the death of Queen Elizabeth in 1603, with James VI of Scotland taking the throne and not Arbella, as her grandmother had always hoped, Arbella expected her cousin James to be more sympathetic to her plight and arrange a suitable marriage for her in due course. However, when James took similar actions to Elizabeth, Arbella resorted back to her old ways and again began talks, on her own terms, negotiating a marriage between herself and William Seymour, whom himself was sixth-in-line to the throne. They married in secret at Greenwich Palace on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of June 1610.<sup>209</sup> However, for marrying without the consent of the monarch, the two were arrested. They attempted an escape, with both managing to get to the coast where they had planned to get separate boats and meet again on the continent. Seymour was delayed, and Arbella waited to ensure that her husband arrived. While they both ultimately did get on separate boats, Arbella's delay allowed for James' ship to reach them just before they reached Calais, and she was returned to England. Seymour managed to flee to Flanders. Arbella spent the rest of her life imprisoned in the Tower of London. She died on the 25<sup>th</sup> September 1615 from illnesses related to her refusal to eat.

#### Mary Cavendish Talbot, Countess of Shrewsbury.

Born in 1556, Mary Cavendish was the last surviving child of Elizabeth Cavendish and Sir William Cavendish. She married her stepbrother, Gilbert, in 1568, at the same time her mother married her step-father, George Talbot, 6<sup>th</sup> Earl of Shrewsbury. As George's eldest son, Mary was destined to one day become the Countess to the 7<sup>th</sup> Earl of Shrewsbury, the same title that her mother had. The pair had five children:

- George Talbot (1575-1577)
- Elizabeth Talbot (1582-1651)
- John Talbot (1583-1583)

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<sup>209</sup> Sarah Gristwood, *Arbella: England's Lost Queen*, 343.

- Mary Talbot (1584-1649)
- Althea Talbot (1585-1654)

With no living male heirs upon the death of Gilbert in 1616, the Shrewsbury earldom passed down to Gilbert's brother, Edward.

While brought up as a Protestant, Mary became a Catholic during her adult life.<sup>210</sup> This is often the reason given as to why Mary was so instrumental in helping her niece Arbella try to succeed in her escape with William Seymour and obtain foreign Catholic support to help seize the English crown.<sup>211</sup> She was placed in the Tower for her part in Arbella's plans and spent much of her later life there. While imprisoned she helped with the detection of the murder of Sir Thomas Overbury, and it is likely thanks to this that she was released in 1615 when Gilbert became ill. A few years after Gilbert died in 1616, Mary was once again called back to the Tower to answer questions on the rumours that Arbella had bore a child to William Seymour.<sup>212</sup> When she refused to answer any questions, having sworn a binding oath not to, she was placed back into the Tower and remained there for 5 years. She was released in 1623 and died nine years later in 1632.

Jane Ogle Talbot, Countess of Shrewsbury and Katherine Ogle Cavendish.

The daughters of Cuthbert Ogle, Baron Ogle, Jane was born in 1566 and Katherine three years later in 1569 in Bothal, Northumberland. As Cuthbert's only children, the sisters were the co-heiresses apparent to the Ogle barony. They both married into families associated with Bess of Hardwick. Jane marrying George Talbot's youngest son, Edward in 1583 and Katherine marrying Bess' youngest son Charles, in 1591. The pair brought to their marriages

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<sup>210</sup> David N. Durant, *Bess of Hardwick: Portrait of an Elizabethan Dynast*, 216-217.

<sup>211</sup> Kathy Lynn Emerson, *Wives and Daughters: the Women of Sixteenth-Century England*, 46.

<sup>212</sup> David N. Durant, *Arbella Stuart: A Rival to the Queen*, 209.

a myriad of estates settled upon them by their father.<sup>213</sup> After their father's death in 1597, the barony of Ogle went into abeyance due to lack of male heir. The two sisters petitioned multiple times to have the title taken out of abeyance but it wasn't until 1628, after Jane's death in 1625/6, that by Letter Patent, Katherine was created Baroness Ogle.<sup>214</sup>

None of Jane and Gilbert's children survived to maturity and the Shrewsbury earldom was passed to his nearest male relative, George Talbot of Grafton. Edward died in 1617, predeceasing his wife by 8 years and she remained a widow until her death. They are both buried in St. Edmond's chapel in Westminster Abbey, in a shared tomb.

Katherine and Charles had two surviving children, William and Charles. William would go on to become the Duke of Newcastle, while Charles was a knight and became a celebrated mathematician. She, along with her husband, continued the Cavendish tradition of architectural patronage and together they built and renovated Bolsover Castle and Welbeck Abbey. Both structures were ultimately completed by their son, William. During Bess' final years, during a disagreement that she was having with her step-son Gilbert Talbot, in regards to money she was due as the widow of his father, Charles sided with his step-brother and best friend.<sup>215</sup> This created tensions between mother and son and Charles was ultimately excluded from Bess' will.<sup>216</sup> This left a lasting impression on his son William who felt that his father's actions caused him to be excluded from the Cavendish family legacy. Katherine died in her ancestral home of Bothal in 1629, and the barony she had only re-secured the year before was passed on to her eldest son. She is buried with her husband Charles in Bolsover church.

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<sup>213</sup> Sir Bart Henry Asgill Ogle, *Ogle, and Bothal; or a History of the Baronies of Ogle, Bothal, and Hepple*, 71.

<sup>214</sup> Sir Bart Henry Asgill Ogle, *Ogle, and Bothal; or a History of the Baronies of Ogle, Bothal, and Hepple*, 72.

<sup>215</sup> Geoffrey Trease, *Portrait of a Cavalier: William Cavendish, First Duke of Newcastle* (London: Macmillan, 1979), 19

<sup>216</sup> David N. Durant, *Bess of Hardwick: Portrait of an Elizabethan Dynast*, 224.

## **The Rise, the Fall, and the Rise Again: The Political Failures and Success of the Next Generation of Cavendish Women.**

With a new generation comes a new set of rules. While it was her female descendants who might have carried Bess' spirit, it was the men who reaped all the rewards of Bess' work.

While she herself found a way to navigate and live outside the patriarchal constraints of early modern England everything that she gained and made during her life adhered to and progressed patriarchal aspiration and intentions. Her life might have been inspirational to her female descendants but her direct female kin did not profit from Bess' life in the same way that her male kin did.

Yet for four women of the next generation, consisting of Mary Talbot, Countess of Shrewsbury, Bess' daughter and the wife of Bess' stepson Gilbert Talbot; Arbella Stuart, Bess' granddaughter, and Jane and Katherine Ogle, sisters married into the family (Jane to Bess' stepson Edward Talbot and Katherine to Bess' son Charles) patriarchal aspiration were the lessons they inherited from the original Cavendish matriarch. Each of these women, to varying degrees of success, tried to formulate an existence of influence for themselves in a society dominated by patriarchal norms and a family haunted by the powerful spirit of the Bess of Hardwick. But there is a vital difference between Bess and this next generation of women in the Cavendish family which appears to be the intended outcome of their actions. For Bess, a woman so interested in buildings and heraldry, it is unlikely to assume that the intended recipients of the glory and prestige gained from her work trying to create a heraldic Cavendish legacy were her future female descendants, who themselves would not be able to solely inherit her buildings nor carry on the Cavendish name. However, with Arbella and Mary, and Jane and Katherine, we begin to see the works of a collective interest in activities, with each woman behaving and acting in such a way that would potentially be beneficial not only for themselves and their male relatives but also for their female kin. It is with these

women that we begin to see the true beginnings of how the women of the Cavendish family took inspiration from the matriarch of the family and used that to help develop something that changed and enhanced the importance of the female collective consciousness within the early modern familial unit.

This chapter is split between two very different, but very similarly focused, groups of women. The beginning of the chapter looks at Mary and Arbella. While similarly focused, with a desire to achieve political and social importance like Bess, Mary and Arbella took their position for granted and ultimately suffered their downfall from grace because of it. The second part of the chapter looks at two women who were married into the Cavendish family, the daughters of Cuthbert Ogle, 7<sup>th</sup> Baron Ogle, Jane and Katherine Ogle, who through their possible connection with Ben Jonson, makes us reconsider the longstanding belief that the Cavendish patronage connection with Ben Jonson originated with the patron/client relationship between Jonson and William Cavendish, Katherine's son. However, what these two different sets of women have in common is their apparent realisation of the female-collective consciousness and their awareness that their collective female condition could be used, not only to their advantage but to better each other's lives, as well as bettering the lives of their descendants. They also served as inspirations, more so in the case of the Ogle sister than Mary and Arbella, as examples of what women were able to achieve through their life activities. With the Ogles, in particular, this chapter also makes us consider how events in women's lives can, not just go unnoticed, but be changed by history, quite simply because of the lack of written evidential proof.

#### The Plights of Arbella Stuart: Growing up as a potential heir.

By far the most influential (at least in terms of contacts and position within early modern English society) and, at least for the modern historical researcher, well-known woman of this next generation was Lady Arbella Stuart. The daughter of a possible heir to the Scottish

throne, as Sarah Gristwood suggests, Arbella is one of the few exceptions of women during the early modern period about whom we have a great deal of information.<sup>217</sup> Her status as a Princess of the Blood meant that her letters were considered important enough to be collected as part of official state business and were thus preserved in such a way that we can still see and analyse them today. She has, therefore, along with such women as the Cooke sisters, Lady Anne Clifford, Mary Sidney Herbert, Countess of Pembroke and Lady Mary Wroth, been examined time and time again, as a way of analysing the existence and importance of female agency during the period and whether, in the words of Joan Kelly-Gadol, women even had a renaissance.

As Sara Jayne Steen states, “Stuart’s letters contribute to our developing understanding of the roles and pressures of upper-class aristocratic Englishwomen in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries.”<sup>218</sup> Her importance to this work was two-fold: her close relationship with her aunt Mary helps to demonstrate the female collective conscious that was developing within this family, allowing us to consider the role she played within the concept of female evolutionary empowerment that was triggered by the work of Bess. She also demonstrates the ways in which Arbella's relatives, Bess and Mary, in particular, used Arbella's position as Princess of the Blood to their own advantage.

As a woman who could be considered as a possible, potential heir to the English throne, Arbella was brought up in such a fashion that befitted her status. Educated and discussed in public by others as a potential heir, her hopes were dashed when James VI of Scotland became the new King of England. Like Elizabeth I before him, he ensured that Arbella was kept on a tight leash by maintaining control over her finances and, at least tried,

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<sup>217</sup> Sarah Gristwood, *Arbella: England's Lost Queen*, 3.

<sup>218</sup> Sara Jayne Steen, "Introduction," 4.



to control her potential marriage prospects.<sup>219</sup> These sequences of events played into the hands of both Bess and Mary, one as a way of familial advancement, the other, using her disenfranchised niece to further her own Catholic aspirations.

It is difficult to imagine that Arbella's life could have turned out any different to how it actually did. The daughter of a potential heir to the Scottish throne and a woman from a family who had their eyes set on the top layers of early modern England's political and powerful elite, it almost seems inevitable that Arbella's life would be enthralled in plots, suspicion, and trouble. Even before her conception, the pairing of her mother and father was thwarted with difficulties. Due to the nature and foreseeable outcome of their union (the birth of a child), when word reached the Queen of the marriage of Elizabeth Cavendish and Charles Stuart, 1<sup>st</sup> Earl of Lennox, the couple, along with the women who helped to orchestrate the pairing, Bess and Charles' mother, Margaret Douglas Stuart, were requested to report to court to explain how this union had come to pass. It took the word of Bess' husband, George Talbot, to calm the situation. He wrote to William Cecil that Charles and Elizabeth "hath so tied themselves upon [their] own liking as they cannot part. The young man is so far in love as belike he is sick without her."<sup>220</sup> He also wrote to Queen Elizabeth herself stating that the marriage "was dealt in suddenly, and without my knowledge...my wife, finding herself disappointed of young Bertie...and that the other young gentleman was inclined to love with a few day's acquaintance, did her best to further her daughter to this

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<sup>219</sup> The Venetian ambassador Nicholo Molin, while in London, reported on Arbella to his government saying "She is not very rich, for the late Queen was jealous of everyone, and especially of those who had a claim on the throne, so she took from her the larger part of her income, and the poor lady cannot lives as magnificently nor reward her attendants as liberally as she would. The King professes to love her and hold her in high esteem. She is allowed to come to Court, and the King promised when he ascended the throne, that he would restore her property, but he has not done so yet, saying that she shall have it all and more on her marriage, but so far the husband has not been found, and she remains without mate and without estate."

David N. Durant, *Arbella Stuart: A Rival to the Queen, 156*.

<sup>220</sup> Sara Jayne Steen, "Introduction," 11.

match, without having therein any other intent or respect than with reverent duty towards your Majesty she ought.”<sup>221</sup> How much of this George Talbot actually believed will remain a mystery. He was not, however, a naive man and was undoubtedly aware of Bess’ familial aspirations. It could easily be believed that from this point on Bess, even in the darkest corner of her imagination, had the image and idea in her mind that one day she might be able to see a member of her family sitting on the English throne.

These aspirations obviously did not come to fruition. Elizabeth chose the king of her northern neighbour, James VI, as her successor and thus the role that had always appeared to be within grasps to Bess and Arbella was taken away. James had a family of young children, all of whom could qualify as heirs, and thus Arbella’s potential path to the throne would never come to fruition. This therefore meant that all the work she did as a child, all of the sacrifices made, and all of the freedom lost because of her closeness to the throne, were for nothing. She was educated to a high standard and from the start of Bess’ guardianship over her, Arabella’s education was the tool that Bess deemed most fit to get her granddaughter to a position that she believed befitted both her birth and her status. Lewalski also concludes that Bess’ educational choices for Arbella were a way of preparing her for the throne.<sup>222</sup> She reports that under Bess’ supervision Arbella received a:

rigorous classical education on the male model; she used Latin easily and competently in several letters. Her studies were more common for highborn ladies: French and Italian, Chancery script, history and globes, the Bible and religious texts, the lute, and virginals, dancing. She also embroidered and stitched, read literature, hunted and hawked, and (at Bess’ insistence) learned to keep accounts.<sup>223</sup>

Contemporary reports confirm Lewalski’s findings. In a letter to Sir Francis Walsingham on the 28<sup>th</sup> January 1581/82 Bess writes to the Principal Secretary to the Queen asking him to petition the Queen for the portion previously given to her daughter Elizabeth before her

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<sup>221</sup> Sarah Gristwood, *Arbella: England’s Lost Queen*, 34.

<sup>222</sup> Barbara Kiefer Lewalski, *Writing Women in Jacobean England*, 68.

<sup>223</sup> Barbara Kiefer Lewalski, *Writing Women in Jacobean England*, 69.

death, to now be given to “my Iuell Arbella, to goe to the child, for her better education and traynine vpp in all good vertue and Learninge, and so she maye the soner be redye to attende on her Majestie.”<sup>224</sup> It is an education that seems to have worked well for the young Arbella. Sir John Harington commented that “she did read French out of Italian, and English out of both, much better than I could.”<sup>225</sup> Her abilities were also confirmed by Lord Burghley, who on her first visit to court, aged 12, also declared: ‘She had the French, the Italian, played of instruments, danced, wrought and wrote very fair.’<sup>226</sup>

However, despite Bess’ letter to Walsingham stating Arbella “is of very greate towardnes to Learne anytheung”<sup>227</sup> and Steen's modern interpretation of Arbella being "one of the most learned women at James's court, where she maintained a regular house for scholarship"<sup>228</sup>, her enthusiasm towards education was not always as “greate” as we could be led to believe.

In a letter written by Nicholas Kynnersley to Bess in 1588 the unveiling of a determined and self-assured female begins to present itself. Kynnersley writes “me lady arbella at viij off ye clocke thes nyght was mery & eates hur meat bot she went not to ye scolle yis vj days therefore I wold be glad off your ladyship’s comyng.”<sup>229</sup> This letter suggests that aged 13, Arbella was already beginning to disobey authoritarian figures and was beginning to make decisions for herself. Kynnersley's requirement of Bess to help bring Arbella’s behaviour back into line also suggests that the only person that seemed to have any

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<sup>224</sup> Letter from Bess of Hardwick to Sir Francis Walsingham, 28<sup>th</sup> January 1581/2.

<https://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=144&view=normal&menu=date>.

<sup>225</sup> Sarah Gristwood, *Arbella: England’s Lost Queen*, 50.

<sup>226</sup> Barbara Kiefer Lewalski, *Writing Women in Jacobean England*, 69.

<sup>227</sup> Letter from Bess of Hardwick to Sir Francis Walsingham, 6<sup>th</sup> May 1582.

<https://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=145>.

<sup>228</sup> Sara Jayne Steen, “Introduction,” 34.

<sup>229</sup> Letter from Nicholas Kynnersley to Bess of Hardwick, 5 November 1588.

<https://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=37>.

authority over her was her grandmother. This suggests Arbella had an early recognition of the strength, power, and position of her female kin, and a realisation that she could learn as much from her female relatives as her male ones.

Whether it was part of her education or it was simply an offshoot of it, letter writing became a vital aspect of Arbella's life and was of great importance to her; using it as a means of escape, as gifts, and more importantly, as an attempt to gain a political advantage.

Arbella's letters during her youth certainly suggest that she had knowledge and awareness of her position and rank, which is hardly unsurprising considering the attention and privileges she was granted, despite her age and sex, within her home at Hardwick and during her visits to court. Notwithstanding letters written by the likes of George Talbot, after his separation from Bess, suggesting that "Stuart had been pampered by the family as by the servants until she was thirteen" indicate she had something of a youthful arrogance about her. This view of her is contrary to the image portrayed in the two existing letters from Arbella's youth in which she appears as a "bright, well-educated woman mindful of appropriate forms and phrases"<sup>230</sup> This image of a gracious Arbella during her youth is further supported by various contemporaries, such as Sir John Harington, who commended her for "hir virtuous disposition, sometime of hir choice education, hir rare skill in languages, hir good judgement and sigh in music, and a mynde to all these free from pryde, vanitye and affection"<sup>231</sup> It could, however, have been this upbringing that cemented the actions that followed through Arbella's adult life, during which she time after time questioned authority, not just that of her guardian and grandmother Bess, but the authority of the court, of Robert Cecil, and of Queen Elizabeth and King James themselves.

Having been brought up and educated in the manner she was, as well as hearing that

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<sup>230</sup> Sara Jayne Steen, "Introduction," 23.

<sup>231</sup> Sir John Harington, *The Letters and Epigrams of Sir John Harington, together with The Prayse of Private Life*, ed. Felix E. Schelling (New York: Octagon Books, 1930), 45.

the Queen herself had stated to the French ambassador's wife, Madame de Chateauneuf that Stuart would "one day be even as I am" it is unsurprising that such ideas would go to a girl's head and the ideas she had regarding authority figures would be somewhat warped, regardless of the minuscule chance she had at obtaining the throne.<sup>232</sup> A letter written from Arbella to her grandmother, in which she explains the circumstances that led to Dodderidge being sent to Hertford sometime between the end of January and beginning of February 1602/03, is not only an example of her abilities in writing and composition but also further demonstrates her questioning of authority.<sup>233</sup> At this point, Arbella was already aware of the fact that her letters were being forwarded to court and therefore wrote with the Queen as her intended audience.<sup>234</sup> The letter consists of a farcical account of a fictional lover who has vowed to take her away from her grandmother's confining home and allow her to live in freedom and in love. Her proficiency in letter composition allows her to relay a convincing story to her would be interrogators and again gives her the opportunity to rebel against the orders given to her. It is highly unlikely Elizabeth ever had any intention of naming Arbella her heir over James, and it was all more likely a series of elaborate lies and flatteries told to Bess in hopes of keeping one of the wealthiest women in England financially available to the Queen. Yet it was actions like this that, despite her position as Princess of the Blood, ensured Arbella created a number of enemies in high positions of power, including the Queen.

To have been so blatantly disobedient would have been concerning to an aging Queen who saw plots to overthrow her everywhere. Certainly, Elizabeth would have always been suspicious of the influence that Arbella, as a youthful, popular and, most importantly, fertile woman, might be able to exert over people. It could be one of the possible reasons she tried

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<sup>232</sup>Phyllis Margaret Handover, *Arbella Stuart, Royal Lady of Hardwick and cousin to King James*, 77.

<sup>233</sup>Sara Jayne Steen, "Introduction," 126-130.

<sup>234</sup>Arbella Stuart, *The Letters of Lady Arbella Stuart*, ed. Sara Jayne Steen (Oxford: Oxford University Press), 126-130.

so ardently to keep her away from the court.<sup>235</sup> Yet, her actions during the end of the Queen's life would have certainly exasperated those fears rather than help quell them. The very thing that Bess did to ensure Arbella's position of power - her education - could very well have been the thing that secured her downfall. Steen suggests that:

Stuart was educated for command, and the women of rank around her in her youth – Mary, Queen of Scots, Queen Elizabeth, and Bess of Hardwick – were active and aggressive role models. The paradox of the aristocratic woman whose sex signified subordination, but whose class signified authority was more extreme in Stuart's case because of her birth and upbringing. Her letters reflect the tensions among these social forces.<sup>236</sup>

As shall be examined more closely in the next chapter, the concept of female education itself is not the prime factor that could have caused Arbella to behave and react against authority the way that she did. Women like the Cooke sisters and Mary Sidney Herbert each used their education in a similar fashion as Arbella, however, their reasoning for education differs, and the stakes were set much higher for Arbella than they were for Sidney Herbert or the Cookes. For them, education allowed them more profitable marriages and potentially more prominent positions within the court. For Arbella, she assumed it was the Crown that was at stake.

#### Arbella as Princess of the Blood and not Heir

Once James was declared king, and all of Arbella's hopes that she might have had at the crown being dashed, she could have simply reverted back to her position of a well placed, highly educated, aristocratic lady, awaiting her cousin and King to find her a suitable husband for her name. However, this did not happen. Arbella's high-spiritedness continued, if not, became bolder. Her actions during Elizabeth's reign could be read as those of a young woman who had been forced to live with her elderly grandmother for too many years, trying to find some form of fun and excitement in her dire situation. The taunting letters of her fake

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<sup>235</sup> Arbella was kept in seclusion for 10 years between 1592 – 1602, as Lewalski suggests at “Queen Elizabeth's behest.” - Barbara Kiefer Lewalski, *Writing Women in Jacobean England*, 67-69.

<sup>236</sup> Sara Jayne Steen, “Introduction,” 5.

lover read like a girl frustrated with her situation but nothing more serious than that. Kept away from court and under continual suffocating supervision from her grandmother, her letters were her only way of entertainment and out of the suffocating world that enveloped her.

Steen points out that "current scholars have argued convincingly that letters are more than sources of information about how women and men "really" lived, that the letter was an important genre in early modern England and that the texts were shaped and involved the creation of personas, the handling of rhetoric, and the establishment of tone."<sup>237</sup> Letters were a fundamental part of Arbell's life, with Steen suggesting that she used her letter writing to "provide psychological release' as well as using them as a form of gifts for her relatives "who she knew enjoyed her keen observations on the court."<sup>238</sup> Therefore, the letters that Arbell wrote towards the end of Elizabeth's reign, in particular the one sent between 29<sup>th</sup> January and 2<sup>nd</sup> February 1602/3 is unlikely to have been written with the malicious motive of a girl trying to obtain a throne that had for years been told would be hers, but a girl bored of her current situation and seeking solace in her writing, much in the same way her great-nieces would do just over 40 years later. The activities surrounding her love life during James' reign, however, feigning illness while under escort from the Tower, escaping her guards, running away to the continent, suggests a woman of a much more calculated disposition. Under Elizabeth, it was her education that she used to rally against authority; under James, it was her actions: a much more dangerous method.

Rather than subduing to her rightful position once the hope of the throne was dashed from her periphery, she attempted to become something of a force to be reckoned with, almost in the same vein as her grandmother, though more anti-establishmentarian. Perhaps this is because she was no longer under the watchful eye of the family matriarch. With Bess

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<sup>237</sup> Sara Jayne Steen, "Introduction," 6-8.

<sup>238</sup> Sara Jayne Steen, "Introduction," 6-8.

no longer around playing the role of the ever watchful overseer of all things that took place within the Cavendish family, it is possible that Arbella thought to take this opportunity to make her own mark on the Cavendish family legacy. She might not have become head of the country, but she could play for the role of head of the family.

Though Arbella certainly troubled her grandmother through her activities and attempts of rebelling against the establishment, essentially, we do not see Arbella causing as much trouble or committing as many faults against her reputation until after she was taken away from the grips of her control and even more so after Bess' death in 1608. Bess' influence over her granddaughter was integral to her shaping, both in an authoritarian and influential sense. While Arbella's attempts at gaining political power and position ultimately failed and she was never able gain the same position or influence that her grandmother did, her acknowledgment of Bess' position, and her attempt to mimic that for herself, demonstrates a consciousness of female ability and agency. Thus, Arbella's activities throughout her life demonstrate that women during this period did acknowledge that, if one woman is capable of position and power, then there is a good chance that other women were too.

#### Female Kin: The Relationship between Mary and Her Mother and Mary and Her Niece.

Another force to be reckoned with within the Cavendish family was Bess' youngest daughter, Mary Cavendish Talbot. She married her step-brother Gilbert Talbot, 7<sup>th</sup> Earl of Shrewsbury, and thus rose, on the death of the 6<sup>th</sup> Earl, the Countess of Shrewsbury, to the same title that Bess had been so proud of rising up to herself. Taking the title of Countess of Shrewsbury, and leaving her mother as the Dowager Countess, could be considered as one of the reasons the relationship between Mary and her mother appears to have been thwarted with difficulties during the latter parts of their lives. Yet, time and time again we see Mary, like Arbella, mimic the methods that Bess used to further her political and personal aspirations. Mary was



also a patron of architecture, however, unlike her mother, who instigated the building of magnificent country houses and estates, appears to have only been the 'money man', when she was a patron to St John's College Cambridge, paying for the building of their Second Court sometime in 1599. While the cost of the Second Court came to just "a little over £3,600" the Talbots only donated £2,760, yet St John's still considered it "a magnificent donation, and enabled the college to replace the slight ramshackle Metcalfe Court with an altogether grander edifice."<sup>239</sup> Certainly the idea of continuing the association of the Cavendish name with the patronage of architecture could have been considered an homage to Bess' legacy with architectural patronage, Mary's decision to be a patron to a university college, St John's in particular, could have less to do with Bess and more to do with the college's other patron, Lady Margaret Beaufort.

A woman of exceedingly religious Catholic faith, it should not be overlooked that Mary, a woman who, during Arbella's later years, wanted to help her niece escape to Europe in hopes of furthering her own Catholic aspirations, decides to be the benefactress of the same College that was founded through the estate of Lady Margaret, a woman of staunch Catholic faith. In his account of the history of St John's College, Peter Linehan states that "the closet Catholicism of the earl, his countess and the members of their household, hardly mattered and it has to be noted that, even in a time of war with Catholic Spain, it made no particular difference to Elizabeth either," stating that "Shrewsbury's wife was fully behind the project."<sup>240</sup> While it should not be suggested that the College accepted Mary as a benefactress thanks to their shared Catholic connection, it could be interpreted that this shared connection was the very reason for Mary's interest. Her apparent enthusiasm for the project, according to Linehan's account, could be explained by the direct association she would be able to create, through the patronage, with the powerful Catholic, Lady Margaret

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<sup>239</sup> Peter Linehan, *St John's College, Cambridge*, 92-100.

<sup>240</sup> Peter Linehan, *St John's College, Cambridge*, 100.

Beaufort.<sup>241</sup> After her portrait was donated to the college by her nephew, William Cavendish, 1<sup>st</sup> Duke of Newcastle, Mary's image hung within the walls of the Second Court of St John's College which, without her, very well might never have existed. This constant reminder could also serve to keep in the memories of the college's occupants the thought that while one powerful Catholic woman founded the college, it was thanks to another powerful Catholic woman that the college was able to continue to flourish. Mary's name was therefore allowed to forever be associated with the woman that she appears to have had such reverence for.

While Bess appears to have wanted her name to forever be associated with the Hardwicks and the Cavendishes and the grand houses that she was able to build thanks to her climb up the early modern social ladder, Mary clearly wanted her name to be synonymous, not only with a place of learning but with a college that, itself, was synonymous with a very important Catholic patron. As a child born into an already middling aristocratic family that continued to progress further and further up the ladder as Mary grew, many of Mary's aspirations would, of course, be different from those of her mother, yet the fact that she used the same primary method as Bess to make her mark on early modern society, suggests that Mary and Bess were more similar than one might immediately think. It is therefore easy to believe that, like her mother, Mary was also aware of the opportunities that came with having a Princess of the Blood as a member of her direct family.

Mary and her husband Gilbert had a strong relationship with their niece. They were in constant correspondence with her and when she wasn't at court or Hardwick, she often stayed with them in Derbyshire. The correspondence between Arbella and Gilbert differed greatly to that between Arbella and Mary. Gilbert and Arbella's was amusing and teasing, however, the correspondence between Arbella and Mary was often more "direct and political in terms of patronage and the exercise of influence. She wrote to Mary, for example, about what she

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<sup>241</sup> Peter Linehan, *St John's College, Cambridge*, 100

needed help from Gilbert, a member of the Privy Council.”<sup>242</sup> The different genres she writes in when corresponding with Gilbert and Mary, one fun and affectionate, the other political, forces us to consider the different relationships that Arbella held with her uncle and aunt.

On the 23<sup>rd</sup> August 1603, Arbella writes to Mary “Madam,/ I have written to my uncle how the world goes with me, I beseech you get him to write to my Lord Cecill on my behalf and to take notice of his <and my Lord Henry Howards> crossing the Kings Intention for my allowance of diet.”<sup>243</sup> The letter demonstrates an example of collective female intentions and agency. Rather than going straight to Gilbert to try to gain information and influence from the Privy Council, Arbella's decision to consult with her aunt suggests a female agenda to their activities, as well as an initiative of women helping other women; a feminine familial connection working together to achieve political goals. Perhaps Arbella thought that, as his wife, Mary would have a greater chance of securing what she needed from her uncle than she did. This idea of the wife having political sway over her husband was certainly not a one-off occurrence that happened only within the Cavendish circle. When Laurence Cockson petitioned Lord Burghley for his support in his oil making scheme in 1579, he did so by enclosing the petition within a letter he sent to Burghley's wife, Mildred Cooke Cecil, whose father was an old acquaintance of Cockson. As Gemma Allen suggests in her biography of the Cooke sisters “Cockson believed that it was more effective to use Mildred as a means of ensuring that her husband gave due attention to the long list of articles.”<sup>244</sup> With the case of Mary and Arbella, however, not only do we see the potential power a wife had over her husband, but the acknowledgment from one female to another, that women were able to further each other's suits for one another in ways that remained undetected to the men around them.

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<sup>242</sup> Sara Jayne Steen, “The Cavendish-Talbot Women: Playing a High Stakes Game,” 158.

<sup>243</sup> Arbella Stuart, *The Letters of Lady Arbella Stuart*, 180-181.

<sup>244</sup> Gemma Allen, *The Cooke Sisters: Education, piety and politics in Early Modern England*, 141.

For Mary, she was aware of the ways in which she could use Arbella to further her Catholic agenda. As described in the brief description of their patroness, in *St John's College Cambridge – A History* Peter Linehan suggests that Mary “lived at the heart of court, understood its politics, and was not afraid to take great risks as the occasion demanded.”<sup>245</sup> Her reputation as a woman of presence and power was certainly felt at court, with Francis Bacon stating in a letter he wrote to King James in 1614 “it is a great person, my lord Shrewsbury; or rather as I think, a greater than he, which is my lady of Shrewsbury.”<sup>246</sup> Given the events that proceeded and followed Bacon’s description, it is unsurprising he would come to such a conclusion about the current Countess of Shrewsbury. After Arbella’s secret marriage to William Seymour was discovered, it came to light that it was Mary who helped Arbella attempt to escape to Europe “hoping she would go abroad and serve as a Catholic pretender to the throne.”<sup>247</sup> She was arrested alongside Arbella for her actions and was questioned twice by the Privy Council, being held prisoner from 1611 until just before Gilbert's death in 1616. Mary did partake in certain other politically motivated court activities such as letter and newsletter writing and distribution as well, again like her mother, but it is the help that she gave to Arbella in hopes of furthering her Catholic intentions and potentially her female familial intentions, that she is of greatest importance to this work. Her relationship with Arbella can be viewed as an example of female collective culture. Mary certainly understood the advantages that came with having a niece of royal blood, but it is also likely that she thought that her plan would be just as beneficial to Arbella as it was to her own aspiration: placing Arbella on a throne and in a position worthy of her status and blood. While certainly, Mary, like her mother before her used Arbella as a pawn for her own gains,

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<sup>245</sup> Peter Linehan, ed., *St John's College, Cambridge: A History*, 101.

<sup>246</sup> Sir Francis Bacon, *The Works of Francis Bacon Vol. 12*, ed. James Spedding et al. (London: Longman & Co., 1869), 110-111.

<sup>247</sup> Kathy Lynn Emerson, *Wives and Daughters: the Women of Sixteenth-Century England*, 46.

it is likely that she also did so because it is where she truly believed her niece was supposed to be.

The need of succeeding in the political world of England's early modern court was so unattainable for Arbella and Mary was not because of their inability but because of the goals they were trying to achieve. Though it was Bess that set in motion the events that occurred during Arbella and Mary's life, ultimately it came to fruition after a point where she had much, if any, control over the events. While in comparison to Bess, Mary and Arbella look like they have failed where their mother and grandmother succeeded, what Bess achieved, though staggering, was something that was, not only attainable but had little risk attached to it. While Bess' involvement in newsletter sharing and harbouring of secrets were aspects of her life that contained some form of risk, she only partook in these activities once she had secured a position of power for herself that made her more or less immune; the lack of consequences to her involvement in the match between her daughter and Charles Stuart is a testament to that fact.<sup>248</sup> Francis Bacon's description of Mary, as a greater person than her husband, suggests that she held just as much of a formidable reputation as her mother before her but their perception of accomplishment appears so radically different quite simply because of the difference in importance of the things they were trying to achieve.

Arbella and Mary attempted to take on the Crown, and here within lies their failure. Arbella was a victim of her circumstance and she was led into a situation that she could never have succeeded in. Her story portrays her as a product of her grandmother, who saw that the only way to succeed was to rise, striving for position and power. Attaining the position of a Countess, however, had fewer implications and risks than those needed to become a Queen. While Arbella's actions throughout her life, her inability to heed to authority's warning and her continual aim to undermine it, certainly contributed to her failure, ultimately the goal that

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<sup>248</sup> Sara Jayne Steen, "Introduction," 11.

she either aspired to, or that was aspired for her, was her downfall. The same can be said for Mary. Regardless as to whether Mary was trying to place Arbella on the throne as a Catholic Queen or not is not the issue. The mere contemplation of Arbella's possibility at being Queen is what put them both in danger. Their lives were situated too close to the sun and their behaviours during it led them to be burned.

#### The Introduction of the Ogle Sisters to the Cavendish clan.

With behaviours and outcomes such as these, from the two women of the Cavendish dynasty who were situated so well within the political elite as Mary and Arbella, the new Countess of Shrewsbury and Princess of the Blood, all the work that Bess had done that could have potentially furthered the female agenda within the Cavendish family sphere, could have been lost entirely thanks to the complete political failures of Arbella and Mary. The next generation of the Cavendish household did not hold out much of a lifeline either. While Bess' favourite son and elected heir, William, succeeded in securing a fine reputation for himself as well as gathering position and power through his Devonshire earldom, his own heir, also William, almost ruined the legacy his father and grandmother had worked so hard to create, accumulating substantial amounts of debt (he procured a private act of parliament to allow him to sell some of his entailed estates) and died at the age of 35 from over-indulgence. It was only thanks to his wife, Christian Bruce Cavendish, whose showed diligence in raising their son and maintaining the legacy that she still had to work with, that the Devonshire earldom managed to continue to thrive. Christian, however, is not the only example of a woman who married into the Cavendish family and helped to secure a more substantial, profitable and powerful future for a branch of the Cavendish family tree. Bess' youngest son, Charles Cavendish, married Katherine Ogle, whose sister, Jane Ogle, married Charles' step-brother Edward Talbot, 8<sup>th</sup> Earl of Shrewsbury. These two sisters, who have fallen into history's obscurity, could quite possibly have been the turning point for Cavendish female

agenda, as well as the driving force behind the success of what was to become the Dukes of Newcastle's branch of the Cavendish family dynasty.

While certainly, the Ogle sisters did not make quite as big an impact on society as their Cavendish in-laws that is not to say that they were not accomplished in their own methods of achieving their aspirations. Hailing from a more established, secure and ancient noble line, it is a fair assumption to suggest that the Ogle sisters were aware of the way that society worked and the myriad of avenues open to them, as women, to help further their own agenda within society.<sup>249</sup> Perhaps this is the reason that Bess instigated the marriages between the Ogle sisters and her son and stepson, especially for the Cavendish match: trying to establish some substance to their newly up-and-coming name and aligning her family with the more secure Ogle line. While certainly, their position as heiresses to the Ogle barony and land gives some indication as to their eligibility, the Cavendishes already had acquired land and estates and had a substantial amount of money at their disposal. When it came to the Ogles, it was the aristocratic security, their already established legacy and title that would bring legitimacy to the legacy that Bess was trying to build.

Perhaps one of the most important things that the Ogle sisters introduced to the Cavendish family was their interest in literature and literary patronage. By examining works directly dedicated to them, to works most probably inspired by them, a greater sense of their involvement with the Cavendish patronage practices begins to unfold. Their activities begin to paint a picture of a set of women, who once again, do not fall into the patriarchal constraints set out in Reformation England's Christian teachings. From fighting numerous legal battles to be awarded the barony that belonged to them, to dispensing belongings through their wills, they were continuing the female agenda that was beginning to take shape within the Cavendish female activities. However, most importantly, it is their possible

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<sup>249</sup> Sir Bart Henry Asgill Ogle, *Ogle, and Bothal; or a History of the Baronies of Ogle, Bothal, and Hepple*.

patronage of Ben Jonson that is the most interesting aspect of these two sister's lives, and as such, begins to open new avenues of thought to modern researchers about Jonson and his patronage connections during his later years.

The Ogles in Poetry: Ben Jonson and others.

It has become a common assumption that the interest in literary endeavours within the Cavendish family, particularly the Newcastle line, began with William Cavendish, 1<sup>st</sup> Duke of Newcastle. As it stands it is still unclear when the interactions began, with Kelliher hypothesising that Newcastle may have met Jonson in 1614 “while Newcastle was sitting as an M.P. at Westminster...[and] when Jonson was at the height of his fame.”<sup>250</sup> Yet James Knowles suggests it could have been somewhat later stating “William Cavendish-Newcastle...knew Jonson at least as early as 1617.”<sup>251</sup> If either of these dates points to the Cavendish/Jonson meeting date, why is it not until Jonson’s 1629 play *The New Inn* that, as Nick Rowe suggests, we see “the earliest of Jonson’s plays to contain evidence of Cavendish’s influence”<sup>252</sup> with David Riggs suggesting that “Jonson evidently had Newcastle in mind when he conceived Lovel, the hero of the play”<sup>253</sup>. In Kelliher’s examination of MS Harley 4955, Newcastle’s collection of literary works that contains a substantial amount of Jonson’s works primarily for Cavendish, he claims that “many of the poems date from the late 1620s and early 1630s.”<sup>254</sup> That is a substantial period of time between first assumed meeting and when patronage links and fruitions begin to present themselves. This, therefore,

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<sup>250</sup> Hilton Kelliher, ‘Donne, Jonson, Richard Andrews and The Newcastle Manuscript,’ in *English Manuscript Studies 1100-1700*, ed. Peter Beal and Jeremy Griffiths. Vol. 4 (1993): 156.

<sup>251</sup> James Knowles, “Introduction to The Cavendish Christening Entertainment,” in *The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Ben Jonson Volume 6* ed. David Bevington et al. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 399.

<sup>252</sup> Nick Rowe, “‘My Best Patron’: William Cavendish and Jonson’s Caroline Drama,” *The Seventeenth Century: Special Edition – The Cavendish Circle*, Vol. 9 No. 2 (1994): 201.

<sup>253</sup> David Riggs, *Ben Jonson: A Life*, 302.

<sup>254</sup> Hilton Kelliher, “Donne, Jonson, Richard Andrews and The Newcastle Manuscript,” 156.



creates a problem for the origin of the commissions for the funerary verse for Sir Charles Cavendish around 1617/1618, the Christening Entertainment sometime between 1625, and the funerary verses written for Jane Ogle Talbot (1625) and Katherine Ogle Cavendish (1629).

It is these inconsistencies that lead to the possibility that, rather than the patronage collaborations between the Cavendish family and Ben Jonson starting with William, perhaps it was begun a generation before, with William's mother and aunt. It is interesting that an increase in works directed specifically towards William begins around the same time that his aunt and mother are no longer alive to provide patronage to Jonson themselves.

While there is no direct documental evidential proof to support a patron/client relationship between Jonson and William's mother, Katherine Ogle Cavendish, and William's aunt, Jane Ogle Talbot, in which Jonson openly refers to any of the aforementioned people specifically as his patron, it is when looking at Jonson's own work, as well as analysing his route during the walk he took from London to Edinburgh in 1618, that we begin to question whether the Ogle sisters had a greater amount of involvement in the Cavendish/Jonson patronage relationship than has previously been considered. This, therefore, opens up a multitude of questions regarding patronage, not only in this family but in society as a whole. If a woman's involvement in patronage can be misinterpreted (or simply overlooked) in such a way as has possibly occurred within this family, perhaps it could be a factor that is more widespread, suggesting that female patronage was more prevalent than has previously been considered and that while men were the ones who appear to be the instigators of patronage links, maybe it was the women behind them who were in fact in control.

The most substantial evidence for Jonson's connection to the Ogle sisters comes in the form of two epitaphs that he wrote in their honour. While certainly there is the possibility they were commissioned posthumously by William, the epitaphs themselves suggest a closer

connection than simply being dedications to the parent and aunt of a patron. When analysing Katherine's epitaph Jonson describes her in such a way that suggests that he has found the epitome of the female species within her and that his search for feminine perfection was therefore over:

The best of women! – Her whole life  
Was the example of a wife,  
Or of a parent, or a friend!  
All circles had their spring and end  
In her, and what could perfect be  
And without angles, it was she.<sup>255</sup>

As Helen Ostovich states that within the epitaph, Katherine is “defined not only as an inspiring figure for her family, but also an exemplar for the entire world.”<sup>256</sup> While this is the type of hyperbole that one should generally expect from funerary verses, the inclusion of the word ‘friend’ in the extract above suggests a connection between the two. The line itself reads somewhat disjointed, with the second ‘or a’ sticking quite heavily when reading aloud, suggesting Jonson wanted to emphasise this point and did not want it to be something that slipped quite easily off the tongue. The second ‘or a’ before ‘friend’ makes the reader pay attention to the line and ensures that they keep in mind the idea of her being the example of a friend, which in itself could be Jonson's way of highlighting his own knowledge of this lady's attributes as a friend.

Jonson continues to describe various attributes about Katherine throughout the poem, but one that particularly catches the eye is his reference to her as being “magnetic in the force”<sup>257</sup> While the importance of his use of the word magnetic will become clearer when I discuss the plays that appear to have been inspired by the sisters, most predominately for this point *The Magnetic Lady*, purely in the context of this poem itself, the idea of describing her

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<sup>255</sup> Ben Jonson, “Epitaph on Katherine, Lady Ogle” in *The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Ben Jonson Volume 5*, ed. David Bevington et al. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 316.

<sup>256</sup> Helen Ostovich, “Introduction to *The Magnetic Lady*,” 407.

<sup>257</sup> Ben Jonson, “Epitaph on Katherine, Lady Ogle,” 316.

as magnetic suggests an attraction to her, not necessarily in a romantic way, but in a sense that he is drawn to her and her force, possibly her patronage activities, an attraction that continues even after she's gone and he establishes a patron/client relationship with her son. It is also the first recorded version of the word 'magnetic' in the figurative sense, thus leading us to the idea that Jonson saw Katherine in such a unique manner that he altered the use of a word to describe her as aptly as possible.<sup>258</sup> It could also suggest that those closest to Katherine would be aware of his use of the word in its figurative form, perhaps suggesting that this was a way in which he could have referred to her while she was still alive.

The idea of her continuance, the force that continues to draw him in, is again suggested when Jonson refers to her as a phoenix: "Until the dust returned be/ Into a phoenix, which is she."<sup>259</sup> While "her soul possessed her flesh's state/ In fair freehold, not an inmate: / And when the flesh, here, [has] shut up day" her attributes, and the "fame's heat [that] keeps war the spice of her good name"<sup>260</sup> have risen again and continued on, quite possibly in the form of Jonson's next Cavendish patron, William. Again, this suggests that there could have been a closer connection between the pair. Whether hyperbole and flattery towards William or not, Jonson is clearly stating that he hopes that his new patron was as immeasurable a figure as his mother was.

Jonson also refers to her as "Katherine, Lady Ogle"<sup>261</sup> and while this was her official title, the complete absence of any mention of her husband by name is interesting. When comparing her epitaph with the one that Jonson wrote for her husband, Charles Cavendish, one striking difference springs out straight away. Where *Epitaph on Katherine, Lady Ogle* is written referring to Katherine and describing her attributes from a third person perspective, in

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<sup>258</sup> Helen Ostovich, "Introduction to *The Magnetic Lady*," 406.

<sup>259</sup> Ben Jonson, "Epitaph on Katherine, Lady Ogle," 316.

<sup>260</sup> Ben Jonson, "Epitaph on Katherine, Lady Ogle," 316.

<sup>261</sup> Ben Jonson, "Epitaph on Katherine, Lady Ogle," 316.

*Charles Cavendish to his Posterity* Jonson writes in the persona of Charles as if Charles is speaking directly to his sons: "Sons, seek not me among these polished stones."<sup>262</sup> But also, at the end of the epitaph, he makes reference to the "sad and weeping remembrance of his sorrowful Lady Katherine, second daughter to Cuthbert, late Lord Ogle, and sister to Jane, present Countess of Shrewsbury."<sup>263</sup> This reference to each of the members of the Ogle family could, therefore, suggest that there was initially a closer connection between Jonson and the Ogle family than there was to the Cavendish family, and despite writing an epitaph in remembrance of Charles, Jonson wanted to point out to whom his allegiance lay. The reference to Katherine as Lady Ogle could suggest that Jonson had a greater awareness of Katherine as an Ogle than he did as a Cavendish, indicating that their link could have been for a longer period of time than simply during her life as Katherine Cavendish, Lady Ogle.

The final clue to there being a closer tie between Jonson and Katherine comes in the last line: "And this a copy is of the record."<sup>264</sup> The fact that Jonson appears to feel comfortable with the idea of making a copy of the record of Katherine's life suggests that he felt he could do full justice to really encapsulate her life into these 41 lines. To truly make a copy of the record of her life, he wouldn't have been able to go off second hand reports, as Ostovich suggests when she claims "doubtless, Jonson had heard stories about Katherine and her husband Sir Charles Cavendish of Welbeck, whether from his patron or from other sources, that inspired him to write a play loosely praising herself, her husband and their sons" (the play is in reference to Jonson's *The Magnetic Lady*).<sup>265</sup> For Jonson to make a true copy of his dedicatee, to have praised her in such a way throughout the poem, referring to her flesh, suggesting that he knew her in the flesh, praising her character in such a way, could

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<sup>262</sup> Ben Jonson, "Charles Cavendish to his Posterity," in *The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Ben Jonson Volume 5*, ed. David Bevington et al. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 350.

<sup>263</sup> Ben Jonson, "Charles Cavendish to his Posterity," 350.

<sup>264</sup> Ben Jonson, "Epitaph on Katherine, Lady Ogle," 316.

<sup>265</sup> Helen Ostovich, "Introduction to *The Magnetic Lady*," 407.

indicate that there was more to the relationship between Ben Jonson and Katherine Ogle Cavendish than her being the mother of the man that acted as Jonson patron.

This is further supported when Jonson also wrote a poem on the death of Katherine's sister, Jane Talbot, Countess of Shrewsbury in 1625: *XXVIII To ye memory of that most honoured Lady Jane, eldest Daughter, to Cuthbert Lord Ogle: and Countess of Shrewsbury*. Simply from the title, a difference between Jane's epitaph and Katherine's springs out. The title is in a much more formal format, writing to the memory of, referring to her father as well as her title of Countess of Shrewsbury. This alludes to perhaps a less personal connection between the two than what appears to have been the case with Katherine. Yet once you look at the epitaph more closely Jonson could be indicating again that he did know Jane and, despite the title of her epitaph, did not want hers to be like the rest of the epitaphs that surrounded her "in this church" (Jane was buried near her husband in St Edmund's chapel, Westminster Abbey.)<sup>266</sup> He begins with "I could begin with the grave form 'Here lies', / And pray thee, reader, bring thy weeping eyes" suggesting that, despite the formality of the title Jonson wanted to ensure that Jane's epitaph not be run of the mill, not identical to all those that surrounded her as she deserved something different and that her epitaph should stand out.<sup>267</sup> He goes on to suggest different attributes that he could award her: "Religious, wise, chaste, loving, gracious, good," but these are all descriptions that could be found on "every table in this church."<sup>268</sup> Jonson's aim of this epitaph is to express something new about Jane: "but I would have thee to know something new, /Not usual a lady, and yet true" and as a

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<sup>266</sup> Ben Jonson, "XXVIII To ye memory of the most honoured Lady Jane, eldest Daughter, to Cuthbert Lord Ogle: and Countess of Shrewsbury," in *The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Ben Jonson Volume 6*, ed. David Bevington et al. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 317.

<sup>267</sup> Ben Jonson, "XXVIII To ye memory of the most honoured Lady Jane, eldest Daughter, to Cuthbert Lord Ogle: and Countess of Shrewsbury," 317.

<sup>268</sup> Ben Jonson, "XXVIII To ye memory of the most honoured Lady Jane, eldest Daughter, to Cuthbert Lord Ogle: and Countess of Shrewsbury," 317.

reader we find ourselves wondering whether he simply means something new in comparison to all the other tombs and epitaphs that surround her, or whether he means something new about Jane, something that wouldn't be known to the public about her personality.

The very thing that made Katherine stand out in her epitaph, the lack of mentions towards her husband and about who Katherine was as a wife over who Katherine was as an individual human being, is the very thing that Jonson suggests is the new thing that needs to be told about Jane: "she was wife/ But of one husband, and since he left life/ But sorrow, she desired no other friend."<sup>269</sup> Despite Jonson using 12 lines to say that this would be a different epitaph because he wanted to ensure that Jane's everlasting memory would not simply succumb to the great masses of epitaphs, he writes an epitaph that focuses on her role as a wife, her devotion as a wife and her heartache in widowhood, like so many epitaphs that have come before it. This was, however, Jonson's way of showing his patron/client relationship with Jane, with the emphasis on the "new" being in reference to a new side of Jane that was not seen by those outside of her circles. After all, as shall be examined in greater detail below, Jonson did stay with the Countess during his foot journey to and from Edinburgh and would have been in her company at her home for a substantial period of time. The second half of Jonson's epitaph, the disclosure of the new information about Jane's mourning, could suggest that, to the public she displayed an outward persona of a woman who was all the virtues and attributes that he describes in the first half, but in the privacy of her home and amongst her circle, she was embedded in deep mourning, held prisoner by the pain caused by the loss of her husband: "But Sorrow, she desired no other friend/ And her she made her inmate, to the end".<sup>270</sup> Jane's epitaph still lacks the familiarity and worship like nature that is

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<sup>269</sup> Ben Jonson, "XXVIII To ye memery of the most honoured Lady Jane, eldest Daughter, to Cuthbert Lord Ogle: and Countess of Shrewsbury," 317.

<sup>270</sup> Ben Jonson, "XXVIII To ye memery of the most honoured Lady Jane, eldest Daughter, to Cuthbert Lord Ogle: and Countess of Shrewsbury," 317.

found within Katherine's, but it does suggest that there was a connection or knowledge of Jane that wasn't known to all and an aspect of her personality that, in her death, Jonson thought was only right to be celebrated.

Of course MS Harley 4955 could simply be a memorial volume, and rather than Jonson's epitaphs to Jane and Katherine being recorded in there as indications of where William's patronage for Jonson stemmed from, they could simply be poems that Jonson wrote for William at a time when their patronage was beginning to take on a life of its own. The folio on which Katherine's epitaph is recorded could be a clear indication of this, displayed on what appears to be the drawing of a tomb with Jonson epitaph inscribed within it. Kelliher suggests that the drawing could be a "rough design for a separate funeral monument, though none such now survives" suggesting it could be the work of the Cavendishes resident architect, John Smythson, the son of Robert, who designed the first Countess of Devonshire's tomb at Ault Hucknall.<sup>271</sup>

As Fogle suggests, during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries "in the case of dedications we may have, in many cases, [dedications that were] no more than an author's *hope* for favour, rather than a sign of a patrons encouragement of the author or prior approval of the dedication."<sup>272</sup> Jonson's poems for William's mother and aunt could simply have been ways of Jonson attempting to grab the attention of a new, influential patron, and William compiled them into MS Harley 4955 as a way of memorialising his female ancestors through the means of poems written for him by his new client. But the rest of MS Harley 4955 doesn't read like a memorial manuscript, meaning these poems are out of place within this collection. Kelliher states, "MS Harley 4955...is no mere miscellany of randomly acquired verse but a

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<sup>271</sup> Hilton Kelliher, "Donne, Jonson, Richard Andrews and The Newcastle Manuscript," 156.

<sup>272</sup> French R. Fogle, "'Such a Rural Queen Patronage': The Countess Dowager of Derby as Patron," in *Late Renaissance England: Papers Read at a Clark Library Seminar 14 May 1977*, ed. French R. Fogle and Louis A. Knafla (Pasadena: William Andrews Clark Memorial Library, University of California, 1993), 3.

collection of first-hand material deriving from the authors themselves, it is not impossible that it might have been authorial in origin."<sup>273</sup> The pieces included in the manuscript were clearly carefully selected and revered with great importance. Therefore the likelihood of William including pieces that were only written as a goodwill gesture from a client is highly unlikely. The epitaphs clearly mean something to William, and that could be due to the fact that they indicate from where the start of his most successful patron/client relationship stemmed and the poems are a witness to the reverence that that client had for the members of his family who began that connection

Had we only had these memorial poems from Jonson as a connection to the Ogle sisters, then it could be forgiven to believe that William was the only reason why Jonson would write them and that William was, in fact, the only member of his family to have offered support to Jonson. But the Ogle sisters continue to pop up in Jonson's later plays, as well as his residence at their homes during his long walk. To discount these occurrences as evidence that suggests that something more is afoot, is to completely misinterpret and misunderstand the complicated relationships that patronage produced. As shall be explored further in the next chapter, William liked to display his literary accomplishment in his manuscript volumes, but with the epitaphs, Jonson wrote to his mother and his aunt, he is displaying the accomplishments that were made for him.

It wasn't just Jonson who dedicated poems and epitaphs to the Ogle sisters after their death. Held within MS Harley 4955 there is another poem by George Holme for Katherine entitled *An Elegy upon the Said Lady Ogle's Death*, while William Sampson in his collection of poems entitled *Virtus post Funera Vivit*, also wrote a poem for both Ogle sisters. The significance of Sampson's collection will be examined in greater detail during the next chapter, but there are some significant parts of Sampson's elegies that allow us to draw a

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<sup>273</sup> Hilton Kelliher, "Donne, Jonson, Richard Andrews and The Newcastle Manuscript," 153.



difference between the way that he describes the sisters and the way that Jonson wrote about them. One notable comparison is Sampson's reference, like Jonson, to Katherine's spirit taking the form of a phoenix: "One Phoenix dead, ther's yet no more come forth/ Out of thy ashes".<sup>274</sup> Jonson's Katherine phoenix had already risen from her ashes and taken the form of her son. Yet for Sampson her phoenix still lays as a pile of ash on the ground, waiting for a time to be resurrected into the world. This could perhaps suggest that Sampson wasn't as aware of the family dynamic and the passing on of traditions and responsibilities within it as Jonson was. Sampson's phoenix is simply an expression of the undying nature of Katherine's greatness, whereas Jonson's is a symbol of the continuation.

Sampson's elegy to Katherine also has a confirmation within it that he was not privy to any first-hand knowledge of what Katherine was truly like. While much of the elegy reads similar to the types of epitaphs that Jonson describes in the first part of his epitaph to Jane, Sampson refers to Katherine's "sacred vertues", how he is dazzled by her "diviner rarities", along with suggesting that "few earthly creatures might with thee compare"<sup>275</sup>. He then goes on to confirm that he is simply writing from what he has heard about her when he states "If I come short of thy known memory,/Whose every word was all perfection,/ And what I now write meere detraction".<sup>276</sup> Sampson knows that he would be incapable of writing a true likeness, a true 'copy of the record' and so plainly states that he can only write from her 'known memory'.

The same can be said about Sampson's elegy on Jane, of whom he refers to the "goodness in you, (all parts speak Divine.)" as well as "And may you fairest Lady ever be, as

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<sup>274</sup> William Sampson, *Virtus Post Funera Vivit, or Honour Tryumphing over Death. Being True Epitomes of Honorable, Noble, Learned, And Hospitable Personage* (London: John Norton, 1636), 7.

<sup>275</sup> William Sampson, *Virtus Post Funera Vivit*, 7.

<sup>276</sup> William Sampson, *Virtus Post Funera Vivit*, 8.

neere to her in deeds as pedegree.”<sup>277</sup> The elegy talks less about Jane and more about the poetic exercise that comes from writing the elegy. Sampson is so engrossed with the mere exercising nature that halfway through he remembers that he should then make reference to the person that he is dedicating it to. The first part of the elegy is filled with classical allusions, referring to "Phoebus", the "Queen of Castalian" as well as "the bastards of the Nine"<sup>278</sup>, and then almost remembers that he is meant to be writing an elegy when he writes, “Well, though I cannot sing, yet you shall see/ Honour, and Truth, kisse in an Elegie” suggesting that Sampson is not writing the elegy because he feels it is his duty to praise the great life and spirit of Jane Shrewsbury, but because he is good at writing elegies.<sup>279</sup>

He also spends a great deal of time discussing the Talbots and their legacy, one that appears to be dying out with each member who passes “Though scarce mention of them is made here/ But honoured urnes, and ashes! what are those/ But reliques which our rotten tombes enclose?”<sup>280</sup> Both Katherine and Jane’s elegies by Sampson do not suggest that he was in any way acquainted with them and read more like exercises in elegy writing, with shallow and un-heartfelt praise. In comparison, we have Jonson's attempts, the moving examples to record the lives of the women that he knew. Of course, Jonson was a far superior writer to Sampson, but Jonson's epitaphs at least give a sense of who the women were, whereas Sampson's elegies could be interchangeable with one another.

William’s daughter Jane also wrote poems on Jane and Katherine, but considering that Jane would have only been 4 and 8, respectively, when her great-aunt and grandmother died, it is unlikely that she would have been able to write anything within them that would be able to grant us a true likeness of their character. Indeed, Jane has a longer poem dedicated to

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<sup>277</sup> William Sampson, *Virtus Post Funera Vivit*, 14.

<sup>278</sup> William Sampson, *Virtus Post Funera Vivit*, 11-12.

<sup>279</sup> William Sampson, *Virtus Post Funera Vivit*, 12.

<sup>280</sup> William Sampson, *Virtus Post Funera Vivit*, 13.

her than Katherine, despite the fact that she would have known Katherine better than her sister. The manuscript in which the poems are found, Rawlinson Poet. 16, held at the Bodleian Library, is itself a combination of pieces that William's daughters, Jane and Elizabeth, used to practice their writing skills during the Civil War. The poems, filled with the normal illusions to the sisters' virtuous ways: "For hir iust vertues lookes, was each ones food/ And wisdome such as every sex might teach" (poem dedicated to Katherine)<sup>281</sup> and "Your blessed selfe was even pure vertues fame/ For goodness was your onely stiled name" (the poem dedicated to Jane) fit into this idea that Jane wrote these as a way of commemorating her female relatives, of course, but also as a way of practicing her art.<sup>282</sup> Given that they are written about her relatives, there is a more personal feel to them than witnessed in both Jonson's and Sampson's work, "If you had liu'd wee had been blest 'tis true/ Soe this madd Chaos is for want of you" but unlike Jonson's, again, the poems do not give us any insight into Katherine and Jane's personalities, if anything, they give us an insight into Jane, showing us the aspects of her aunt and grandmother's personalities that she admired the most.

The fact that there appears to be a limited amount of dedications to the Ogle sister after their death, with the only other example in MS Harley 4955, other than Jonson's being by George Holme, a little-known writer, could suggest that they were not necessarily active with their literary patronage. However the fact that, despite that, Ben Jonson wrote epitaphs for them, could indeed indicate that it wasn't that their patronage did not exist, more that it was limited to a single person. Jonson appears to have chosen his patrons wisely, during times in which they were at their most powerful, like the Lucy, Countess of Bedford, who

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<sup>281</sup> Jane Cavendish, *On the Lady Ogle, my deare Grandmother*, MS Rawlinson Poet 16, Bodleian Libraries, Oxford, 30.

<sup>282</sup> Jane Cavendish, *On my good Aunt, Jane Countess of Shrewsbury*, MS Rawlinson Poet 16, Bodleian Libraries, Oxford, 34.

during her lifetime had a total of thirty-eight texts dedicated to her from such writers as "Daniel, Davies, Drayton, Florio, Chapman, and Jonson [ranging] over a forty-four year period, 1583-1627, suggesting her continuing prominence and importance for writers."<sup>283</sup> Bedford's position in the royal household meant that she could place writers in prominent positions, as was the case in 1604 when "she, "who had charge of the Queen's masque for the first Christmas of the new reign, recommended Daniel to the Queen"; the result was Daniel's *The Vision of the Twelve Goddesses*, performed on 8 January 1604 at Hampton Court and dedicated to the Countess."<sup>284</sup> Jonson wrote two poems about the Countess, *LXXXIV. To Lucy Countess of Bedford* as well as *To Lucy, Countess of Bedford, with M. Donne's Satires* as well as most likely writing the part of Lady in waiting to Queen Elizabeth I in his *Cynthia's Revels, or the Fountain of Self Love* for her. He would have seen the advantages of attaching himself to a woman like Bedford who, like she did for Daniel, would have been able to ensure his continued favour at court. But the Ogle sisters mainly stayed on their estates in Northumberland, Nottingham, and Derby and were not particularly involved with court life. Jonson's interest in them, enough to make him write epitaphs for both of them as well as Katherine's husband, must surely suggest that, not only was there a pre-existing patron/client relationship existing between them, but that there was more to it than simply attaining position and preference, so much so that it was a relationship that passed on to the next generation of Cavendishes after their death.

### Jonson's Walk to Scotland

In addition to Jonson's poems on the Ogle sisters, the manuscript description of Jonson's 1618 foot journey to Scotland supports a connection with the Ogle women. In 1618 Ben Jonson walked from London to Edinburgh accompanied by an, as yet unknown, fellow

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<sup>283</sup> David Bergeron, "Women as Patrons in the Renaissance," 283.

<sup>284</sup> David Bergeron, "Women as Patrons in the Renaissance," 284.

traveller. This traveller recorded the journey that the two men took in a 7500-word account which, in 2009, was discovered by James Loxley amongst the Aldersey family papers within the Cheshire archives. In this manuscript, we are given precise details as to where they went, whom they saw, and where they stayed. The narrator states that, after leaving the hospitality of George Markham and his family in Newark, he "went to Rufford where the countess gave [them] extraordinary grace and entertainment."<sup>285</sup> This countess was Jane Ogle Talbot, Countess of Shrewsbury. The narrator explains how he and Jonson were granted great liberties within the estate and, the very next day after arriving were "hunting a stag killed, and hawking at the poult" as well as the Countess ensuring that all of her "gentleman were wholly attendant on" them.<sup>286</sup>

After leaving Rufford they travelled to the Cavendish seat at Welbeck, where again, Jonson and his companion were granted the greatest of liberties and freedom within these aristocratic homes. William "resigned the whole house to [Jonson] commanding his steward and all the rest of the officers to obey [him] in all things, which authority he did as freely put in execution."<sup>287</sup> He also refers to "my lady [resigning] all power and authority to him to do what he pleased. The house was his, and withal to entreat him they might have as good cheer as he could make them when they came home."<sup>288</sup> In fact, the same kind of freedom and special treatment followed Jonson as he travelled further and further north, with "an Ogle-Cavendish network [sustaining] Jonson long after he had departed Welbeck. Between Hodsock and Pontefract, and again between Newcastle and Berwick, his hosts were kinsmen or clients of Sir William, or, just as usually, Jane, Countess of Shrewsbury."<sup>289</sup>

Jonson's continued hospitality at the hands of Jane's kinsmen or clients helps to

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<sup>285</sup> James Loxley, et al., *Ben Jonson's Walk to Scotland*, 49.

<sup>286</sup> James Loxley, et al., *Ben Jonson's Walk to Scotland*, 49-50.

<sup>287</sup> James Loxley, et al., *Ben Jonson's Walk to Scotland*, 51-52.

<sup>288</sup> James Loxley, et al., *Ben Jonson's Walk to Scotland*, 52.

<sup>289</sup> James Loxley, et al., *Ben Jonson's Walk to Scotland*, 183.

support the case that a relationship between Jonson and the Ogles existed before and separately to the relationship that existed between him and William. While Jonson had extended periods of conformity towards the Church of England, he also had long periods of his career where he was recusant and many of his works attest to these Catholic connections. Given the Ogles' Catholicism and Jonson's return to the old religion during the later years of his life, the Catholic factor could be the essence that made this patron/client relationship so integral, with Jonson's extended accommodation across the North stemming from a Catholic connection, forming a Catholic trail of England of sorts. This connection in beliefs could be the common denominator that brought these two parties together. It could also explain why, given their inactivity at court, why Jonson sought them as patrons in the first place, as well as a possible cause as to why their patronage has mainly been obscured: an attempt to ensure that their connection did not divulge their beliefs.

The liberties granted to Jonson by Jane also suggest a greater relationship between the pair rather than simply fulfilling a favour to her nephew. Nick Rowe suggests that, as evidenced by exchanges between the pair in later life, William Cavendish allowed Jonson an 'unusual degree of license' within their patron/client relationship.<sup>290</sup> Judging by the activities and freedom that he was granted while staying at Rufford and Welbeck during his visits in 1618, it would appear fair to say that he was granted the same 'unusual degree of licence' during the very early days of his patronage. The editors of *Ben Jonson's Walk to Scotland* suggest that it was during this visit in 1618 that the mutual benefits of their patron-client relationship were "apparently cemented during this week at Welbeck."<sup>291</sup> However, the likelihood that the Ogle/Talbot/Cavendishes would have allowed a man they barely knew such licence in their home, regardless as to what benefits he might bring to them, is unlikely.

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<sup>290</sup> Nick Rowe "'My Best Patron': William Cavendish and Jonson's Caroline Drama," 200.

<sup>291</sup> James Loxley, et al., *Ben Jonson's Walk to Scotland*, 183.

### The Ogles in the Late Plays.

The possibility that Jonson was closely connected with the Ogles, as suggested by the epitaphs in their remembrance and the hospitality shown by Jane Ogle in 1617, throws new light on Jonson's later works, revealing further connections between the two parties, most predominantly in *The New Inn* (1629) and *The Magnetic Lady* (1632), licensed by the Master of Revel's the year of and three years, respectively, after Katherine, the last remaining Ogle's, death.

The pre-William relationship between the Katherine Ogle and Jonson was hinted at by Helen Ostovich who questioned the extent to which Lovel in *The New Inn* is in fact based on William Cavendish, as claimed by Anne Barton and David Riggs.<sup>292</sup> She instead suggests that Lovel was in fact based on William's father, Sir Charles who, when it came to fencing, was even more famously renowned for his talent than his son. Ostovich goes on to propose that Katherine "continued to be a strong influence on Cavendish family interests, including patronage, although she moved from Welbeck up to her Bothal estate in Northumberland."<sup>293</sup> Had Katherine's involvement in Cavendish family activities simply been thanks to William it would be likely that once she returned to Bothal her patronage activities would have ceased. Yet if, as Ostovich suggests, they continued, and considering Jonson's epitaph to her they very likely did, this surely suggests that the Ogle patronage was a completely different element to Jonson's involvement with this family and thus gives more weight to the point that Ostovich makes when suggesting that characters in Jonson's later plays are inspired by a greater range of Cavendish family members, rather than all simply being caricatures of William.

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<sup>292</sup> See Anne Barton, *Ben Jonson, Dramatist* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984) and David Riggs, *Ben Jonson: A Life* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1989).

<sup>293</sup> Helen Ostovich, 'Patronage,' 300.

## The Magnetic Lady

While the extent of the patronage relationship between Jane and Jonson cannot be determined, internal allusions in Jonson's funerary verse written for Katherine, when he referred to her 'magnetic force', could give a stronger clue to the inspiration behind Jonson's *The Magnetic Lady*.<sup>294</sup> The fact that this was Jonson's last play in which he looked into the idea of humours, in fact, as the title would suggest, the play in which he reconciled all of his conceptions regarding humours plays, is interesting.<sup>295</sup> While I have already suggested above that Jonson's reference to Katherine as magnetic came down to the idea that he found himself drawn to her, the fact that he felt, after her death, that he was able to conclude his humours plays and that in her absence there was now nothing more he could do with them, he could have felt that there was still more explanation to be done to truly express his gratitude to the first person he had referred to as magnetic in a figurative sense.

Helen Ostovich suggests that within the epitaph Katherine is "defined not only [as] an inspiring figure for her family but also an exemplar for the entire world."<sup>296</sup> While he had tried to make a 'copy of the record' through his epitaph, perhaps Jonson felt that to truly encapsulate this 'magnetic' lady that had drawn him in, he would have to do so in a play rather than simply a poem. While certainly the re-emergence of Katherine in Jonson's work could be explained away to his renewed relationship with William and honouring William's mother in the form of a play to ensure favour from his patron, this explanation sails too closely to the reasoning that for so long has obscured the idea that the Cavendish patronage went beyond William. Had he simply wanted to write a play that would flatter his patron, Jonson very well could have just written one about William. But the fact that it was about Katherine, the fact that he had referred to her 'magnetic force' in the epitaph and then names

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<sup>294</sup> Ben Jonson, "Epitaph on Katherine, Lady Ogle," 316.

<sup>295</sup> The full title of *The Magnetic Lady* is *The Magnetic Lady, or Humours Reconciled*.

<sup>296</sup> Helen Ostovich, "Introduction to *The Magnetic Lady*," 407.



his play *The Magnetic Lady*, indicates that he wanted the connection to be made with Katherine, not with William. Lady Loadstone, the character of closest resemblance to the idea of Katherine that we have, is the matriarch of the piece and it is her magnetic nature that draws the other characters of the play together, a nature that Jonson seems to have felt Katherine herself had.

### The Ogle Inheritance.

The idea of the Ogle's being active patrons would not have been surprising. Their barony was, after all "unlike some Tudor and Stuart titles...ancient, a true confirmation of 'blue blood' and gentlemanly status."<sup>297</sup> Their partaking in the tradition of aristocratic patronage, supporting a "healthy relationship" between the arts and the nobility, would have been an inevitability for a family of this stature.<sup>298</sup> As Sara Jayne Steen suggests in a passing comment in her edition of Lady Arbella's letters, the activity of literary patronage within the Ogle family appear to have been prevalent with the Ogle sisters' father, Cuthbert Ogle as well, when she discusses diversions that Arbella had during her time spent within her grandmother's house: "Occasional diversions included seeing the touring players, like the Queen's players, Lord Thomas Howard's players, and the troupes of Lord Ogle and the Earls of Huntingdon and Pembroke."<sup>299</sup> By having his own troupe, Cuthbert clearly had a vested interest in supporting the acting and literary community and it is likely that this aspect of his life could have been an inspiration to his daughters to carry on that tradition, in the same way, William carries it on from Katherine, and Jane and Elizabeth carry it on from him.

The sisters inherited much more from their father than just his interest in literary and acting activities. The Ogles held a vast amount of land in the North, both tied originally to the

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<sup>297</sup> Helen Ostovich, "Patronage," 300.

<sup>298</sup> David Brennan, *Literary Patronage in the English Renaissance: The Pembroke Family*, 9.

<sup>299</sup> Sara Jayne Steen, "Introduction," 27.

Ogles and ones brought over when Cuthbert married his wife Katherine Carnaby, daughter, and co-heiress of Sir Reginald Carnaby of Hatton, including manors of Morley and Berle, Thorngrifton Mill and Newton Hall, among others.<sup>300</sup> In 1583:

having no hope of male heirs, he applied to the Crown for permission to disentail the property...[and] on the 20<sup>th</sup> of September following by an indenture, to which George, Earl of Shrewsbury was part, he entailed his property upon Edward Talbot and Jane, his eldest daughter, with the exception of North Middleton and Lorbottle, which were for the use of his younger daughter, Katherine."<sup>301</sup>

When Cuthbert died, though the sisters and their mother inherited all of the Ogle land, the Ogle barony did not transfer over to them. After Cuthbert's death in 1597, the barony went into abeyance. It was that barony, however, that was vital to Katherine, as it was with the barony that she could bring substance to the newly risen Cavendish family name. Katherine managed to bring that stability to her married family when in 1628, after her sister's death in 1625, she petitioned Charles I to reclaim the title "ratifying that title of honour to her and her heirs forever" ensuring that a barony of such history and nobility was not lost simply due to lack of male heir.<sup>302</sup> Jane had made the same petition to James I in 1606, but to no avail. Having tried so hard, and succeeded in ensuring that the Ogle estates remained within his family, Cuthbert made clear to his daughters the importance of their Ogle heritage. The continual connection to their ancestry homes helped them retain their Ogle identity, as evidenced by Katherine's returning to her Northumberland estates after the death of her husband. Therefore, given the effort made in ensuring the Ogle properties were retained by Cuthbert's heir's, it is unsurprising the effort that the sisters went to, by continually petitioning two different Kings to take their title out of abeyance, to ensure that their Ogle

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<sup>300</sup> Sir Bart Henry Asgill Ogle, *Ogle, and Bothal; or a History of the Baronies of Ogle, Bothal, and Hepple*, 68 – 70.

<sup>301</sup> Sir Bart Henry Asgill Ogle, *Ogle, and Bothal; or a History of the Baronies of Ogle, Bothal and Hepple*, 69.

<sup>302</sup> Arthur Collins, *The English Baronage: or an Historical Account of the Lives and Most Memorable Actions of our Nobility, with their Descents, Marriages, and Issue, etc.*(London: Robert Gosling, 1727), 28.

barony was kept bound to their bloodline. It was with this sense of familial urgency that Katherine's own actions at the end of her life become clearer.

### Katherine Ogle Cavendish as a Female Focused Political Force.

While Jane and Katherine's inheritance was overseen by their father, some women were not as fortunate. On the death of George Clifford, Earl of Cumberland, in 1605, his daughter Anne Clifford, 14<sup>th</sup> Baroness de Clifford, inherited the ancient title of the Clifford barony *suo jure*, but his earldom (of Cumberland) along with the family estates, went to her father's younger brother Francis Clifford, as George had bequeathed it in his will. She entered into a long legal battle trying to reclaim her family estates but it was not until 1643, when the last remaining male heir died without male issue, that she was able to recover the family estates that she always believed should have belonged to her in the first place.

The Ogle sisters found themselves in the opposite position to Clifford: while the Ogle estates remained in their possession, rather than going to the closest male heir, the barony of Ogle went into abeyance. While it could be perceived that the Ogle sisters got the better bargain in retaining their estates, commodities that provided houses as well as substantial incomes, in a society where position, power, and importance were paramount in the hopes of succeeding, the ancient barony of Ogle created substance behind the wealth obtained from their estates.<sup>303</sup> After all, as the sisters married into two of the wealthiest families in the country, money is unlikely to have been an issue they would have to face. Aristocratic legitimacy, especially in the case of Katherine and Charles, would have been of a much larger issue. The Cavendish family were a perfect example of how money could only get you so far in gaining aristocratic respect. It was through marriage into the titled aristocracy, both for Bess and her children, that she was able to fully secure her dynasty and her family's secure

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<sup>303</sup> Sir Bart Henry Asgill Ogle, *Ogle, and Bothal; or a History of the Baronies of Ogle, Bothal and Hepple*, 69.

position within the turbulent world of early modern England's elite. It was never more clearly demonstrated than when Arbella knew the way to gain back the favour of her grandmother was to secure the Cavendish barony granted to William Cavendish. While money was paramount for success during this period, prestige and position counted for much more. The Ogle sisters, having been raised in this world of titles and position, were likely to understand just how much weight a barony could bring to the reputation of an individual.

Reacquiring that barony, however, like Lady Anne Clifford, was a constant concern for the sisters, but it would appear that it was something that they thought was worth the fight. While we saw Bess marry her and her family into a position where they were able to secure strong dynastic ties, for Katherine Ogle Cavendish, it would appear that her fight to reinstate the Ogle barony to her family was to ensure that, rather than securing her family's position through others, that she could do so through her own line and dynastic ancestry. Perhaps for Katherine, the last direct heir of the Ogle line, she did not want her family's heritage lost within the new rising nature of the Cavendish dynasty and wanted to ensure that her descendants were able to carry on her family's dynasty as well. After her death the barony passed on to William, after whom it went to William's eldest son Charles, and then after his death, William's youngest son and heir, Henry Cavendish, 2<sup>nd</sup> Duke of Newcastle, who, unfortunately had no surviving male heir and thus the barony, once again went into abeyance in 1691.

Where Katherine's true legacy lies, however, is what appears to be the consideration she took for her female descendants and relatives, as well as her male ones. Katherine wrote her last will and testament on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of July 1624, and it remained in force until her death in 1629. Interestingly, rather than simply bequeathing all of her possession to her two sons and Ogle kinsmen, she makes a series of bequests to female relatives that appear to be in the hope

of benefitting them rather than their own male relatives i.e. spouses. Amy Louise Erikson gives an explanation for such occurrences:

Women not only bequeathed different things than men did and were more detailed in their descriptions, they also gave them to different people. Women favoured female legatees, whether daughters, granddaughters, nieces, in-laws, or friends, in a small but significant way. It is not unusual to find a widow whose husband had favoured their sons in his will, using her own will to try to equalize their daughters' portion. The preference for female beneficiaries was not limited to bequests of clothing or childbearing linen but extended to all types of household goods, cash, and even land.<sup>304</sup>

Given the common law of coverture, where more often than not everything that a woman might have owned before marriage, in theory, became the property of her husband, wills appear to have been women's attempt to try to create opportunities for their female kin that allowed them to be separate from their male relatives.

The first example of this within Katherine's will at first appears insignificant but could, in fact, be rather telling of Katherine's idea of female entitlement during this period. When referring to her household materials she states, "and all that gellte playte and vesall whiche my sonne and daughter hath giveine me I give it all unto them agayne."<sup>305</sup> Within this bequest, Katherine not only acknowledges that her daughter-in-law contributed to the household materials that were given to her by her and William, but she also gives them back to both of them as a collective, rather than just William alone. Of course, it could be assumed that the bequest had been worded in such a way due to the fact that they are a married couple, however the significance of the joint bequest is made even more poignant by Katherine's next request, in which she specifically leaves her livestock solely to William: "and I give unto my sonne Manesfeilde all my stocke of catell shepe horses marres & of all sortes of beastes

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<sup>304</sup> Amy Louise Erikson, "Possession – and the Other One-Tenth of the Law: Assessing Women's Ownership and Economic Rules in Early Modern England," 373.

<sup>305</sup> The Final Will and Testament of Lady Catherin Cavendish, Baroness Ogle. Nottinghamshire Archives Office, MSS Portland of Welbeck (6<sup>th</sup> Deposit), DD/P6/1/19/17 (22<sup>nd</sup> July 1624).

whatsoever and in all places where I have anye."<sup>306</sup> These joint and sole bequests highlight Katherine's intention for certain items to be left to both her son and his wife but also just to her son, meaning that she intended, even in a joint way, for her daughter-in-law to benefit from her will as well as her son.

Her interest in making provisions for her daughter-in-law is again highlighted by the sole bequest that she makes to her later in the will when she "give unto my daughter Manesfeild the ues of all my chamber coubarthe playte: so loinge as she pleasethe to ues theme eather at Welbeck or Boulesover...and I give unto my Honnorabl daughter Manesfeild three hundred poundes: wherof on to make a cupe of goulde: and the outhre foure to be bestowed In pearle: to inlarge her chaine."<sup>307</sup> Again, this sole monetary request is made separately to the one that she makes to William (to whom she leaves £2000). The bequests to her daughter-in-law Elizabeth are just the start of the bequests in the will that demonstrate an interest in ensuring some kind of material or financial security for her female kin.

She leaves to her granddaughter, Jane Cavendish "thous tow Lordeskepess which my lorde my father left me: Medalltone and Lorbottle: during her life: and I give unto her also feftene hundred pounds in monye."<sup>308</sup> This bequest, again, seems rather significant. It is interesting that Katherine should leave the Ogle estates that her father petitioned and fought for Katherine to receive, to her granddaughter rather than her son, the man who would, as time would tell, continue the Ogle barony she and her sister fought for. The estates must have been of some financial significance, hence why Cuthbert left them to his youngest daughter, leading us to the conclusion that through this bequest, Katherine is also trying to secure a profitable future for her granddaughter (while also making her look more prosperous to any potential suitor) just as her father had done for her when he entailed the property to her in

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<sup>306</sup> The Final Will and Testament of Lady Catherin Cavendish, Baroness Ogle, DD/P6/1/19/17.

<sup>307</sup> The Final Will and Testament of Lady Catherin Cavendish, Baroness Ogle, DD/P6/1/19/17.

<sup>308</sup> The Final Will and Testament of Lady Catherin Cavendish, Baroness Ogle, DD/P6/1/19/17.

1583.

Katherine then goes on to give £100 to her sister (though she predeceased Katherine), £40 for a diamond ring to Katherine Howard, her daughter-in-law Elizabeth's daughter from her first marriage, and also £50 in money and "rentecharge of sexe poundes thretene shillings fouer pence a yare dureing her life oute of my lands at Fesment in the country of Northethumbarland" to her servant Mary Loinge.<sup>309</sup> While certainly there are of course bequests left to her male relatives, like her grandson William, her son Charles, as well as male servants, Henry Ogle, Roger Fretwell and John Smythson, the number of bequests made to female relatives and servants and the significance of the amounts left, certainly suggests that Katherine used her last will and testament in such a way to give the women in her life something of an advantage in a patriarchal world where, without it, they would be entirely dependent upon the men in their life.

The bequests to Elizabeth Basset Cavendish could indicate that Katherine saw Elizabeth as a separate entity to her husband, suggesting that perhaps she had more of a role in the Cavendish family than simply being a wife to the next head of the Cavendish-Newcastle line, or at the very least Katherine believed that Elizabeth was capable of a more substantial role. Then there are the estates that are left to Jane. As shall become apparent in the proceeding chapters, Jane Cavendish grows up to be a demanding, strong-willed and determined woman, who is a great asset to her father when he was forced into exile during and after the English Civil War. It is possible the origins of that personality that was present in her from her late teens began to manifest themselves thanks to the inheritance of the two estates that Katherine left to her and the opportunities and influence that she gained because of it; the concept of female consciousness and advancement in a patriarchal world being an

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<sup>309</sup> The Final Will and Testament of Lady Catherin Cavendish, Baroness Ogle, DD/P6/1/19/17.

inspiring force which allows Jane to discover and realise that she was not simply reliant on men, but had support from her female kin.

What appears to be an interest in the female agenda and female consciousness is something that could have stemmed from Katherine's mother. In her will, when stating her intentions for what she wishes to be left to her second son, Charles Cavendish, she states "of all thous my lands in Moralye: Bearell: Hisehame: Nutonehall: Bruntone: Mattesene: and all thou lands by...name or titell soever which my honorabl Mouter the La: ogle conveyed to me".<sup>310</sup> While certainly, with there being no male heirs, Katherine's mother had no choice but to leave her estates to her two daughters, certainly the independence and influence that was gained through this inheritance could have triggered Katherine's own realisation of the potential importance and somewhat control this could enable a woman in this patriarchal world. The fact that she felt it of importance to declare it within her will, that the estates had been granted to her by her mother, suggests that this changing over of property from one woman to another could be of significant importance to Katherine. This is a theory that is supported by Erikson's work in wills when she states:

English women's greater propensity to make wills, to exhibit an affinity for material good and describe their possessions in detail, and to favour women beneficiaries may have been an artefact of the English legal system – the result of dissatisfaction with the rules of marital property and the rules of distribution in the event of intestacy. Were English widows perhaps trying to claw back some legal agency by making wills?<sup>311</sup>

It is an interesting point, the consideration that women saw a way to fight against the patriarchal norms of society by using their last act on earth as a way of not only having one last lasting effect on the world they once inhabited but also, in most cases, attempting to create a more stable and beneficial environment for the female kin.

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<sup>310</sup> The Final Will and Testament of Lady Catherin Cavendish, Baroness Ogle, DD/P6/1/19/17.

<sup>311</sup> Amy Louise Erikson, "Possession – and the Other One-Tenth of the Law: Assessing Women's Ownership and Economic Rules in Early Modern England," 380-381.



While Mary Prior claims that “wives’ wills can themselves be seen as a part of the groundswell of feminist sentiment, although here wives claimed for themselves individual rights which other, later, feminists were to claim for all women” this statement seems to be missing the bigger picture of the bequests that women made during the will.<sup>312</sup> While certainly, yes it can be argued that wives’ wills allowed them one final attempt at control over their lives and whatever possessions they owned, it also granted opportunities for their female kin, and even male kin, who would otherwise be forgotten in the husband’s will, most of whose property would be left to the eldest son and heir.<sup>313</sup> To disregard the beneficiaries of wills and merely focus on the act of writing it is to misunderstand the probable reason behind any woman’s decision to even construct a will.

It is also interesting to consider the fact that the majority of wills written by women would not have their actions fulfilled unless agreed to by the wife’s husband. The story of Hannah Smith requesting her husband to fulfil her last requests of giving the items left to her by her grandmother to his children from a previous marriage, so as that any future wife that he is likely to take after her passing does not benefit from the goods given to her by her own female kin, and him promising to do so, suggests that perhaps it wasn’t only women who saw the injustice of the coverture law and the unfairness of women’s complete lack possession.<sup>314</sup> Nevertheless, the idea of women writing wills for women is interesting. Not only are they enriching their lives through bequests, but they are also developing a realisation of the importance of female consciousness and awareness. Prior suggests “the wives themselves were often impressive women whose influence can sometimes be traced through women’s

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<sup>312</sup> Mary Prior, “Wives and Wills 1558-1700” in *English Rural Society, 1500-1800*, ed. John Chartres and David Hey (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 225.

<sup>313</sup> Amy Louise Erikson, “Possession – and the Other One-Tenth of the Law: Assessing Women’s Ownership and Economic Rules in Early Modern England,” 373.

<sup>314</sup> Will of Hannah Smith alias Boswell, Wife of Creswell Oxford, Oxfordshire, National Archives, PROB11/196/480 (21 June 1646).

networks, and their example was followed by other wives.”<sup>315</sup> That certainly appears to be the case here, that in the same way her mother helped her demonstrate the importance of the female consciousness and collective female advancement, Katherine too wished to convey that onto her female kin and demonstrate what role they could play within it as well.

### The Ogle Sisters’ Patronage and Importance Overlooked.

In the way that the vast amount of family property was inherited from male to male, so too it would seem are family attributes and success. If William was first acquainted with Jonson in 1614 when he was acting as an MP in Westminster, this does not then account for the freedom he was given at his aunt’s Rufford home. This, therefore, along with concrete proof of Jonson’s dedication to the sisters as well as circumstantial evidence, even more strongly suggests that a patron/client relationship existed outside of that between William and Jonson. The Ogle sisters are an aspect of the Cavendish dynasty that so far has mostly been overlooked by scholars or still remains something of a mystery due to the lack of concrete documentary evidence left by them. Their importance in what was to become the Newcastle line of the Cavendish family has not until now been fully appreciated.

Lucy Worsley in *Cavalier: The Story of 17th Century Playboy* paints the picture of Katherine, Lady Ogle as a controlling, determined woman who had great plans set for her sons and was a great part in ensuring those plans were fulfilled, describing her as "formidably intelligent and well organised".<sup>316</sup> The fact that she, along with her husband, negotiated a marriage between William and Elizabeth Bassett Howard indicates this. Not only was she providing further wealth for her son, given that Elizabeth was the sole heiress of William Bassett of Blore, she also helped to create a connection between the Cavendishes and the

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<sup>315</sup> Mary Prior, “Wives and Wills 1558-1700,” 225.

<sup>316</sup> Lucy Worsley, *Cavalier: The Story of a 17<sup>th</sup> Century Playboy* (London: Faber, 2008), 25.

Howard family (Elizabeth's marriage to William was her second, having been widowed by Henry Howard, third son of the 1<sup>st</sup> Earl of Suffolk, with whom she also had one daughter, the aforementioned Katherine Howard to whom Katherine left money for a diamond ring in her will). It is maybe within this Elizabeth, again a woman who has married into the newly powerful Cavendish family, from an already established family, that Katherine perhaps found her successor in controlling the interest of the Newcastle Cavendish family. As shall be examined in the next chapter, in the same way that it is possible that the extent to which the Ogle sisters' involvement in the patronage activities of the Cavendish family have been overlooked, the same fate has befallen this Elizabeth Basset Howard Cavendish, who has fallen into the shadow of her exceedingly extravagant and engaging husband, William.

# **Chapter 4**

## **Biographical Short.**

### William Cavendish, First Duke of Newcastle and Elizabeth Bassett Cavendish.

The next chapter looks at the lives of William Cavendish, First Duke of Newcastle and his first wife, Elizabeth Bassett Cavendish.

### William Cavendish, First Duke of Newcastle.

William Cavendish, born in 1592 at Handsworth Manor, Yorkshire, was the son of Charles Cavendish and Katherine Ogle Cavendish. He was their eldest surviving son and had one younger brother called Charles, who also survived to maturity. As the grandson of Bess of Hardwick, it is unsurprising that he was set for position and privilege from early on in his life. In 1610, at the creation of Prince Henry as Prince of Wales, he was made a Knight of the Bath.<sup>317</sup> He went on to become Viscount Mansfield, in 1620 and the Earl of Newcastle in 1628. After his mother's death in 1629 he inherited her barony of Ogle. At the beginning of the Civil War he was made Marquess of Newcastle-Upon-Tyne, and then after the Restoration, was made Duke of Newcastle-Upon-Tyne, in 1665.

He married Elizabeth Bassett, the daughter of William and Judith Bassett of Blore. Together they had 10 children, with only 5 surviving past maturity. He has two sons, first Charles and second Henry. As Charles predeceased William, upon his death, the Newcastle dukedom was passed onto Henry, who had no surviving male heirs himself and the dukedom became extinct upon his death in 1691. They also had three surviving daughters:

- Jane Cavendish (1621-1669)
- Elizabeth Cavendish (1627-1663)
- Frances Cavendish (1641-1678).

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<sup>317</sup> Geoffrey Trease, *Portrait of a Cavalier: William Cavendish, First Duke of Newcastle*, 28.

William achieved a position of prosperity and influence at court and was certainly considered favourably by the various monarchs that sat upon the throne during his lifetime. Despite this, he never felt he obtained a position truly fitting of his Cavendish heritage and he seems to have put a lot of that blame on the disagreement that arose between his father and grandmother towards the latter years of her life.<sup>318</sup> It was, however, more likely thanks to his lack of any extended presence at Court, preferring a life spent in the country at his various stately homes.<sup>319</sup>

Upon the outbreak of the Civil War he was quick to align himself with the Royalist cause and soon became a trusted and loyal subject during an unsettling and ultimately disastrous time for the royal family. He maintained the northern troops at his own expense and frequently gave money to the Royalist cause.<sup>320</sup> While he and his troops had a great victory at Adwalton Moor, he suffered an embarrassing defeat at Marston Moor in 1644. With the death of his wife in 1643, perhaps William found that there was too much sorrow left for him in England and soon after his defeat escaped to the continent with his brother and two sons, against the King's wishes, fearing that all was lost. While in exile he left not only his estates in the hands of the Parliamentarians, but his daughters as well, who were left as guardians of family estates in his absence.<sup>321</sup> His fears in regards to the war became reality when King Charles I was executed for treason in 1649, with the Civil War finally coming to an end in 1651.

William spent the years of the Interregnum mainly in the Netherlands, basing himself in Rotterdam, Antwerp and The Hague. It was while in exile that he met his second wife, Margaret Lucas Cavendish, who was acting as a Lady in Waiting to Queen Henrietta

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<sup>318</sup> Geoffrey Trease, *Portrait of a Cavalier: William Cavendish, First Duke of Newcastle*, 20.

<sup>319</sup> Geoffrey Trease, *Portrait of a Cavalier: William Cavendish, First Duke of Newcastle*, 61.

<sup>320</sup> Lucy Worsley, *Cavalier: The Story of a 17<sup>th</sup> Century Playboy*, 152.

<sup>321</sup> Lucy Worsley, *Cavalier: The Story of a 17<sup>th</sup> Century Playboy*, 187.

Maria.<sup>322</sup> They returned to England after the Restoration and he, along with his wife, spent the remainder of his life entertaining writers, philosophers, and mathematicians in their various stately homes. Both William and Margaret were enthralled by literature, and William, who before the war had been a patron to Ben Jonson, became patron to the likes of Shirley, Davenant, Dryden, Shadwell and Flecknoe. He used his time surrounded by these men of words to continue his own literary endeavours, an activity that he started to pursue with substantial vigour after his return from the continent.

Unfortunately, like his first, William's second wife also predeceased him in 1673, and it was a loss that he never truly recovered from. He died on the 25<sup>th</sup> of December, 1676, and he, along with his Margaret, is buried in Westminster Abbey. His tomb describes him as 'The Loyal Duke' a befitting title for a man who gave so much to the crown.

### Elizabeth Bassett Cavendish

Born in 1602, a similar pattern begins to emerge when examining the women in this thesis, as Elizabeth was only 2 years old when her father, William Bassett of Blore, died. Her mother Judith was left in a terrible situation when the Master of Wards deemed that the lands that William held belonged to the Crown. The Bassett estates were valuable and Robert Cecil, the Master of Wards, wanted to see them come under the control of the Crown. He got his wish, and this saw Elizabeth become a ward of the Crown, with Judith's petition to have wardship over her daughter being refused.<sup>323</sup> It was eventually granted to Henry, Lord Cobham who allowed Judith custody of Elizabeth for the price of £40 a year until she reached the age of ten. After that, she would have to pay a further 100 marks until she reached the age of

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<sup>322</sup> Lucy Worsley, *Cavalier: The Story of a 17<sup>th</sup> Century Playboy*, 177.

<sup>323</sup> David Swinscoe and Martine Swinscoe, *Swinscoe, Blore and The Bassetts* (Blore-with-Swinscoe: Churnet Valley Books, 1998), 172.

sixteen.<sup>324</sup>

Before her marriage to William Cavendish, Elizabeth was married once before to Henry Howard. They had one daughter, Catherine. After his death she married William Cavendish, to whom she was married until her death in 1643.<sup>325</sup>

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<sup>324</sup> David Swinscoe and Martine Swinscoe, *Swinscoe, Blore and The Bassetts*, 174.

<sup>325</sup> David Swinscoe and Martine Swinscoe, *Swinscoe, Blore and The Bassetts*, 24.



**The Newcastle Cavendishes: The Role of William Cavendish and his First Wife, Elizabeth Bassett, on the Continuance of and Alteration to the Cavendish Family Legacy.**

While certainly not unique, it would be foolhardy not to admit that the life of Bess of Hardwick was somewhat extraordinary. It was, at the very least, rare to see that kind of influence and passion for a family legacy emulated predominately through a female line. In the last chapter we looked at some of the female descendants who were closest to Bess, her daughter, the granddaughter she brought up, as well as the Ogle sisters, her daughter - and step-daughters-in-law, all of whom appear to have taken heed to the reputation she created and wanted to continue it through their own lives. While certainly this continuing interest in female empowerment progressing from one generation to another down the female line was rare, it is something that is reconcilable in the minds of modern historians. The women closest to Bess would have of course seen the advantages of her lifestyle and wished to create such a life for themselves. Where these advances in female empowerment and influence begin to really assert its importance within the familial structure of the Cavendish family comes the generation immediately after those directly associated with Bess.

Born in 1592, William Cavendish, the eldest surviving son of Bess' youngest son Sir Charles Cavendish and his wife Katherine Ogle, who was only 16 at Bess' death, not only furthered the legacy that Bess had created, but continued to encourage the idea of strong women within the family. William celebrated the life and achievements of Bess and attempted to use them to his own advantage; establishing the idea that his connection to the great Bess of Hardwick must have meant that he was also destined for greatness.

It is, however through his activities in life, and most predominately his patronage, that the concept and influence of evolutionary female empowerment really begins to take form. While, through his more Cavendish influenced activities, such as his architectural

endeavours, William clearly took influence from Bess, his great love and passion for literature, literary patronage and the composition of literature itself clearly hailed from his Ogle ancestry. William selected different parts of his families' legacies which he believed would be most useful to him and his own future descendants – taking the influence and power from the newly risen Cavendishes and the status and security from the Ogles.

Yet the most extraordinary aspect of William's life, for which he is included in this thesis, is his recognition of female ability, and his encouragement to see these behaviours in the women within his own immediate family. While not much appears to be known about William's first wife, the heiress Elizabeth Bassett, with much of the attention of William's marital life being spent on his second wife, Margaret Lucas, when searching through archival documents, both from William and Elizabeth, a picture of an educated, strong-willed and determined woman begins to take form. Yet, there are no concrete secondary documents to go along with this picture. There are no odes written in praise of her intelligence and wit. She has no books, poems or plays dedicated to her in recognition of her knowledge of languages and rhetoric, no letters between different men of importance praising her for her academic accomplishment like the other women in this thesis. Yet, as shall be examined below, the evidence suggests that she had abilities in all these areas, thus bringing into question how rare the idea of the 'learned woman' such as Anne Clifford, Mary Sidney, and the Cooke sisters really was. This makes us re-evaluate our concept of female education during this period and the degree to which it was dispersed amongst the populace. This chapter tries to unearth the degree to which both Elizabeth and William were influential in the continuing development of the Cavendish female evolutionary wheel and how each of them, in their own right, appears to be responsible for the furthering of the strong female Cavendish personalities that are apparent within their own daughters.

## William Cavendish and his Quest for Position and Acceptance.

In her introduction to *An English Prince: Newcastle's Machiavellian Political Guide to Charles II*, Gloria Italiano Anzilotti documents the various compliments bestowed upon Cavendish throughout his life. She gives the example of Edward Hyde, who refers to him as “one of the most valuable men in the kingdom”<sup>326</sup>; as well as Shadwell, describing him as “the greatest master of wit, the most exact observer of mankind, and the most accurate judge of humour that ever I Knew”<sup>327</sup>; while Charles I claims “his noble bounty and generosity is so manifest to all the world, that I should light a candle to the sun if I should strive to illustrate it.”<sup>328</sup> She then states, with some disbelief, that “surely, a man that aroused such expression of encomium from such a wide array of people deserves to be better known three centuries later.”<sup>329</sup>

Anzilotti makes a good point. The ‘loyal duke’, so dubbed not only by himself but countless of his contemporaries, including Charles II, and is seen on his tomb as the man who lost it all in his defence of Charles I, who remained ever loyal to the crown during the Interregnum despite his predicament of being banished from his homeland where his daughters and property remained, as well as being a very generous patron to the arts, builder of some of the most magnificent examples of Caroline architecture, and one time governor of the future Charles II, is barely remembered outside of today’s academic circles and appreciators of dressage. When considering his contributions to the crown and culture throughout a significant part of the seventeenth century it would not be considered

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<sup>326</sup> Edward Hyde, Earl of Clarendon, *The History of the Rebellion and Civil Wars in England Volume 1*, 125.

<sup>327</sup> Thomas Shadwell, *The Virtuoso*, 3.

<sup>328</sup> Margaret Cavendish, *The Life of the Thrice Noble, High and Puissant Prince William Cavendish Book III*, 111.

<sup>329</sup> Gloria Italiano Anzilotti, “Introduction,” 16.

outrageous to consider him as important a figure as other well known Caroline personalities such as George Villiers, 1<sup>st</sup> Duke of Buckingham, Oliver Cromwell and Samuel Pepys.

While his contributions to the seventeenth century are little remembered now, even during his own lifetime, despite the words of admiration quoted above, William himself spent a great deal of time reminding his peers he was worthy of the praise. Life in the Stuart court for William Cavendish was never going to be simple. While the idea of being the grandson of Elizabeth Talbot, Countess of Shrewsbury, the nephew of Mary Talbot, Countess of Shrewsbury, and the cousin of Arbella Stuart, could be seen as a blessing, when analysing the positions these women had at court, his association with them would presumably have presented themselves to William as more of a curse. These women made an impression on their society. William not only had to contend with the legacy that his female descendants left but also the fact that they were able to create such a legacy despite the fact they were women. Where they had to work twice as hard to gain their notoriety, he had to work three times as hard to prove that he was simply as good as them.

To start with, however, William was always going to have difficulty establishing himself within the Cavendish family's name and stature. The confrontation between Bess and her step-son Gilbert in regards to her widow's allowance, and Charles' subsequent alliance with Gilbert over the matter created a rift between Bess and her son and he was disinherited from her will. This is significant, as her will was Bess' tool to demonstrate with whom she placed her trust to continue, not only her work but also the line she worked tirelessly to create. Despite Sir Charles's behaviour being far less detrimental to the legacy Bess had created than that of her first son Henry and that they had in fact reconciled before her death, Sir Charles was forgotten in her will. All that was left was 4000 marks each to Sir Charles' two children, William and Charles. While this could be perceived as Bess simply bypassing their father, but continuing to allow an association between herself and her grandsons,

considering the discussion of the importance that Bess placed on family in chapter 2, it is more likely that Bess was simply making provisions for members of her family who held the Cavendish name. Within this act of disinheriting Charles she demonstrated that she did not hold any faith in her youngest son, and thus his line, in being able to continue the familial legacy she had begun to set the foundations for, and therefore, his future descendants (William and his brother Charles included) could not benefit, nor truly associate themselves, with her name, the Cavendish dynasty or legacy. It was, however a legacy that William spent a great deal of his life trying to realign himself with, as well as ensuring a legitimate claim could also be made by any of his own future descendants, doing so by taking inspiration from his Ogle heritage as well as his Cavendish heritage.

#### William Cavendish's use of Architecture as a Family Trait.

William had in his life three great loves: the arts, such as literature, art and music; horses, and architecture. Throughout his lifetime he acquired, inherited, built and renovated a number of country estates in and around Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire, including Bolsover Castle, Nottingham Castle, and Welbeck Abbey. Lucy Worsley, in her 2001 thesis on the architectural patronage of William Cavendish, looks in great depth at William's architectural empire and his accomplishments and failures within it. One aspect of her study, which is particularly important to this argument, is her analysis into the various reasons why William focused such attention on building works. Worsley suggests one motive that could have been something of an influential motivator for William as to why he decided that architecture could have been an opportune way to achieve the advancements he so believed he deserved, could be his uncle Devonshire. She writes:

This pattern of building and advancement up the ladder of nobility was not unusual. William's uncle, another William Cavendish, for example, became the first Earl of Devonshire. Achieving a barony in 1605, he spent over a thousand pounds on improvements at Hardwick between 1608 and 1612. He

finally received his earldom in 1618, in consideration of a payment of £8000 to the Crown. In 1619 there was another spurt of building at Hardwick, and a visit from the Prince of Wales in August. The dates and facts are very similar: expenditure followed by an honour.<sup>330</sup>

Perhaps, rather than simply being another example of an aristocrat who subscribed to the notion of ‘expenditure followed by an honour’, William Cavendish, 1<sup>st</sup> Earl of Devonshire was, in fact, the model by which his nephew lived. After all, it is with this William Devonshire whom Bess placed her belief and trust in to fulfil her dynastic desires. William, so desperate to associate himself and his line with the greatness and the glory that was bestowed upon his family while under Bess' rule, chose to mimic the practices of her chosen heir so as to show, in everyone else's minds, that not only did he carry the Cavendish surname, but he also carried the Cavendish mentality and honour. For William it wasn't quite as simple as ‘expenditure followed by an honour’ but rather expenditure leading to alignment and familial recognition, thus, in his own mind, inevitably being followed by an honour.

Therefore while Worsley makes the connection between William and his uncle William, 1<sup>st</sup> Earl of Devonshire, I would go further and suggest that the association solely with the Earl of Devonshire and his own achievements had little to do with William's decision to partake in architectural patronage and it was in fact the Earl of Devonshire's position as the heir to the great Cavendish legacy that was the more conscious connection between the two. William's mimicry of the Earl's activities comes across as an attempt to align himself with his paternal ancestors, considering, as we saw in chapter 2, the position, the power and the prestige that the Earl of Devonshire had, came more or less directly from Bess. It was with her money that his properties were bought and his first title, Baron Hardwick, was bought with her money.<sup>331</sup> While certainly, William does appear to have

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<sup>330</sup> Lucy Worsley, “The Architectural Patronage of William Cavendish, First Duke of Newcastle, 1593-1676” (Ph.D. thesis, University of Sussex, 2001), 182.

<sup>331</sup> Pamela Kettle, *Oldcotes: The Last Mansion built by Bess of Hardwick*, 25.

subscribed to the notion of 'expenditure followed by an honour' that we see within Devonshire's activities, that model and belief also appear in Bess' business. Hardwick Hall's grandest apartment was built specifically with the hope of an imminent visit from Elizabeth I (a visit that was never substantiated). Though the Earl of Devonshire had certainly risen to his earldom thanks to his own efforts, it could be argued that the only reason he was able to attain that position was thanks to the initial help that he was granted by Bess. It was this initial help, this association with a woman of such societal importance, that William seems to have believed would help him rise as high, if not higher than his Devonshire uncle and cousins.

Bess' use of Robert Smythson as her chosen builder/architect for her architectural pursuits and that continued use with the Cavendish-Newcastle tree is especially interesting when considering William's wish of matriarchal association. It was with her building works that Bess was able to mask the life that she had stemmed from, that of a family of farmers.<sup>332</sup> It was this same method that William would, rather than hide his ancestry, celebrate, flaunt and revel in it and ensure that anyone that looked on his own architectural endeavours would immediately realise that the building they saw in front of them had some connection to the Cavendish legacy, and by default, Bess of Hardwick herself.<sup>333</sup>

While Bess might have disinherited her youngest son Charles, and thus taken away the Cavendish legacy from his familial line, it is the Newcastle Cavendishes that continued the passion and the work in architectural renovation. They took over the patronage of Robert Smythson, even continuing it on to his son John after Robert's death. In fact, by 1615 John Smythson was in permanent employment to Charles and William Cavendish. It was with

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<sup>332</sup> Philip Riden and Dudley Fowkes, *Hardwick: A Great House and Its Estates*, 11.

<sup>333</sup> Lucy Worsley, "The Architectural Patronage of William Cavendish, First Duke of Newcastle, 1593-1676," 56-57.

William's father Charles, rather than any of her other sons, that we truly see the continued dedication and interest in architectural endeavours and brilliance that was prevalent in Bess' own endeavours. Whether because of his mother, or indeed in spite of her, Sir Charles developed a keen interest in architecture and building, and purchased and began the renovation of Bolsover Castle and Welbeck Abbey, the country houses that were passed on to William after his father's death, that he himself continued to develop and renovate. William continued the Cavendish association with the younger Smythson, allowing not only for his country estates to be continually associated with his father who had begun the projects but also with the woman that had used Smythson's father to build her homes.

The history books would remember the alliance between the different factions of the Cavendish family as being reborn through William, not simply obliterated by his father Charles. He would rewrite the tale, telling the story of the Newcastle Cavendishes as the family that did, rather than the family that couldn't. It wasn't enough for him to indulge in the same activities that had helped to make Bess and his uncle great, he also wanted everyone to know, through the appearance of the buildings that he continued to build, through their themes and styles, that he could also be linked to Bess of Hardwick and her Cavendish legacy. Malcolm Airs argues building for her was connected to her deep ambitious nature and they acted as signifiers not just of how important she was but how far she herself had risen through the aristocratic society.<sup>334</sup> William appears to have thought that continuing this architectural interest was the only way for him to be associated with the same ambitious nature of the Cavendish line.

### Architecture as Political Gains.

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<sup>334</sup> Malcolm Airs, *The Making of the English Country House 1500-1640*, 9.



Like his grandmother before him, William also seems to have recognised that, while architecture would allow him to create a connection between his line and Bess, it could also, independently of any Bess connection, work for his own political advantage. Worsley suggests that William's quest for political success was a driving force behind his architectural pastimes. While she admits that there is "no direct evidence that William deliberately used architecture as a means of distinguishing himself from other courtiers in a similar position," she points out that it is impossible to ignore the timetabling of his projects. Worsley explains that "far from being simply the romantic and reclusive pleasure house described in most accounts of Bolsover, it can be argued that the completion of the Little Castle was in fact performed with short-term 'political' gain in mind."<sup>335</sup> The title of the biography that Worsley writes about William refers to him as a 'seventeenth-century playboy' and when reading contemporary accounts of Newcastle this is the general image that has been portrayed.<sup>336</sup> Yet, the completion of the Little Castle, just in time for the royal entertainment that he organised for the visit of King Charles and Queen Henrietta Maria, does suggest that Newcastle's actions were somewhat more calculated and he believed that he could improve his position by impressing the King and Queen with the Bolsover entertainments.

The importance of these entertainments and the completion of Bolsover's Little Castle for the second of the entertainments shall be examined below, but certainly, this suggests that William did have a mind for advancement, and Worsley's analysis that his building works were with 'short-term political gains in mind' does appear to be true. Indeed, in a letter written from Lord Cottington to William on 13<sup>th</sup> December 1632, 6 months before William's first reception of the King at Welbeck on his travels to Scotland, Cottington writes:

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<sup>335</sup> Lucy Worsley, "The Architectural Patronage of William Cavendish, First Duke of Newcastle, 1593-1676," 181.

<sup>336</sup> See Prince Rupert's accounts of William during their campaign in the Civil War, most predominately those referring to his activities the night prior to the Battle of Marston Moor.

I must tell you from my Lord Treasurer that you are lively in the memory, both of the King and of his lordship...my Lord Deputy is precisely sent for, so that you will have one friend more here. You are appointed to attend the King into Scotland which I conceive might be a good motive for your friends to put it to a period.<sup>337</sup>

The timing of this letter being received and William's first royal Entertainment demonstrates that, given the inclination that possible advancement could be due, William has done all in his power to try to change that possible advancement into something more concrete. In the biography she wrote on her husband, Margaret Cavendish, Duchess of Newcastle, states that William spent between four and five thousand pounds on the entertainments, while Edward Hyde, Earl of Clarendon confirms how, during the first entertainment that William put on for the King, "both king and court were received and entertained by the Earl of Newcastle, and at his own proper expense, in such a wonderful manner, and in such an excess of feasting, as had scarce ever before been known in England."<sup>338</sup> While the perception of William that has filtered down through the centuries as a lover of revels and pleasure, it could be assumed that William only partook in these activities as a way of entertaining himself as well as his King.

However, in a letter written to his friend, Thomas Stafford, Lord Deputy of Ireland on 5<sup>th</sup> of August 1633, after no advancement had been attained despite the hospitality and entertainment provided for the Crown, William writes:

I cannot find by the King but he seemed to be pleased with me, very well, and never used me better or more graciously; the Truth is, I have hurt my Estate much with the Hopes of it, and I have been put in Hope long, and so long as I will labour no more in it, but let Nature work and expect the Issue at Welbeck.<sup>339</sup>

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<sup>337</sup> Geoffrey Trease, *Portrait of a Cavalier: William Cavendish, First Duke of Newcastle*, 67.

<sup>338</sup> Edward Hyde, Earl of Clarendon, *The History of the Rebellion and Civil Wars in England*, 139.

<sup>339</sup> William Knowler, *The Earl of Stafford's Letters and Dispatches, with an Essay toward his Life by Sir George Radcliffe, Volume 1* (London: William Bowyer, 1739), 101.

William goes on to state that he is concerned with the amount of debt that he has accumulated thanks to the King's visit, while also aware that, with his ever growing family, money will continue to be a difficult factor in his life, and without any assurance that the suggested advancement would be guaranteed he would have to restrict his life to simply that of a country gentleman, explaining, "I know no Diet better than a strict Diet in the Country, which, in Time, may recover me of the prodigal Disease."<sup>340</sup>

Yet, not a year later, at the King's request, with the further suggestion that advancement might, this time, be attainable, William once again played host to the King, as well as the Queen, along with the court, and put on another entertainment and feast just as grand, if not more, in magnitude and expense; Margaret Cavendish suggesting that this visit cost William between fourteen and fifteen thousand pounds.<sup>341</sup> Having already put one entertainment on at Welbeck, William appears to have wanted to show off the rest of his estates. Bolsover, which was the venue where this second entertainment was held but, at this point, was far from being finished, with the terrace range nowhere near completion, nor the state apartments.<sup>342</sup> It was therefore decided that it was to be at Welbeck that the court would stay on their visit, but at Bolsover where the revels would take place. This allowed William to show off his newest venture, with his various country estates demonstrating his importance, both locally and nationally, his position and his (perceived) wealth. The revels and feasting worked to demonstrate William's personality, while his buildings worked to demonstrate the concreteness of his power and influence in the surrounding area. Throughout his life, William used different means to highlight his importance, which will be examined later, but on this stage, with this company, and this royal opportunity at stake, his architectural endeavours appear to have been what he deemed the most suitable way of highlighting the grandeur of

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<sup>340</sup> William Knowler, *The Earl of Stafford's Letters and Dispatches*, 101.

<sup>341</sup> Margaret Cavendish, *The Life of the Thrice Noble, High and Puissant Prince William Cavendish*, 111.

<sup>342</sup> Lucy Worsley, *Bolsover Castle* (English Heritage, 2013), 9.

his estate and self. William certainly put a lot of time, effort, and of course money, into ensuring that Bolsover was presentable as a place of entertainment and perceived as the Palace of Pleasure that William always endeavoured it to be, in time for the royal entertainment. This quick completion of Bolsover for the second set of royal entertainments was surely the ‘short-term political gain’ that Worsley suggested William had in mind.

Sampson’s *Virtus Post Funera Vivit, or Honour Triumphant over Death*.

William, like Bess before him, had a deep interest in the idea of family and where it was that he came within the overall scope of it. It was never more aptly presented than when examining a set of poems dedicated to him by the Nottinghamshire writer William Sampson, called *Virtus post Funera Vivit, or Honour Triumphant over Death* (*Virtus post Funera Vivit* also being the motto for Nottingham). Sampson is believed to have been born in the Nottinghamshire village of South Leverton, into a family of yeomen who were considerable landowners. He went on to become a retainer to Sir Henry Willoughby, Baronet of Risley and his family, and Trease refers to Sampson as a “lesser writer”.<sup>343</sup> Having been born in Nottinghamshire and then lived in Derbyshire when he was with Sir Henry Willoughby, Sampson would have found himself rooted in two counties that both held the seats and residences of the two branches of the Cavendish family. The contents of *Virtus post Funera Vivit* confirms the impact that the Cavendish family had not only on Sampson's life but also the lives of all those who lived in the two counties of Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire as a whole.

Out of the thirty-one poems that make up *Virtus post Funera Vivit*, ten are dedicated to someone related to William Cavendish (Newcastle), with only two being dedicated to Sir Henry Willoughby’s family. By writing *Virtus post Funera Vivit* in this way a case could be

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<sup>343</sup> Geoffrey Trease, *Portrait of a Cavalier*, 72.

made that he is writing specifically with William in mind, with poetry included not only about his grandmother, mother, aunts and uncles, but about his second son, also William, who had recently died. Despite the fact that William shares the dedication with Christian Bruce, the wife of his cousin, William Cavendish, 2<sup>nd</sup> Earl of Devonshire, there are no poems dedicated to her relations other than those that she also shares with William. It is when looking at this list of subjects for the collection of poems that a picture begins to be created of the true intentions behind the way that *Virtus post Funera Vivit* was composed and formulated. Had Sampson merely been seeking patronage from Cavendish, the safer route travelled would have seen *Virtus post Funera Vivit* being a collection of poems that dealt exclusively with the Cavendish family. However Sampson wrote his collection and presented it in such a way that the Cavendish family poems appear the most prominent, and therefore most important, among the assembled subjects praised in *Virtus post Funera Vivit* and by extension, especially considering the usage of Nottingham's motto as its title, the collection symbolises the importance of the family to their surrounding area.

In the same vein as Lucy Worsley's suggestion of 'expenditure followed by an honour' being the model used when building, perhaps William thought that he could use the same method with one of his other loves: literature. The 1633 and 1634 entertainments at Welbeck and Bolsover had failed. His letter to Stafford after the first entertainment confirms how deeply he had hurt his estate and how this made him question whether the prize of a court appointment was indeed worth the effort he had to make. Trease suggests that William, at this point was "undecided now whether he even wanted a court appointment...[and was] increasingly frustrated in his desire for some conspicuous recognition."<sup>344</sup> Yet, the Bolsover entertainment still took place a year later, despite that uncertainty in resolve felt by William, and it again did not result in success. Dejected and heavily out of pocket, William was surely

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<sup>344</sup> Geoffrey Trease, *Portrait of a Cavalier*, 68-69.

beginning to discover that, despite the successes this practice brought to his other Cavendish kin, the 'expenditure followed by an honour' model had failed to work for him. William had tried to impress and align himself with the Cavendish name through his building and had tried to impress again by creating two spectacles which expressed his own unique tastes and personality, both to no avail. He needed to find another way to impress, one that wouldn't break the bank, and perhaps William Sampson's 1636 publication, *Virtus post Funera Vivit*, was his solution.

William wanted to demonstrate how he and his family were as worthy of position and power as much as his cousins were and as much as his grandmother was in her lifetime. He wanted to take the inherited legacy that was taken away from him and reclaim it. It is when looking at the dedication of *Virtus Post Funera Vivit* that a picture begins to form that could suggest that perhaps William had more to do with its construction than simply being the muse to Sampson's writing.

By dedicating the collection to both a member of the Devonshire Cavendishes and a member of the Newcastle Cavendishes, it gives the appearance that, in the eyes of the people of Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire, that these two branches of the Cavendish tree were equal and just as important as one another, and thus, both have equal claims to the Cavendish legacy that began with Bess. After the dedication, the first poem of the collection is dedicated to Bess. Bess took the position of the matriarchal head of the Cavendish family, and her place as the head of this collection of poems would be the exact place that William, if he did in fact act as a patron to Sampson and pay him to write this collection, would have chosen for his grandmother to be placed. Not only does it show his awareness to her position as the family head, but physically places them close together in the collection, furthering the apparent close connection between the two that William endeavoured to portray.

˘ For Charles I lineage and baronial power were two elements vital to the form of

courtly chivalry that he was attempting to achieve under his reign, and Bess was a great example of both of those elements in the Elizabethan and the beginning of the Jacobean reign.<sup>345</sup> Sampson addresses these issues of importance to Charles by making reference to the lineage that was left after Bess and the power that she had in her own lifetime. He claims that "The World beneath her feet she did controule."<sup>346</sup> Sampson also points to the honour and nobility that can be found in Elizabeth's issue, and the importance and impact they would bring into the history of England:

Three noble Earles sonnes of her great bloud,  
Whose perfect honour writes her Honours good,  
Six Countesses descended all from her,  
Whose names, and fames deserve and Chronicler  
Whose births, and worths in future times shall stand  
Enrold within the volumes of our Land<sup>347</sup>

Sampson then moves on to the aspect of Bess' story that appears to be most important to William: her acquisition and renovation of houses. Of Chatsworth, he says "Thy structure merits admiration"<sup>348</sup>, he claims that "her truest lover, [was] the stately Cabinet of Boulders' over" being the "second colosse built by her"<sup>349</sup>. This reference to the venue where William's second royal entertainment took place only two years earlier could be an indication of how intricately connected he was to his grandmother, where he continues to enhance and live in the 'second colosse built by her.' When it comes to Hardwick, the structure or the beauty of the house is not described, but the natural beauty that surrounds it.

Beneath our Hard-wicke, in the Valley trills  
The Becke of Crawley fed by springs, and rills.

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<sup>345</sup> J.S.A Adamson, "Chivalry and Political Culture in Caroline England," 178.

<sup>346</sup> William Sampson, *Virtus Post Funera Vivit*, 2.

<sup>347</sup> William Sampson, *Virtus Post Funera Vivit*, 2.

<sup>348</sup> William Sampson, *Virtus Post Funera Vivit*, 3.

<sup>349</sup> William Sampson, *Virtus Post Funera Vivit*, 4.

Whose watry course, no river can beget  
Till in the Rother she her head does set.<sup>350</sup>

Though Bess did make renovations to Hardwick, and it was where she decided to live once she became estranged from her fourth husband, it was also her place of birth, and the emphasis on the surroundings rather than the structure indicates how far from her humble beginning she came. It demonstrates how far she had come from the valley around Hardwick to the "gilded Turrets" of Chatsworth.<sup>351</sup> While, for Bess, this move from humble beginnings to aristocracy would not have been what she wanted people to see when they admired Hardwick, for William it was the perfect way to show how, despite their humble beginnings at the start of the sixteenth-century, the Cavendishes were destined for greatness. William presumably wanted to show that he was still able to continue that greatness.

It is clear that Trease is correct, and "Sampson's quality was not high" but perhaps that was always William's intention.<sup>352</sup> Had William indeed had a hand in the composition and printing of *Virtus Post Funera Vivit*, to have asked any number of established, professional writers to have written a selection of poems that advocated him, his family, and his place within it, the reasoning behind the composition would have been clear. That, itself, would have been counterintuitive to his plan. William did not simply want to align himself with his family; he wanted it to appear as if that alignment was a clear and natural thing for the people of Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire, regardless of their own position within society. The dedication once again places William in a position of great importance. As the first dedicatee, he is placed at the head of the book, the new head of the family. He is placed before Christian Bruce, the carrier of the next line of the Devonshire Cavendishes, the woman that would continue the line that Bess had originally put such faith in. Most importantly, however, William finds himself placed before Bess herself. Symbolically Sampson tumbles

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<sup>350</sup> William Sampson, *Virtus Post Funera Vivit*, 4.

<sup>351</sup> William Sampson, *Virtus Post Funera Vivit*, 3.

<sup>352</sup> Geoffrey Trease, *Portrait of A Cavalier*, 72.



the Cavendish matriarch from the head of the family and places the son of the son she disinherited above her. While Bess might have put her faith in the Devonshire Cavendishes, *Vivit post Funera Vivit* suggests that the people of Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire placed theirs in the Newcastle Cavendishes. The volume clearly demonstrates the importance the Cavendishes had in their local areas, as also suggested by Nick Rowe when he claims “the book serves as a demonstration and confirmation of Cavendish’s local status at the head on the ranks of county society.”<sup>353</sup> It is possible that this was the same message he was trying to portray through Ben Jonson’s masque at Bolsover, with the inclusion of the local workmen characters in the entertainment, but, this message once again being presented in Sampson’s collection, suggests that the message wasn’t acknowledged by the visiting court.

The double dedication to William and Christian Bruce also suggests the calmer waters and good relations that now existed between the Devonshire and Newcastle Cavendishes. As James Knowles points out in his introduction to Jonson’s *Cavendish Christening Entertainment*, William was “embroiled in a difficult relationship with his Cavendish-Devonshire cousins after 1616 due to tensions occasioned by his executorship of the seventh Earl of Shrewsbury’s will. These disputes only eased in the late 1620s.”<sup>354</sup> These troublesome relations between the two factions of the Cavendish family during the 1610s and 1620s would have been little help to support William's claim to the Cavendish legacy. If he was quarrelling with the side of the family entrusted with the legacy, it would be no surprise that those around him would not think him worthy of claiming his place within that legacy. With the tensions subsided by the late 1620s, by 1636, especially considering the joint patronage relationship held between Hobbes and the two Cavendish factions, it's safe to assume that any earlier quarrels were all but resolved. Therefore, Sampson's collection not only shows William's

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<sup>353</sup> Nick Rowe, ““My Best Patron,”” 198.

<sup>354</sup> James Knowles, “Introduction: A Cavendish Christening Entertainment,” 399.

importance to his county and its people but also his importance to the Cavendish name. With the two houses being such integral parts of the running of Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire, this dual dedication helps to emphasize why the two families working together in unison was so vital. *Virtus post Funera Vivit* helps to signify that the wellbeing of the counties cannot be fulfilled by just one Cavendish family, but requires both of them working together.

There is, however, no concrete evidence that William had any hand in *Virtus Post Funera Vivit*, yet the circumstantial evidence and happenings around its production remain too suspicious to simply be overlooked. Two years after having put on two extravagant productions for the King's pleasure, displaying his wealth, good hospitality and nobility, with no advancements being bestowed upon him for either of his efforts, a book describing his importance appears. Of course, in comparison to the other 'expenditure followed by an honour' exercises, being a patron to a poet would have been minimal, however, it would be relating back to William's own interests. Whether connected or not, two years after *Virtus post Funera Vivit* was published, on the 4<sup>th</sup> June 1638, William Cavendish was finally awarded the court position he clearly hoped he would achieve, when he was officially appointed as governor of the future King Charles II.<sup>355</sup> Sampson's true reason for writing *Virtus post Funera Vivit* might never be known, but a strong case can be presented that its timing, and William's position in it, are linked to William's quest for courtly recognition.

William did not simply make the leap from the architectural patronage that his grandmother favoured to the literary patronage that we see throughout his career, all by himself. As evidenced in chapter three, it is likely that he gained his interest in literary endeavours from his mother, Katherine Ogle Cavendish, Baroness Ogle, and his aunt, Jane Ogle Talbot, Countess of Shrewsbury. Katherine brought a great deal to her son's life. Where his grandmother had taken away a familial identity and dynasty, Katherine brought to him the

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<sup>355</sup> Gloria Italiano Anzilotti, "Introduction," 20.

ancient barony of Ogle. Unlike the Cavendishes, who made their money, and thus gained their position and power, from the dissolution of the monasteries and made their rise up the social ladder thanks to Bess' advantageous marriages, the Ogles were members of the old aristocracy and adhered to the practices that had been passed down over generations. These included the ancient practice of *noblesse oblige* which, as Michael Brennan explains, is a "healthy relationship" between the arts and nobility. It was an obligation that was both "expected and widely admired."<sup>356</sup> Though this appears as a noble gesture towards the development of the arts, there were more selfish motives behind it.

While it is fair to say that through their patronage the aristocracy enabled the composition of vital works, it is also true that through that patronage they ensured themselves an eternity of fame. Through dedications and being the subjects of poems, nobles were able to "transcend time and death" and be known, or indeed famous, not only in their own time but hundreds of years later merely by showing support to a writer.<sup>357</sup> The depth of William's patronage will be established below and an understanding of his deep appreciation of not only patronage but literature as a whole will be highlighted, but the probable involvement that William had with *Virtus post Funera Vivit* suggests that William had a vast understanding of the many facets and advantages connected with patronage and appears to have used it for both pleasurable and political gains.

### The Importance and Development of the Ben Jonson Connection

William's dedication to literature earned him the title of the 'English Macaenas' as referred to by Gerard Langbaine in his 1691 biography *Dramatick Poets*, in which he describes

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<sup>356</sup> Michael Brennan, *Literary Patronage in the English Renaissance: The Pembroke Family*, 10.

<sup>357</sup> Michael Brennan, *Literary Patronage in the English Renaissance: The Pembroke Family*, 9.

William's importance both as a patron and a writer during the Caroline era.<sup>358</sup> As literature appears to have held such a special place in his heart, the literary relationships he had appears to have developed on a more personal level, none more so than the long-standing connection he held with Ben Jonson, who, in his correspondence with William, often referred to him as "my Patron of excellence"<sup>359</sup> and "my best Patron"<sup>360</sup>. As discussed in chapter three, it would appear that that relationship between the Newcastle Cavendishes and Ben Jonson did, in fact, begin thanks to an initial patronage relationship between the two Ogle sisters and Jonson. In a similar way that William mimicked Bess and her methods of attaining power and privilege, we appear to once again be seeing William copying a strong female ancestor's methods of displaying nobility.

Of course, his actions could be of a less calculating nature, with William's continued patronage of the writer, who had honoured his mother in such beautiful forms through his writing, was in itself a way for him to honour his mother, as well as paying homage to the man who immortalised his mother in print. This explanation could also explain the reason why, despite his ever decreasing popularity, William still chose Jonson to write the politically important entertainments at Bolsover and Welbeck in front of the King and Queen. Either way, this continued connection with Jonson helps to demonstrate how much of an impact the actions of his female kin had on William and the importance they had in his decisions making on how to run his life, his estate and activities.

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<sup>358</sup> Gerard Langbaine, *An Account of the English Dramatick Poet or Some Observations and Remarks on the lives and writings of those that have publish'd either Comedies, Tragedies, Tragi-Comedies, Pastorals, Masques, Interludes, Farces, or Operas in the English Tongue* (Oxford: LL for George West and Henry Clements, 1691), 226.

<sup>359</sup> Letter from Ben Jonson to William Cavendish 1<sup>st</sup> Duke of Newcastle, The Newcastle Manuscript, Harley MS 4955, British Library, London, recto 182.

<sup>360</sup> Letter from Ben Jonson to William Cavendish 1<sup>st</sup> Duke of Newcastle, The Newcastle Manuscript, Harley MS 4955, British Library, London, recto 203.

The relationship that William had with Jonson appears to have been a fulfilling and one, which William certainly learnt a lot from, especially when it came to composing his own plays. Gerard Langbaine commented not long after William's death how deeply-rooted the affection that Cavendish felt for the aging playwright was, stating "he had a more particular kindness for that Great Master of Dramatick Posey, the Excellent Johnson; and 'twas from him that he attain'd to a perfect Knowledge of what was to be accounted True Humour in Comedy."<sup>361</sup>

It is within this relationship he had with Jonson that we begin to see the formation of William Cavendish. He saw his patronage relationship with writers not simply as a tit-for-tat money, dedicatory exchange, but found within these men of letters kindred spirits who assisted him and allowed him access to their arsenal of words. In terms of technique, William appears to have learnt a lot from Jonson, while Jonson relied heavily on him during the period where he was out of vogue at court, after his very public fight, and ultimately loss, to onetime collaborator Inigo Jones.<sup>362</sup> As Helen Ostovich explains, "The income for Jonson [from Cavendish] was vital, since his masque-making had been out of favour at court since 1631, and he had also lost his post as City Chronologer through ill-health, in addition to having difficulty collecting his royal pension from Charles."<sup>363</sup> In various letters addressed to William, Jonson referred to him as his 'best Patron' a sentiment that Nick Rowe states, when considering Jonson's life and predicaments during this time, should not simply be put down to writer-patron hyperbole, commenting how it "should be seen to acknowledge the very real importance to Jonson of a particular patronage relationship during the notoriously hard times

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<sup>361</sup> Gerard Langbaine, *An Account of the English Dramatick Poets*, 226.

<sup>362</sup> Graham Parry, *The Golden Age Restor'd – The Culture of the Stuart Court 1630-42* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1981), 180.

<sup>363</sup> Helen Ostovich, "Patronage," 301.

he faced during the rule of Charles I.<sup>364</sup> Robert Evan claims that William was a patron “whose significance for Jonson has not been fully emphasized.”<sup>365</sup> This is certainly true when considering how, towards the end of Jonson’s career, we begin to feel William’s influence in the plays he writes, with characters appearing as caricatures of members of the Cavendish family. It was not, however, simply the members of William’s family that served as inspiration for Jonson’s work, but also the activities that William associated himself in, or at least, the activities that other members of William patronage circle involved themselves with.

While this work focuses mostly on William’s architectural and literary patronage, William’s patronage men of a more philosophical persuasion, such as Thomas Hobbes, should not go unmentioned, especially as these connections also appear to have influenced his literary patronage. Although Hobbes first made his entrance to the Cavendish family through the Devonshire Cavendishes, acting as tutor to the future second Earl, he was often present at Welbeck. It is Hobbes’ attendance at these gatherings that could explain Jonson’s subject matter for *The Magnetic Lady*.

In 1600 the philosopher William Gilbert released a book that changed the way in which the scientific philosophers of the seventeenth century would view the properties of a loadstone.<sup>366</sup> This book was named *De Magnete* in which Gilbert put forth his ideas, as well as examining and contradicting the ideas set forward by generations of philosopher before him, of the interworking principles behind the elements of magnets and their force.<sup>367</sup> The ideas set forth in *De Magnete* were still of great interest 30 years after Gilbert released his book and were used by Thomas Hobbes when constructing his own theory in 1630, on the subject of movement in *A Short Tract on the First Principles*. Within his *First Principles*,

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<sup>364</sup> Nick Rowe, “My Best Patron,” 197.

<sup>365</sup> Robert. C. Evans, *Jonson and the Contexts of His Times* (Lewisbury: Bucknell University Press, 1994), 35.

<sup>366</sup> William Gilbert, *De Magnete*, trans. P. F. Mottelay (New York: Dover Publications, 1958), 33.

<sup>367</sup> Silvanus P. Thompson, *William Gilbert and Terrestrial Magnetism in the Time of Queen Elizabeth: a discourse* (London: Chiswick Press, 1903), 2.

Hobbes examines the causes behind inanimate object movement and it is when he reaches his ninth principle that influences for the story of *The Magnetic Lady* could possibly be seen: “whatsoever moveth another moveth it either by active power inherent in it self or by motion received from another.”<sup>368</sup> The “inherent power in itself” is a reference to the magnetic qualities that are found in the loadstone and Hobbes continues in his analysis of magnetic properties to try to understand the elemental factors and consequences of an object with “inherent power”. The concepts put forward by Hobbes in *First Principles* appear to trouble Gary B. Herbert who finds the principles difficult to incorporate with the physical world. He states, “it is hard to construct an image of a world governed by such forces [power inherent]. Bodies would collide with other bodies, with the effect of attracting them rather than propelling them away. Striking would be a form of pulling.”<sup>369</sup> While in reality, Hobbes' ideas appear to be unsustainable, it would, however, seem to be an idea that resonated well in the creative mind of Ben Jonson.

The core plot to Jonson's *The Magnetic Lady* examines the inherent force released by the unknowingly disguised Placentia Steele onto the hero of the play, Master Compass. The ideas Hobbes puts forward surrounding magnetic philosophy were perfect for a storyline in which, to the right person, the qualities held by an aristocratic woman, can be felt by others, even when those in possession of the qualities are not aware of their existence themselves – the qualities of a true aristocrat, over that of an upstart societal climber. Jonson's interest in the nature of magnetism, both those put forward by Gilbert and Hobbes, can clearly be seen before the play even commences. The full title of the play, *The Magnetic Lady: Or, Humours Reconciled* could be a clear indication of a belief that was put forward in William Gilbert's

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<sup>368</sup> Thomas Hobbes, *Elements of Law, Natural and Politic*, ed. F. Tönne (London: Simpkin Marshall & Co., 1889), 193.

<sup>369</sup> Gary B. Herbert, *Thomas Hobbes: The Unity of Scientific & Moral Wisdom* (University of British Columbia, 1989), 35.

De *Magnete*. When discussing the medicinal virtues of the loadstone, Gilbert explains that “Dioscorides tells that loadstone blended in water is administered in a dose of three oboli to expel gross humors.”<sup>370</sup> In a play, in which Jonson claims that his comedic humours are “reconciled” surely it is only fitting that it would be surrounding an object that is believed to cure those “gross humors”.

Peter Happé also comes to the same conclusion of Gilbert’s influence on the play in his introduction to *The Magnetic Lady*, when stating “The linking of their contrasted powers, equated with love, is a key theme in the play which leads up to the power of love to reconcile opposites, including humours.”<sup>371</sup> Indeed, the theme is further enhanced by the first name in the *dramatis personae* and the lady of the title, the Magnetic Lady herself, Lady Loadstone.<sup>372</sup> Though her name is also later in reference to the attraction between herself and Captain Ironside, the concept that one of the lead characters of the play is the namesake of the substance that is believed to cure humours, speaks volumes about what Jonson was trying to achieve with his character list and enabling him to bring his humours comedies to a conclusion. When considering the dedication to Katherine on her funeral monument and the likelihood that Lady Loadstone was inspired by Lady Cavendish, there is a sense that with the Cavendish family influence, the loss of Katherine and the new emphasis of William at the head of that patron/client relationship, Jonson came to a position where he felt he could complete his exploration into humours comedies.

The magnetic theme and the idea of the power inherent, is found strongest within the character of Placentia Steele, a changeling girl who, as a child, was swapped with the girl due to be her waiting-woman, Pleasance, by Lady Loadstone's gossip, Mistress Polish. The two girls then lived each other's lives until Master Compass arrives at the house of Lady

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<sup>370</sup> William Gilbert, *De Magnete*, 52.

<sup>371</sup> Ben Jonson, *The Magnetic Lady*, ed. Peter Happé (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), 31.

<sup>372</sup> Ben Jonson, *The Magnetic Lady*, 63.



Loadstone and is drawn to Placentia, only to later discover that it is she who is heiress to the Steele fortune and not Pleasance, the woman that every other man is fighting for. This part of *The Magnetic Lady* could be said to represent Hobbes' tenth principal: "Nothing can move it self."<sup>373</sup> Placentia clearly had the inherent Steele power within her all along, the very power that drew Compass towards her rather than towards the woman everyone believed to be the Steele heiress. However, despite this force she was unable to reclaim her rightful position, as Hobbes explains, because the inherent power does not make the body automatically moveable<sup>374</sup> It can move others and others can move it, but nothing, in accordance with Hobbes' tenth principle, "that whereto nothing is added, and from which nothing is taken, remains in the same state it was in", is actually able to move itself.<sup>375</sup> As Hobbes explains, "suppose (if it be possible) that A can move it self. This must be by active power in it self (else it move not it self, but is moved by another); and seeing it self is always applied to it self, it shall...move it self allways."<sup>376</sup> Subsequently, had Placentia the ability to move herself away from her position as a waiting-woman and into the position of the heiress, it could surely mean that she could then move herself back again, and her place as the Steele heiress could never truly be secure. However, with the push administered by Compass, her position as the heiress would be secured. This is also the case with Captain Ironside whom, without Master Compass and Lady Loadstone, would also have failed to find his place beside his "true magnetic mistress and lady."<sup>377</sup>

The importance of this inherent power and magnetic pull would have been of great symbolization to Jonson's patron, whose influence can be felt, from the inspiration of characters, to the entirety of its scientific theme. William surely would have marvelled at the

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<sup>373</sup>Thomas Hobbes, *Elements of Law*, 205.

<sup>374</sup> Thomas Hobbes, *Elements of Law*, 205.

<sup>375</sup> Thomas Hobbes, *Elements of Law*, 193.

<sup>376</sup> Thomas Hobbes, *Elements of Law*, 205.

<sup>377</sup> Ben Jonson, *The Magnetic Lady* ed. Peter Happé, 214.

concept of the inherent power within, the proof that, thanks to his lineage, he was just as worthy of promotion, praise, and respect, as all of his predecessors before him. And thus, *The Magnetic Lady* shows us Cavendish propaganda at its best, demonstrating them to be humble, good, refined and respectable people who have the ability of achieving greatness as a vital part of their being; all William needed was the push of promotion to release his inherent powers.

It is the timing of Hobbes' *First Principles* and Jonson's *The Magnetic Lady* that truly cement the likelihood of the influence between Jonson and Hobbes' works. *The Magnetic Lady* is the second in a set of four plays that appear to have some semblance of influence from Newcastle's 'Cavendish Circle' and its ideas. Hobbes' *First Principles* appeared around the same time that Hobbes first began his intellectual relationship with William and his brother, the mathematician Sir Charles Cavendish. Hobbes' *First Principles* was written around 1630, while Jonson's *Magnetic Lady* was first performed only two years later in 1632, with Jonson first using the word 'magnetic' in a figurative sense in his epitaph to Katherine Ogle Cavendish in 1629. However, as already discussed, the ideas around magnetism had been circulating quite potently for three decades before Jonson himself decided to incorporate the idea into his own works. Indeed, some of Jonson's most famous plays, such as *Volpone* and *The Alchemist*, were written during this time. It is, however, only when a member of his patron's philosophical circle begins to construct and write his own musings on the subject that Jonson begins to find an interest in it. This therefore suggests that Jonson could have discussed the ideas behind the mechanics of the plot of *The Magnetic Lady* with his patron, Hobbes himself, or perhaps simply by being sent a copy of Hobbes' work by William. The timing of these being released do suggest that, for his later plays, Jonson took his influence from the new circle of learned men that he found himself associated with.

This connection between Jonson's works on magnetism being influenced by Hobbes' work on magnetism is further supported by the play that William himself wrote around the same time as Jonson's and Hobbes' work. Sometime between 1634 -1636 William began writing *Wit's Triumvirate, or the Philosopher*, where once again the ideas surrounding magnetism find their way into seventeenth-century drama. Unlike Jonson, who incorporated the ideas and theories behind magnetism into the core being of his play, William simply places small snippets of knowledge on the subject, scattered throughout the play with words and phrases of magnetic connotation being found throughout the dialogue of *Wit's Triumvirate*.

In Act 1 Scene 2, Fright explains how a handsome wench "drew my iron heart just like a loadstone." (I.ii.56).<sup>378</sup> In Act 1, Scene 1, Newcastle makes reference to gravity, an idea recently studied by Galileo, who he later mentioned by name in the play. Firstly he makes reference to Galileo's discovery of stars: "It seems 'tis a multiplying-glass to you and discovers new diseases as Galileo's did new stars – new worlds of diseases." (II.ii.312-314).<sup>379</sup> Then again, in Act 5 Scene 4 when Bond and the other cheaters are giving Algebra presents for the "seal of our honesties" they present Algebra with "a pair of Hondius globes, a glass of Galileo's with brass mathematical instruments of Elias Allen's making." (V.iv.173-177).<sup>380</sup> There is also an interesting section in Act 4, when Phantsy is talking about love and likens it to magnetism. Phantsy exclaims, "Love is magnetic. All to it draws, /The primus motor of all nature's laws. /It sets on work all motion." (IV.iv.115-117).<sup>381</sup> "The Primus motor [prime mover] of all nature's laws' alludes to Hobbes' theory of the loadstone's power inherent."<sup>382</sup> It

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<sup>378</sup> William Cavendish, 1<sup>st</sup> Earl of Newcastle, *A Critical Edition of Wit's Triumvirate, or The Philosopher*, ed. Cathryn Anne Nelson (Salzburg, Institut für Englische Sprache und Literatur, Universität Salzburg, 1975), 110.

<sup>379</sup> William Cavendish, *Wit's Triumvirate*, 176.

<sup>380</sup> William Cavendish, *Wit's Triumvirate*, 400.

<sup>381</sup> William Cavendish, *Wit's Triumvirate*, 324.

<sup>382</sup> Thomas Hobbes, *Elements of Law, Natural and Politic*, 193.

also suggests an agreement with Gilbert's analogy that the Earth itself is a magnet.<sup>383</sup> With Galileo's new discovery that the Earth moves around the Sun rather than the Sun around the Earth, the Earth's movement is therefore the thing that 'sets on work all motion'. While the line above could, at first glance, simply be read as a description of love, there is clearly a lot more being examined within those three lines than simply the affections of the heart.

William also makes clear through *Wit's Triumvirate* his own beliefs and position on the works of Galileo, whose writing at the time were still considered works of heresy by the Catholic Church. Yet, by presenting the 'glass of Galileo' to Algebra, who in essence is the hero of the story, and his acceptance and joy at receiving it, William demonstrates not only the characters of play's acceptance of Galileo's work and theories, but his own as well, despite earlier in the play, Galileo's work being referenced as the devil's work: "I shall beseech you not to taste Copernicus, Tycho Brahe, or Kepler, but especially Galileo. He has the devil in a glass and a greater devil in his brain for persuasion." (IV.ii.368-371).<sup>384</sup> Yet the change in opinion and Algebra's description of the gifts as being "well-chosen gifts" (V.iv.178-179) suggests that despite what common perception of Galileo's works were, William wanted to declare himself as someone who subscribed to the same way of thinking.<sup>385</sup>

This use of magnetism in his own play, especially around the same time as Jonson and Hobbes' works, again indicates that William's patronage and formation of Welbeck Academy was a way of allowing him to discuss his own ideas of literature and philosophy with those he was patron to. While William's patronage allowed philosopher's and writers to find support from a sympathetic and generous patron, for William it was a way for him to find like-

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<sup>383</sup> Silvanus P. Thompson, *William Gilbert and Terrestrial Magnetism in the Time of Queen Elizabeth: a discourse*, 8.

<sup>384</sup> William Cavendish, *Wit's Triumvirate*, 294.

<sup>385</sup> William Cavendish, *Wit's Triumvirate*, 401.

minded people with whom he could have the type of discussions that clearly seemed to move him.

Around the same time as Robert Evans made his initial claim that the significance of Cavendish to Jonson was yet to be realised, more work was beginning to be done to fully understand the importance of Cavendish's relationship with Jonson. This can be most notably in *The Seventeenth Century* journal's 1994 special edition look at the Cavendish circle, edited by Timothy Raylor. The most beneficial essay for this analysis in the collection is the paper written by Nick Rowe, already cited above, in which he examines the depths of the relationship between the two men and how the partnership was very different to any Jonson had had previously and any subsequent relationships William would later have with various different writers. For this reason I will not delve any further into the Cavendish/Jonson relationship except to expand on a concept touched upon, at least from Jonson's perspective, by Anne Barton in her article 'Harking Back to Elizabeth: Ben Jonson and Caroline Nostalgia.'<sup>386</sup>

Another defining aspect to their relationship was their nostalgic feelings for England under the reign of the mighty Virgin Queen. While this "harking back" is understandable from Jonson's point of view, William's nostalgia, who would have only been 10 when the last Tudor monarch died, takes more consideration to understand why he was so reminiscent of a time gone by. William's incessant need to be accepted into the Cavendish legacy is the most probable explanation for this. William was reluctant to spend time at court and gain preferment in the same way as other courtiers as he preferred to be at home in the country with his family and horses. Despite this William believed he was entitled to grander and more powerful positions in the Caroline court and couldn't understand why he wasn't achieving

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<sup>386</sup> Anne Barton, "Harking Back to Elizabeth: Ben Jonson and Caroline Nostalgia".

this.<sup>387</sup> By reminding the public of The Golden Age under Elizabeth, he also reminded them of the power of his family and his inherent right to a higher status.

Also, like his claim for greater position, William would have been nostalgic for the successes of the courtiers of Elizabeth's court who were of the same persuasion as him. Men such as Sir Philip Sidney, Henry Wriothesley, 3<sup>rd</sup> Earl of Southampton and Robert Dudley, 1<sup>st</sup> Earl of Leicester, were all great admirers and patrons of art and literature, all subscribing to the ideals of gallant, medieval, chivalric knights. Sidney has been described as a "knight soldier, poet, friend, and patron, [who] seemed to the Elizabethans to embody all the traits of character and personality they admired: he was Castiglione's perfect courtier come to life."<sup>388</sup> It is understandable that William would have identified with this description. He was a lover of music and literature, was a writer himself, as well as being acclaimed for his horsemanship and swordsmanship. David Riggs in his biography of Jonson states "The contemporary figure who best exemplified the chivalric ideals of "A Speech According to Horace" and The Vision of Ben Jonson was William Cavendish".<sup>389</sup> Yet despite his personification of the great heroes of a bygone era, for him preferment and the attainment of political power were not as easily accessible as they were for the likes of Sidney and Wriothesley. Certainly he was liked, but as already examined, William had to fight hard and spend great deals of money simply in the hope of gaining an office of importance at court. Jonson and William both could envision that their lives were and could have been better if the Golden Age of Elizabeth had continued through the seventeenth century and it was through this nostalgic remembrance that the two men truly found their kindred spirit, one harking

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<sup>387</sup> The letter from William to Thomas Stafford, Lord Deputy of Ireland on the 5<sup>th</sup> of August 1633, discussed earlier, is a testament to this idea.

<sup>388</sup> Stephen Greenblatt, ed., *The Norton Anthology of English Literature* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2012), 1037.

<sup>389</sup> David Riggs, *Ben Jonson: A Life*, 301.

back to his own wonder years and one believing that by harking back he could bring about his own wonder years.

### Elizabeth Bassett – The Next Spike in the Wheel.

Perhaps one of William's most remarkable achievements, especially in the patriarchal society of early modern England, was his acknowledgment of the abilities of women. Given his strong, female ancestry, this awareness of the female capability is not too surprising. Still, given the strong personalities of his two wives and at least two of his daughters, it can certainly be suggested that William encouraged such behaviour, or indeed acknowledged and quite simply succumbed to the fact that the women in his life would act in their own way regardless of whether he was happy with it or not. Though little is really known of William's first wife, Elizabeth Bassett of Blore, there is documentary evidence from throughout their life together, that gives a suggestion that Elizabeth, like the other women who married into the Cavendish family, was a strong-willed woman who had just as firm a grip on the future and fortunes of her family, as her husband and her marital female kin before her. Together, both William and Elizabeth nurtured their children, both male and female alike, to ensure that yet another generation of Cavendishes consisted of strong, powerful individuals.

Yet, while her contribution to the continuance of the Cavendish female evolutionary wheel is of importance to this thesis, Elizabeth's importance also comes from our ability to use her as an example to examine women as a whole during this period, and demonstrate that their contribution to society was not as inconsequential as previous scholarship has suggested. While there is a list of examples of women, many of whom I have referenced a number of times during this thesis already, who appear to have fought and created a new path against sixteenth and seventeenth centuries' patriarchal society, these women are considered as exceptions to the rule and stand out as examples of women who stood separate from the vast majority of their sex. However, as shall be discussed in greater detail below, Elizabeth

does not fit into this category: she doesn't stand out, she appears to conform to societal norms, and her name has never been considered alongside those I have mentioned above. Yet, when considering Elizabeth, we find a woman who appears to have control over her life, as well as her family, to the same extent as those persons mentioned above who stood outside of the role of a conforming woman during the early modern's patriarchal rule. This, therefore, calls into question the validity of the argument that women during this time had little to no influence over their own lives, leaving us to question what the norms during this period in fact were.

The period stretching through the Tudor and Stuart reign was an interesting time for women and their education. Thanks to the prevalent ideas of humanist theorists, the concept of female education was not seen as being a negative as it once had been before. For centuries women were not trusted with knowledge or wisdom due to Eve's betrayal of God and the leading of humanity to damnation. It was believed that women would misuse education and either squander it or use it for evils feats. However, humanists saw the situation from a different angle, and believed that women were at a greater risk of sinning and wrong-doing if they were not educated. How could they equip themselves against such evils if they were unaware of the forms in which these evils could present themselves? With education they recognise immoral situations and were equipped with the knowledge of what to do should such a situation arise. Humanist outlined that women, and society as a whole, would be a more God-pleasing place should women receive some form of educational instruction. This new emphasis on female education brought about a great deal of educated women who found themselves central in the patriarchal society of the Tudor and Stuart courts. While women were still exempt from the key positions within the politics of England's early modern court, they certainly found their own ways to be a part of it.

Kathy Lynn Emerson states that "Englishwomen were liberated long before their



sisters in Europe”, citing the Dutch traveller, Emmanuel Van Meteren, who wrote that “although English wives were ‘entirely in the power of their husbands, except for their lives’ they were ‘not kept so strictly as elsewhere.’ Englishwomen persisted ‘in retaining their customs’”.<sup>390</sup> What, however, is most intriguing about the evolution of female education is the degree to which women took this opportunity and strove to ensure that each generation of their family had educated women within it. Not only did women see the use of education within their own lives, but they also appear to have understood what that education could do to further their family’s ambition. They appear to have understood that by creating daughters with the same spirit, drive and ambition as them, they would be able to continue the evolution of education within the female sphere, reminding each generation of the importance of educating its women.

During the early days of William's quest to attain political importance and court favour, as well as when he was finally made governor to the Prince of Wales, he was often away from his family home. It, therefore, stands to reason that the parent who had the greatest amount of influence on the day to day lives of the children came from their mother, Elizabeth Bassett Cavendish. This, therefore, lends itself to the presumption that the children's tutelage, both sons and daughters, while their father was away, was supervised and overseen by Elizabeth.<sup>391</sup> The composition exercises between William and his children were sent to them while he was away from the familial home. It is, therefore, quite likely that it was Elizabeth who assisted her children with the composition exercises that were sent to William. While William writes a couplet for each of his children, it is only Jane and Charles who send responses. Yet, in a letter that William sent to his wife from court, he thanks her

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<sup>390</sup> Kathy Lynn Emerson, *Wives and Daughters – The Women of Sixteenth-Century England*, v.

<sup>391</sup> Michelle M. Dowd states: “Education in seventeenth-century England certainly involved formal schooling, which began in the home, usually under a mother’s supervision, and continued until children were seven years old, at which time (at least in wealthier families) they would be sent away to a tutor.” – Michelle M. Dowd, *Women’s Work in Early Modern English Literature and Culture* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 134

not only for the latest letters that he received from her but also the letters that he had received from his children, "In these laste ten dayes I have received your three Letters & all the Children."<sup>392</sup> The composition exercises were clearly not a one-time occurrence. It would appear that there seems to have been some kind of progression from the recorded composition exercises to when the family as a whole sent letters to William while at court. From his description of 'all the Children,' it is likely that William received numerous letters from his sons and daughters. His children would have been between the ages of 4 and 15 at the time that he wrote this letter so there would have been varying levels of competence for each child writing their own letters. Perhaps, in the same manner that William set couplet composition exercises for their children, Elizabeth would set her children writing exercises in the form of composing letters to send to their father, a form of writing much more accustomed to a female persuasion. One could almost imagine the scene of the family gathering together, helping one another to formulate entertaining and interesting letters to be sent to William at court for his amusement.

Where William created the 'Welbeck Academy' to nurture and support playwrights, the same principles could be lent to the 'academy' that Elizabeth is likely to have bred in her home during William's absence, allowing their children to follow in their father's literary footsteps. While William tutored and encouraged his children in the composition of poetical writings, it would appear Elizabeth dedicated her time to instructing her children in a mode of writing that would be beneficial to them in society. In a world where no other form of communication existed, written letter correspondence was paramount for a person to be able to communicate with the outside world. Writing was therefore of the greatest importance to ensure that her children had the best tools in life to continue following the family's quest for position and importance.

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<sup>392</sup> Letter from William Cavendish to his Wife Elizabeth Bassett Cavendish London, British Library, Additional MS 70499, 198r (Good Friday, 1636.).

## Female Education During The Sixteenth and Early Seventeenth Century

There is no reason to suggest that Elizabeth would not have been capable of these actions. By all means, in terms of her place in society before her marriage, it is likely that she would have been somewhat, if not highly, learned. While it cannot be said that the Bassetts were in the highest ranks of early modern court life, they were well-esteemed members of the gentry. Elizabeth's great-grandfather, William Bassett, was knighted by King Henry VIII, with her father, William Bassett, being described as a courtier on his tombstone. While the majority of women receiving some form of education at this time were taught in matters that would benefit their lives, such as housewifery and managing family estates, there were examples of women who were educated in the same manner or indeed surpassing their male counterparts.

Women such as Lady Anne Clifford and Mary Sidney Herbert, Countess of Pembroke placed themselves comfortably within the world of literature, equalling the men of letters that they supported, with their own compositions.<sup>393</sup> Mary Sidney Herbert not only led the Wilton Circle salon at Wilton House, in Wiltshire, which was frequented by Ben Jonson, Edmund Spenser and Michael Drayton, but also wrote translations herself, as well as completing *the Book of Psalms* (now referred to as *The Sidney Psalter*) that her brother, Philip Sidney, was preparing before his death in 1586.<sup>394</sup> Lady Anne Clifford, who was also a patron to numerous men of literature, is renowned in her own right for the literary achievements found in the diary that she kept throughout her life. However, there are also examples of women being taught in matters other than composition and being immersed within the key components of humanist teachings.

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<sup>393</sup> See for example Lady Anne Clifford, *The Diaries of Lady Anne Clifford*, ed. D.J.H Clifford (Stroud: Sutton, 1990), Michael A. Mullet, *Patronage, Power and Politics in Appleby in the era of Lady Anne Clifford, 1649-1689* (Kendal: Cumberland and Westmorland Antiquarian and Archaeological Society, 2015). See also Margaret P. Hannay, ed., *Mary Sidney, Countess of Pembroke* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2009).

<sup>394</sup> Mary Sidney, *The Sidney Psalter: The Psalms of Sir Philip and Mary Sidney*, ed. Hannibal Hamlin, et al. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).

Sir Anthony Cooke, a tutor to King Edward VI, taught his daughters in the same manner and to the same standard as his sons. Sir Anthony understood the advantages of female learning and taught his daughters in Latin and Greek as well as composition.<sup>395</sup> Of course, he was not the first man who saw the worthiness of female education. Sir Thomas More educated both his daughters and sons to the same standard, while there were also many humanist theorists in Europe who believed in the benefits of a more extensive education for women. What marks the Cooke sisters somewhat apart from their fellow learned females is that, despite their sex, they did find their way, through their learning, into the political heart of Elizabethan and early Jacobean court.

It was a general belief that women did not require any knowledge of the classics as it was with this knowledge that men went on to create a career in politics, the law and within court.<sup>396</sup> It was deemed to be wasteful for women to have knowledge of philosophy and classics as they would never have any real-life need for them, unlike their male kin. However, while, of course, the Cooke sisters never found themselves in public office, their marriages placed them within the inner circle of the turbulent political world of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century, and with their education they were given a great advantage of succeeding within that world. Cooke's eldest daughter, Mildred, married William Cecil, Lord Burghley. As the Queen's chief advisor, many people seeking favour or influence from the Queen would try to attain that through counsel and persuasion from William Cecil. In many cases, in order to attain his goodwill, many petitioners went through Mildred to get to him. As such, Mildred was in correspondence with some Europe's most important people.

Her sister, Anne Cooke Bacon was noted for her translations, in the same manner as Mary Sidney Herbert and Lady Anne Clifford. However, as Gemma Allen explains, what is

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<sup>395</sup> Jane Stevenson, *Women Latin Poets; Language, Gender, and Authority, from Antiquity to the Eighteenth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 255-256.

<sup>396</sup> Jane Stevenson, "Women and Classical Education in the Early Modern Period," 109.

particularly interesting about Anne's most famous translation, *Apologia Ecclesiae Anglicanae*, is the political element that runs through it, as well as its importance to a particular period of time. Translated from John Jewel's Latin text published in 1562, Anne's version, translated two years after Jewel's original came to press, gave the text to the masses within England, whereas Jewel's version was aimed towards Europe. While Jewel's version was defending England's church within Europe, classing it as a return to the old church, not the beginning of a new one, Anne's version was "intended to provide a creed for the Church of England written for a wide readership in plain English."<sup>397</sup> This becomes more evident given the epistle written by Matthew Parker that features in the first edition, in which he hails Anne and her achievements with the translation while failing to give any substantial mention to Jewel and the original text, a dedication which is missing from any subsequent editions. For the establishment, Anne's translation was an important tool at that point in time, as a means to calm any unrest within England towards the new church.

There was certainly an increase, between the Middle Ages and the mid-seventeenth century, in the number of women who were receiving some form of education, though, like their male kin, this was more or less restricted to the aristocratic members of society. One of the reasons behind this came from the new humanist way of thinking that "they believed a humanist education would protect a woman's virtue by dispelling ignorance, and that such an education, by making the woman a more moral and hence wiser person, would also make her a better mother and wife."<sup>398</sup> On the whole, women were still excluded from public access to education from the universities or Inns of Court, however, there were examples of women who were able to gain access to universities. Anna Maria von Schurman was the German-Dutch born daughter of the wealthy Frederik von Schurman and Eva von Harff de Dreibern. In the same way as Anthony Cooke, Frederik taught his daughter alongside his sons and she

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<sup>397</sup> Gemma Allen, *The Cooke Sisters: Education, piety and politics in Early Modern England*, 63.

<sup>398</sup> D'Arne Welch, "Sixteenth-Century Humanism and the Education of Women," 242.

was well versed in Latin and Greek and studied the classics. In the late 1630s, she studied at Utrecht University in the Netherlands, where she was shielded behind a curtain or in a booth when she was in attendance of lectures.<sup>399</sup> While the Cooke sisters and von Schurman could be considered exceptional cases in terms of their tutelage in the subjects that were generally deemed only appropriate for men, they do highlight the female ability for such subjects. As such their example allows us to argue that women were not only capable of this form of education but they could also flourish in it without becoming the dangers to society that religious teachings claimed they would.

For most women, however, education consisted of teaching young ladies how to develop certain attributes that would help them succeed in the home as well as accomplishments that would help them appear more desirable to a husband. The humanist theorist, Richard Mulcaster, believed that women would benefit most from reading and writing, while an ability in different languages as well as being able to perform on a musical instrument, would be the exact kind of attributes required for a gentlewoman. Mrs Thornton, while under tuition in the house of Sir Thomas Wentworth, alongside his daughters Anne and Arabella was taught “speaking and writing of French, singing, dancing, playing the lute and the theorbo, working silks, preparing sweetmeats and other kinds of housewifery”<sup>400</sup>. Mulcaster’s belief in the advantages of languages as part of young ladies’ education was clearly prevalent during this period, with examples like Elizabeth Tanfield, an Oxfordshire heiress, who was said to have been fluent in six languages.<sup>401</sup>

There were, of course, those who disagreed with the concept of female education. Edward Hake, in his book *A Touchstone for this time Present* (1574), commented that, with education, women would simply squander it on reading “amorous bookes, vaine stories and

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<sup>399</sup> Joyce L. Irwin, "Introduction," 5.

<sup>400</sup> Norma McMullen, “The Education of English Gentlewomen 1540-1640,” 95.

<sup>401</sup> Norma McMullen, “The Education of English Gentlewomen 1540-1640,” 90.

fonde trielling fancies that smelleth of naughtinesse”. However, as Norma McMullen points out, Hake was just as opposed to women learning as he was annoyed by women’s ignorance.<sup>402</sup> Hake’s conflicting views were a great example of the confusing nature of the debate between whether women should or shouldn’t be educated. The examples of female educational endeavours given above indicate the wide range of syllabuses that existed for women. These dramatic differences more often than not came down to the male head of the family, and what he deemed to be acceptable for his daughters and female kin. For men who subscribed to the idea that some education in the lives of women could be perceived as a good thing, their daughters would find themselves immersed in the procedures of learning, whereas those men, like Hake, who were opposed to this female enlightenment, found themselves with daughters who were able to sing, dance and perhaps play an instrument, but were unable to contribute, in any real sense, to the running of their homes after marriage, let alone be able to immerse themselves in the world outside of their own immediate vicinity.

For those who did receive an education, while, as mentioned above, the public educational institutions were more or less out of bounds for female scholars, they found themselves taught at home by governesses or tutors. There is also evidence to suggest that the mother of the family, at least in the early stages of learning, if not for the length of a child’s education, would be involved in their children’s tutelage. Mildred Cooke Cecil was most definitely a part of her son, Robert Cecil’s, education, with William Cecil stating that she was “so zealous and excellent a tutor”<sup>403</sup>. In fact, the idea of a mother teaching her children while they were in the home is also suggested by Ann and Frances Courtney’s move to Westerham in Kent after their mother’s death around 1620, allowing them to continue their education with “a gentlewoman whose name was Isley”.<sup>404</sup>

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<sup>402</sup> Norma McMullen, “The Education of English Gentlewomen 1540-1640,” 90.

<sup>403</sup> Gemma Allen, *The Cooke Sisters: Education, piety and politics in Early Modern England*, 2.

<sup>404</sup> Norma McMullen, “The Education of English Gentlewomen 1540-1640,” 93.

Considering these mothers' participation in their children's education in these cases, the idea of Elizabeth Bassett being involved in the education of her children from her second marriage to William Cavendish does not seem too extraordinary. When considering Elizabeth's status at birth and the circumstances surrounding her adolescence, it is also likely that she would have been given tuition as a child herself. Her father died when she was two years of age and left her as the heir to the vast Bassett estates. When arguing in favour of female education, William Gouge highlighted the importance of the rich to teach their children how best to take their inheritance and not only maintain it but attempt to increase it. He also believed that they should be educated in other matters to ensure that, should their inheritance somehow diminish entirely, they had some form of a career as a back up to try to begin to grow their fortune once more. After her husband's death, Judith Bassett had to fight for the wardship of her daughter. While this request was denied (ultimately the wardship of Elizabeth Bassett went to Sir Walter Raleigh), she was awarded the custody of the body of her daughter. For this, Judith had "to pay £40.0s.0d until Elizabeth was ten years old [and thereafter] a further 100 marks (£60.3s.4d) was to be paid until she reached the age of sixteen".<sup>405</sup> One could imagine that having gone through such an ordeal herself, Judith would want to ensure that her daughter was knowledgeable in matters of the law to some degree, allowing her daughter to support and defend her own family should such a situation befall her in adulthood. This is a similar situation to what we saw with Bess, who, as suggested before, appears to have led her life in such a way that would ensure that, should such a situation befall her own family, they would not have had to suffer in the same way that she did when her own father died when both she and her brother were young. Time and time again we are given a sense that mothers' actions against the patriarchal norms are an attempt to prepare their daughters to be equipped in such a way that they are able to navigate their way through

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<sup>405</sup> David Swinscoe and Martine Swinscoe, *Swinscoe, Blore and The Bassetts*, 172.



a system that continually deems that a child's mother is not capable to look after and manage her own family after a husband's death. There are countless examples of women during this period who appear to be arming themselves, and their daughters, against a system that is constantly undervaluing their abilities because they are women.

### The Cavendish Female Collective in Work

When considering the family that Elizabeth married into, her connection with them could also point to the consideration that Elizabeth did not subscribe to following the ideals of the chaste, silent and obedient woman that sixteenth-century society deemed so appropriate for women. As I have tried to demonstrate throughout this thesis, the women of the Cavendish family, whether born into it or married into it, were all strong, self-assured women. With a pedigree of women such as this within the family, it is unlikely that, even with Elizabeth's vast wealth, Katherine, who would have helped her husband Charles choose a suitable match for her son, would be happy for William, her eldest surviving son and the man who would continue the barony that she had fought so hard to obtain, to marry a woman who would not be able to help him manage it. Given what we have discovered about Katherine's character in the last chapter, with regard to her attaining the Ogle barony, it is unlikely that when it came to Cavendish concerns she would have given all the power to her husband. Indeed, in a letter written in 1617 from Mary Cavendish Talbot, Dowager Countess of Shrewsbury to Katherine Ogle Cavendish, we are given an indication that the women within this family were pulling just as many strings as their male counterparts.

The letter is in reference to Mary's husband, Gilbert Talbot's, will, which was originally being executed by Katherine's husband Charles Cavendish, and then after his death, by her son William. The question begins to be raised why Mary is writing to her sister-in-law Katherine rather than the man who is actually executing the will. It is within this letter that we are able to begin to glimpse the way in which this family is operating, with female

relatives corresponding with other female relatives in hopes of their agendas being fulfilled. This correspondence is similar in nature to that which occurred between Mary and Arbella. Mary gives to Katherine instructions of requests within the letter that she wishes to be followed through by Katherine, clearly intending that this interaction to remain between the two of them: “save my desire is now to *you* as to all other creditors to let me know at what days *you* will demand payment.”[my italics]<sup>406</sup>

As the executor of the will, these forms of inquiry should have surely been directed towards William. However, by keeping this exchange between herself and her sister in law, the wife of her husband's greatest friend, Mary is doing all she can to ensure that her wishes are upheld. As a woman who would herself be experiencing the woes and misfortunes of widowhood, there would surely be something of a kindred spirit between the two of them, an understanding of what the other is going through and thus Katherine would have a greater urgency of Mary's needs. It would then be to Katherine to lean upon her son to secure the requests within Mary's letter.

It is through this form of female networking that we begin to see women discovering ways in which they could, even in the smallest sense, create some improvement or control in their own lives and thus begin to formulate the idea of the female collective. This correspondence with her sister in law suggests she understood the importance of female networking and understood how beneficial it could be. Unlike men, she did not underestimate that connection and collective understanding between women, and thus was able to use that to her advantage. This correspondence, as well as the correspondence between Arbella and Mary, and the relationships between the women of the family, suggests that this form of communicating between themselves was an integral aspect of how the family worked and the way that these strong women were able to achieve what they did. Therefore, it can only be

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<sup>406</sup>Letter from Mary Cavendish Talbot to Katherine Ogle Cavendish, London, British Library, Additional MS 70499, 70v (November 1617).

presumed, to ensure that those relationships could continue to be beneficial, to all involved within the family, all women who were married into it would have to be of the same persuasion and calibre, with the same capabilities in ensuring things were done in the right way.

### The Cavendish Letters.

Elizabeth's marriage to William itself could also signify her education and, at the very least, her interest in literature. William's second wife, Margaret Lucas Cavendish immersed herself within the literary world of the mid-seventeenth century and wrote a number of books on philosophy as well as poetry and plays. William was much enamoured with his second wife, continually singing her praises in text and as such, allowing us to formulate a picture of the type of woman that William would have been interested in. William's interest in literature and literary endeavours is evident, and it would be a fair assumption to make, especially considering his marriage to Lucas, that if Elizabeth was not educated or interested in literature at the start of her marriage to William, it is likely that she was by the time of her death in 1643.

Their marriage, by all accounts, appears to have been a happy one, even though it was instigated as a marriage of benefit rather than that of love. One can only assume that, with a husband as involved in the literary happenings of the seventeenth century as he was, and who, according to Thomas Shadwell, opened his home to the poets and playwrights that he supported, Elizabeth would have also had some involvement with these literary men that frequented her house. She would have also been in attendance and most likely helped plan, the two entertainments that William had at Welbeck and Bolsover. Regardless as to whether she wanted to be a part of the literary world or not, her marriage to William would have almost certainly ensured it.

As any husband would do, William sent news from court to his wife while he was

way, however, being William Cavendish, these were not simple, run of the mill letters of information between the court and the Midlands. He sent poetical letters to his wife, which read more like pieces of poetical musings than informative details. In one, in which he addresses her as his "Sweet Harte" he informs her of the recent build-up to the tilting tournament.<sup>407</sup> He complains about how he is being treated at court:

Iff this be your remembrance, I doe will  
All you great Lordes, att Courte forgett me still  
Why taxe theye me with sutch an Imposition?  
As iff my flutes Coulede not be trewe Contrition”<sup>408</sup>

William spent much of his life trying to attain preferment and advancement at court and this insult towards Cavendish, of courtiers paying little attention to him, would have been a soft spot for him. However, by the end of the letter he pokes fun at those who spend all their time and money at court and have little to show for it when it comes to the end of their days:

A simple one, to waste all out in prancinge,  
In Tiltte-yarde, or att maskes, In Christmas dancinge,  
And, att the laste, have nothings lefte at alle,  
But titles, Lorde, & *Amadis de Gaule*.<sup>409</sup>

There could, of course, be a hint of jealousy within these words however a life at court was not what William wanted. He certainly wanted more power and preferment from the King but he wanted to take that advancement with him back to his family estates where he could have the power he so desired while living with his wife and children in the countryside that he called home. In this letter he also talks about money and how he cannot wait to get home to see his wife:

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<sup>407</sup> Verse Letter From William Cavendish to His Wife Elizabeth Bassett Cavendish, The University of Nottingham MSS Portland Collection, Pw V 25 f17-17v. (1625-1643).

<sup>408</sup> Verse Letter From William Cavendish to His Wife Elizabeth Bassett Cavendish, The University of Nottingham MSS Portland Collection, Pw V 25 f17-17v. (1625-1643).

<sup>409</sup> Verse Letter From William Cavendish to His Wife Elizabeth Bassett Cavendish, University of Nottingham MSS Portland Collection, Pw V 25 f17-17v. (1625-1643).

But, oh nowe listen to the Joyefull newse:  
Your cruell sickness this yeare, did excuse  
Me frome the Tiltinge therefore (doe you heare?)  
Fayle me not I praye for Sicknes Every yeare.  
And as I am a knight with spurs of Gilte,  
When I coume home, Ile run with you att Tilte.<sup>410</sup>

This letter is a very personal letter between husband and wife. William uses this letter not just to update his wife on the happenings at court but also expresses his feelings to her, complains about the situations that surround him, all the while attempting to entertain her. His method of using rhyming couplets takes any seriousness out of the complaints of the letter and as such, brings some of the joviality of her husband to Elizabeth when he is so far away. A small reminder of himself presented to her in a way unique to William. William also recorded this letter in the collection of his literary endeavours. While the letters mentioned below are held within Cavendish papers held at the British Library, the letter quoted above is recorded in a collection of papers that include the two poems he wrote in dedication to Ben Jonson, various songs that he has written that could be included at the ends of plays, as well as the couplet exercises that he put together for his children. Clearly, this was a letter of importance that he put effort and love into. Literary endeavours were an exercise that William placed a lot emphasis on and his inclusion of this poem to his wife in a collection of works that he clearly wanted saving indicates the importance of this correspondence between them. He wanted to include her in his literary life.

However, William also sent word from court to Elizabeth in more serious forms as well. In the letter sent to her on Good Friday 1636, William once again relays the happenings of court to his wife, however, where William writes the poetical letters in a way that informs but entertains, in the letter sent on Good Friday, William's main aim is to let his wife know about his experiences and worries. Where, in the poetical letters, we see William appear more

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<sup>410</sup> Verse Letter From William Cavendish to His Wife Elizabeth Bassett Cavendish, The University of Nottingham MSS Portland Collection, Pw V 25 f17-17v. (1625-1643).

aloof and illustrative with his tone of speech, in this letter he gets straight to the point. In his poetical letters, when discussing the people at court, William speaks of them as a group of people, however, in his letter from Good Friday 1636, he gives Elizabeth specific information and the names of those he is speaking of, “Ande growe nowe verye wearye off the toune – my Lord Danby...did putt very farr for Gouvernor for the Prince butt is Gone to his Governmente att Garnseye & theye saye is deniad my Lord off Lesester hath used all the strengthenes hee hath or Can imagin for the fame, butt theye saye Itt will nott doe.”<sup>411</sup> With his poetical letters, William is painting a picture with his words for his wife allowing her to form a mental image of the world that her husband was currently finding himself in, a world that he finds comical and wants to share that humour with her. In the more serious letters, there is not anything to find funny anymore, he just wants his wife to understand his issues.

Letter correspondence appears to have been an important part of the relationship that Elizabeth had with her husband. In 1629 William writes to his wife about a trip that he has made to Chatsworth after the death of his cousin the 2<sup>nd</sup> Earl of Devonshire. There is not much relayed in the letter other than thanking her for her letter, while expressing his joy “to heer you weer all well.”<sup>412</sup> He then goes on to tell her about the current situation at Chatsworth, “A Greate change In Chatsworth since the death of the Lord for privaceye I could be weare butt I will nott in my respects to my Lady” before finishing by “preyenge for your helth with my blessing to All my Children.” Again in a letter written on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of May 1636, William writes to his wife but only “to Acoumpany the Captins letter & to thanke you

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<sup>411</sup>Letter from William Cavendish to his Wife, Elizabeth Bassett Cavendish, London, British Library, Additional MS 70499, 198r (Good Friday, 1636.).

<sup>412</sup> Letter from William Cavendish to his Wife, Elizabeth Bassett Cavendish, London, British Library, Additional MS 70499, 128 (28<sup>th</sup> July 1629).

for those by Mr. Markham."<sup>413</sup> While certainly, the letter could have just ended there, as a simple note from her husband to accompany letters he forwards on to her, he then goes on to assure her of his current state of being "I thanke God I am very well & very wearye" as well as giving her a quick update on his current business arrangements "I was yesterday witht he B.B. Ande for any thinge finde itt Is a Lost business." While William was not away from his estates for long, substantial periods of time, it is clear that when he was he wanted his wife to be in constant knowledge of what was happening in his life during their separation.

While these letters will not unravel any great mysteries of the seventeenth-century, they do give us a picture of the lives of this married couple. There is nothing of importance in these letters, no instructions for Elizabeth to fulfil for her husband while he is away, nor any news of a great scandal having taken place that he must inform her of. They are quite simply letters written from husband to wife and indicate that letter writing was a significant part of the marriage. There doesn't appear to be any recorded or transcribed letters written from Elizabeth to William so analysing her side of the correspondence is impossible, but given that most of William's letters begin with a thanks for her letters, it's clear that she sent the same amount of letters, if not more - "In these laste ten dayes I have received your three Letters" - to him, most likely of the same type of genre.<sup>414</sup> The next chapter will look more deeply into the importance of the idea of writing as a collective, family pastime within this family, but these letters, along with the children's exercises and indication of letter writing from the children to their father as well, begins to give a glimpse of an integral part that composition, both in the form of literary and letter writing, had on the formation, structure, and continuance of this family.

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<sup>413</sup> Letter from William Cavendish to his Wife, Elizabeth Bassett Cavendish. London, British Library, Additional MS 70499, 200 (23<sup>rd</sup> May 1636).

<sup>414</sup> Letter from William Cavendish to his Wife Elizabeth Bassett Cavendish London, British Library, Additional MS 70499, 198r (Good Friday, 1636).

Within all of these letters, we begin to see the close relationship between William and Elizabeth, a woman with whom he shares all of his secrets, thoughts, and feelings and who he cares for deeply, mimicking himself within the letters that he writes so as to bring a bit of himself to his distant wife. This suggests that William would not have wanted anyone other than his wife reading these letters, again giving us confirmation that Elizabeth must have been even in the smallest way educated, clearly having the capability to read and write. This is further supported by the fact that at Bolsover Elizabeth had her own separate reading closet away from William's own.<sup>415</sup> Within his poetical letter, his mention of *Amadis De Gaule* gives us the suggestion that, as well as being able to read, Elizabeth was proficient with languages.<sup>416</sup> From the Spanish original *Amadis de Gaula*, it was a collection of chivalric romances that came to prevalence during the sixteenth century. Due to its popularity, it was translated into many different languages, with many English readers taking it through its French reincarnation. William's reference to it with no explanation as to what it was or what happened within the story suggests that Elizabeth must have been aware of its existence and known its contents. This, therefore, suggests that, given William's reference to it in its French title, Elizabeth was not only able to read and write, but was able to read, at the very least, in French as well.

However, Elizabeth's place within educated spheres did not end with her capability of reading. During one of her pregnancies, Elizabeth received a letter from Doctor Richard Andrews, the contents of which suggests that she had some understanding of the functions of medicine during the seventeenth century. In his opening lines, Doctor Andrews writes that he knows that she "desire[s] to be furnished with such helps in physicke as shall be fitt when

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<sup>415</sup> Lucy Worsley, *Cavalier: The Story of a 17<sup>th</sup>-Century Playboy*, 114-115.

<sup>416</sup>Verse Letter From William Cavendish to His Wife Elizabeth Bassett Cavendish, University of Nottingham MSS Portland Collection, Pw V 25 f17-17v. (1625-1643).



such an occasion, and as you have had here-to-fore.”<sup>417</sup> He goes on to list various remedies, plants, and cordials that would be of use to Elizabeth while travelling during her pregnancy. However, confirmation from Andrews that she had some experience with procedures and his acknowledgement of the types of remedies she would be interested in because of this previous experience, demonstrates that she is likely aware of what would be useful to her during pregnancy. While Doctor Andrews does explain to Elizabeth how to take the different remedies and when would be most opportune to take them, he does not explain what each remedy is or what their contents are, for example, Bezoar stones or Confectio Alchermas, which suggests that Elizabeth was already aware of their existence and their properties.

#### Women using Law.

Again in 1633, Elizabeth demonstrated her extended educational sphere with her ability to correspond and participate in law proceedings. She had a testatory letter written up in which she bequeathed various amounts of money to the poor in the parishes of Langley, Grindon, Blore, and Chedle, the town of Caulston and her lord's tenants at Waterfall and Kingsley. While, of course, she had to obtain permission from William to bestow, what in terms of the law was his money, it is made clear within this letter that the intention and the desire behind this matter came directly from Elizabeth: "Shee hath moved the Right Honorable the Earl of Newcastle hir husband to yeild then unto whereupon his Lord was pleased to give his free consent". It is also written that "the paid Earle is pleased to *ioyne* with the paid Countess" (my italics) which gives the impression, once again, that this venture has been decided upon by Elizabeth and merely presided over by William as he is the one that has the ability to fulfil

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<sup>417</sup> Letter from Doctor Robert Andrews to Elizabeth Bassett Cavendish, London, British Library, Additional MS 70499, 160v.

it through law.<sup>418</sup> The letter also included clauses as to what should happen when either of them died. Though the letter is signed and sealed at the bottom by both William and Elizabeth, it is clear through the wording of the letter that the idea of this act of charity had been instigated, planned and set in motion by Elizabeth.

In 1642 she also wrote her last will and testament, after contracting a cough. Though the study of Katherine's will in the last chapter could suggest that there is nothing new to be learnt from the construction of Elizabeth's, the key difference between Katherine writing a will and Elizabeth writing one is that, when hers came to be read, Katherine was a widow. When Elizabeth was writing hers, she was still a wife. The reason that Elizabeth's decision to write a will is interesting is that, considering "in marriage, the doctrine of coverture removed from a wife her very legal entity, making it impossible for married women, *femmes covert*, to enter contracts or to assert or defend their rights in court, except with the consent and assistance of their husbands."<sup>419</sup> Yet, this did not stop women from writing wills. As Amy Louise Erikson explains "some two million wills survive in England, and between one-fifth and one-quarter were made by women. Of these 400,000 or 500,000 wills, 80 percent were made by widows and 20 percent by never married women."<sup>420</sup> Mary Prior also gives an array of examples of women who wrote wills between 1558-83 who were of also of quite a high standing, pointing out six of which were married to MPs, as well as highlighting that a number of them had connections with the Inns of Court.<sup>421</sup> While in her will she acknowledges that, due to her being a female with no rights in terms of the law, her will

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<sup>418</sup> Testatory Letter, Elizabeth Bassett Cavendish Newcastle bestows money on the poor, Nottinghamshire Archives Office MSS Portland of Welbeck (6<sup>th</sup> Deposit), DD/P/6/1/19/25. (14<sup>th</sup> May 1633).

<sup>419</sup> Tim Stretton, *Women Waging Law in Elizabethan England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 22.

<sup>420</sup> Amy Louise Erikson, "Possession – And The Other One-Tenth of the Law: Assessing Women's Ownership and Economic Rules in Early Modern England," 372.

<sup>421</sup> Mary Prior, "Wives and Wills 1558-1700," 211.

would not be deemed as a legally binding contract, she hopes that her husband will fulfil her last wishes: “this is all I desire you to do for me for in lawe I know this will not stand good but itt moust be your Goodnes.” The fact that she writes it at all suggests that she has every faith that her husband will follow through with her wishes.<sup>422</sup>

These two documents, the will and the testatory letter, demonstrate a clear understanding from Elizabeth of her place within the political sphere. Even though, despite, by law, the little amount, in terms of legal rights, that she had, it does indicate that she still placed herself, thanks to the will and the testatory letter, into the political sphere and believed herself to justly to be a part of it. While these examples clearly show some understanding of legal matters on her part, they also show a somewhat cunning manner to Elizabeth, who, like her husband's grandmother, knew how to manoeuvre her way through the patriarchal world of seventeenth-century England and achieve the goals she wished to set out.

In her will, after setting out her wishes for her funeral and asking for the continued charitable support from the testatory letter mentioned above, her first bequeath goes to her four daughters (Jane, Elizabeth and Frances from her marriage with William Cavendish, and her eldest daughter Katherine from her first marriage to Henry Howard). She requests that 500 pounds be given to each of her daughters “to remember me by not for ther husband but to them”.<sup>423</sup> This request seems quite significant. With this act, she has entitled her daughters with a form of independence and an ability to do with their belongings as they wished. Erikson states that “we may reasonably surmise that even married women...did not, in their daily lives, operate in the premise that the entire marital household belonged to their

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<sup>422</sup> The Last Will and Testament of Elizabeth Bassett Cavendish, Countess of Newcastle, Nottinghamshire Archives Office MSS Portland of Welbeck (6<sup>th</sup> Deposit), DD/P/6/1/19/26 (22<sup>nd</sup> November 1642).

<sup>423</sup> The Last Will and Testament of Elizabeth Bassett Cavendish, Countess of Newcastle, Nottinghamshire Archives Office MSS Portland of Welbeck (6<sup>th</sup> Deposit), DD/P/6/1/19/26 (22<sup>nd</sup> November 1642).

husband."<sup>424</sup> With her act of writing a will, Elizabeth is showing that, though legally she had no right to divide her possession however she wished, she is making the case that she still deserves to, at the very least, ask for her wishes to be upheld. By bequeathing money to her daughters and her daughters alone she is giving them possession over something that is entirely theirs, thus allowing them a sense of entitlement of their own possessions and showing that they can be seen as separate entities away from their husbands.

William's mother, Katherine Ogle Cavendish, made a similar request and left the estates of Medalltone and Lorbottle to her eldest granddaughter, Jane Cavendish, "during her life" along with fifteen hundred pounds in money.<sup>425</sup> While Katherine is not specific in whether the estates and money are for Jane's own use, and I doubt they would be, this bequeath does give her granddaughter a better dowry and therefore better prospects for a husband. This is just another example of the women within this family trying to further the capabilities and enrich the resources of their female kin of the next generation, through the best methods available to them at the time. Through whatever means they had accessible to them the Cavendish women sought to empower the next generation to continue their lineage of strong, powerful women.

This, therefore, begins to call into question the validity of the claim that only a select few women were educated and powerful, with the majority of the female society having little to no effect on their own life choices. There is little known about Elizabeth Bassett, with what we do know only really being brought to light through archival material that relates more to her husband than her. Yet, this archival evidence does suggest that she was, to some degree learned and in possession of educational abilities that went further than simply household and

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<sup>424</sup> Amy Louise Erikson, "Possession – And The Other One-Tenth of the Law: Assessing Women's Ownership and Economic Rules in Early Modern England," 370.

<sup>425</sup> The Final Will and Testament of Lady Catherin Cavendish, Baroness Ogle Nottinghamshire Archives Office MSS Portland of Welbeck (6<sup>th</sup> Deposit), DD/P/6/1/19/17 (22<sup>nd</sup> July 1624).

child-rearing practices. This, therefore, allows us to ponder as to whether the women like Anne Clifford, the Cooke Sisters, and Anna Maria van Schurmann were not necessarily exceptions to the rule when it came to female education, but simply shining examples of the fact. Perhaps the only reason why we have heard of the education of these women was not because they were the only examples of women who were allowed an education, but because they are examples of women who flourished through their education. Once again, the attitude of Edward Hake could be a telling reason why women's educational achievements, unless they could be described as phenomenal, were not highlighted more. The uncertainty as to whether education was good for women or not could cause some fathers to ensure that education factored in their daughter's life in some way but wouldn't necessarily highlight that education for fear of what the wider society would think of them.

Education, regardless as to whether it was a limited amount or an extensive study, gave women an opportunity to try to carve a life for themselves in the patriarchal world of the Elizabethan and Stuart courts. While men might consider it to be a way to make their daughters appear more attractive to a suitor, for women, as we have seen in the Cavendish family, it was a way for them to continue to evolutionise the role of women within the family home and within society at large. By ensuring the best for their female kinswomen, they were able to continue to work on creating familial legacies, generation after generation. While each woman knew that it was with their sons that they would be able to truly attain familial notoriety, which did not stop them from creating fitting legacies for their daughters to begin their own familial notoriety. With every good marital match, every bequeath within a will and every piece of educational advantage, each generation equipped their female kin with the ability to continue the work that they had begun in their own lifetime. It is because of this and 'female teaching' that we are able to continually witness strong-willed and purposeful women within one family who bend the constraints placed upon women in a male-dominated world.

Family for women meant everything, because it was more often than not the only place they could really shine, and they strove to do their best to ensure that their family reached its full potential. Bess, Katherine, and Elizabeth were not simply self-made women who took education and shone through it, they were each a construction of the women that came before them, a newer version, with bigger goals and a larger support system.

The marriage and partnership between William Cavendish and Elizabeth Bassett was the perfect example of exactly what the Cavendish family aimed to achieve through evolutionary female empowerment. On the one hand, there is William, who after two generations of numerous strong women, both within the Cavendish family and married into it, having some kind of influence over him, has continued that tradition and placed the importance of female evolutionary needs onto his wife and his own new generation of female Cavendishes. William certainly did not hide the education that he gave to his daughters, ensuring that the exercises that he set for them were copied in his own book of literary musings. Elizabeth appears to have been just as forward-thinking, cunning and focused as her marital female kin were before her. Where her grandmother-in-law fought to ensure her prominent place within society, her mother-in-law ensured that she could claim the title that should rightfully have been hers and was only kept away because she was a woman, Elizabeth appears to have simpler hopes, looking out for the less fortunate as well as for her daughters. While this doesn't necessarily suggest that Elizabeth wasn't as politically minded as her female Cavendish predecessors, the methods with which she achieved them suggests that had her actions been more politically motivated, there is every likelihood that she would have achieved as much as them. With these two parents together, it is no surprise that the culmination of this thesis should come to Elizabeth and William's two eldest daughters, Jane and Elizabeth, who appear to embody everything that the Cavendish women appear to have been striving to achieve for three generations before them.



# **Chapter 5**



## **Biographical Short**

### **Lady Jane Cavendish Cheyne and Elizabeth Cavendish Egerton, Countess of**

#### **Bridgewater.**

The eldest daughters of William Cavendish, First Duke of Newcastle and Elizabeth Bassett Cavendish, are the final generation to be examined in this thesis. Jane, the eldest, was born in 1621, while Elizabeth, the middle daughter, was born in 1626. Their father had already risen to Viscount Mansfield by the times of their birth and would soon after Elizabeth's birth have risen again to the Earldom of Newcastle. The world in which the sisters were born into was a prosperous one and their childhood appears to have been a happy one filled with games, literature and family, with doting parents who spent time with them developing their literary skills.

At the age of 15, in 1641, Elizabeth was married to John Egerton, Lord Brackley, though she continued to live with her family as she was too young to fulfil the duties of wife.<sup>426</sup> A year later the English Civil War broke out and the year after that the sisters' mother died. By 1644 their father had left England in exile after his defeat at Marston Moor and Jane and Elizabeth, along with their younger sister Frances, were left besieged in their Nottinghamshire family seat, Welbeck Abbey.<sup>427</sup> During this period Jane and Elizabeth looked back to the pastimes of their youth and began to write again, together. This writing consisted of a variety of poems, a play and a masque, acting as a form of remembrance of a time that once was and the family they once had.

Elizabeth relocated to her husband's home in 1645 where she remained relatively separate from the horrors of war that had once surrounded her. Jane and Frances remained at

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<sup>426</sup> Jane Stevenson and Peter Davidson, ed., *Early Modern Women Poets: An Anthology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 316.

<sup>427</sup> Lucy Worsley, *Cavalier: The Story of a 17<sup>th</sup> Century Playboy*, 187.

Welbeck where they continued fighting for the Royalist cause. They entertained Charles I there twice in 1645 and also helped relay messages between royalist fighters. Their father did not return from exile until the 1660s and the sisters, Jane in particular, were left to maintain and continue the family interests and legacies.

Given her staunch Royalist views, and the small number of royalist suitors available to her during the Interregnum, Jane married quite late in life at the age of 33. In 1654 she married Charles Cheyne, (later the Viscount Newhaven).<sup>428</sup> They had three children together, Elizabeth, William and Catherine.

Both sisters continued to write after their days spent at Welbeck.<sup>429</sup> While Jane continued to write poetry, Elizabeth's writing took a more devotional direction, and she dedicated her literary efforts to writing meditations, prayers and essays. The love between Elizabeth and John was very deep and after her death, John collected all of her meditations into a manuscript collection, known as her 'Loose Papers'.

Elizabeth died during childbirth in 1663. The event struck Jane hard and she wrote an elegy dedicated to her sister. Elizabeth is buried at the Egerton family seat of Ashridge in Hertfordshire.

Both Elizabeth and Jane predeceased their father, with Jane dying in 1669. She and Charles bought the former royal palace and manor of Chelsea with her dowry and they lived there until her death. She is buried in Chelsea Old Church and her tomb, though once believed to have been built by Bernini, was in fact more likely built by one of his students.<sup>430</sup>

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<sup>428</sup> Geoffrey Trease, *Portrait of a Cavalier*, 172.

<sup>429</sup> Jane Stevenson and Peter Davidson, ed., *Early Modern Women Poets: An Anthology*, 290, 316.

<sup>430</sup> Linda Levy Peck, *Consuming Splendour*, 278.

## **Creating Their Own World Through Their Pen: The Importance of Writing in the Cavendish Family and its Uses for Lady Jane Cavendish and Lady Elizabeth Brackley.**

Being a member of the Cavendish family must have been something of a daunting challenge for all those involved, whether married or born into it. Each new generation had the task of achieving the same, if not more, than the one before and creating their own legacy within a family history already filled with members of great importance, position, power and larger than life personalities. While this is a pressure that would be inevitable through the male line, not much thought has been spared for the pressures that would have been felt for women who had to follow a strong, dominant, female, familial line. Through this thesis, I have examined the ways in which women reacted to these pressures and what this has been able to tell us about the concept of female agency and the evolution of female empowerment within a familial situation. This evolution comes to its fruition with Jane and Elizabeth Cavendish, William Cavendish's two eldest daughters who provide a proof that, despite the odds, the concept of the female collective consciousness has been achieved.

When considering the difference in character between Bess and her great-grandchildren the success of the Cavendish female evolutionary wheel becomes apparent. Previously we have seen the majority of members of the Cavendish family acting as patrons to achieve their ends, either through architecture or through literature. Their actions were something of a mimicry of that first example of female empowerment displayed by Bess during the sixteenth century. We begin to see that process of patronage as power take something of a different turn once we reach William Cavendish and his family, with the concept of acting as both patron and creator beginning to take shape, though we still see, with William at least, patronage and the nurturing of literary and philosophical talent being his primary focus and aim. It is, however, once the evolutionary wheel stops at William's daughters that we see a greater emphasis placed on the idea of original creations over that of

nurturing others' creations. Certainly, there are a variety of reasons why this shift could have occurred: William's literary encouragement of his children, the Civil War and the establishment of the Commonwealth after the Royalist defeat, along with the lack of royalist sympathetic writers due to the royalist exodus from England at the end of the war. However, this change in empowerment practice makes us consider the importance of Jane and Elizabeth's place and position within the Cavendish female evolutionary wheel.

### William's Later Patronage and his Literary Work.

After Ben Jonson's death in 1637 and despite the beginning of the Civil War coming into play, William continued his literary patronage and extended his favour to a number of different up and coming writers of the seventeenth century. Over the years he was connected to many prominent writers and thinkers of the seventeenth century such as Thomas Hobbes, Rene Descartes, Thomas Shadwell and John Dryden. Many of the men that Cavendish supported found solace in William and his home, which he opened up to them and created, the newly termed, Welbeck Academy. Thomas Hobbes was tutoring the 2<sup>nd</sup> Earl of Devonshire when he first came into contact with William through whom he met Dryden, Jonson, and William Davenant. It was at Welbeck that Hobbes was able to develop his ideas and collaborate with other philosophers and writers. It was however not only Hobbes that found Welbeck to be a stimulating environment.

In his dedication to Cavendish in his play *The Virtuoso*, Thomas Shadwell states that he "show'd your Grace some part of this comedy at Welbeck."<sup>431</sup> In his earlier play *The Libertine*, in his dedication, Shadwell expresses his delight at being invited into Welbeck where he "found a Respect so extremely above the meanness of my Condition that I still received it with blushes."<sup>432</sup> These two dedications symbolise the importance Welbeck had

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<sup>431</sup> Thomas Shadwell, *The Virtuoso*, 3.

<sup>432</sup> Thomas Shadwell, *The Libertine*, 2.

on the development of writers' ideas and writing. The fact that Shadwell thought it of such importance to mention it in two consecutive play dedications emphasises how vital his time there was to him. This becomes even more evident when considering the contents of *The Libertine*. As Helen Pellegrin states in her introduction to the play, that:

from the point of view of pure theatrical craftsmanship, it must be admitted that *The Libertine* is thematically flawed by its overabundance of satiric targets. Its importance is greatest in the domain of intellectual history because it articulates the then prevalent conflicts between Hobbism and orthodox morality; between free will and determinism.<sup>433</sup>

She also suggests that William's wife, Margaret Lucas Cavendish was perhaps the woman "that we owe aspects of Shadwell's forceful and unconventional heroines."<sup>434</sup> While often Margaret Cavendish's importance to her literary contemporaries as well as it's society is somewhat over-exaggerated, most predominately through claims of her "feminist" leanings, when in fact her work is less an advocate for women and more of an advocate for herself, Pellegrin's assumption of Margaret's influence on Shadwell's work emphasises how important the Cavendishes were as an influential literary family.<sup>435</sup> The fact that Hobbes' ideas and philosophies played such an integral part in Shadwell's key concept of *The Libertine* can most likely be explained by the common denominator of having William Cavendish as their patron. By bringing these people together William helped to formulate ideas and produce collaborations that never would have come about had it not been for his intervention.

The dedications that William received forms a picture of him as a more 'hands-on' patron than simply being a man giving money or preferment to writers who simply tickled his fancy. When considering the insistence by Rowe to read the dedications and words of admiration written by Jonson as being untainted by hyperbole, it lends itself to consider later

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<sup>433</sup> Helen Pellegrin, "Introduction," in *The Libertine*, ed. Helen Pellegrin (New York, Garland Publishing Inc, 1987), xcvi.

<sup>434</sup> Helen Pellegrin, "Introduction," xcvi.

<sup>435</sup> Helen Pellegrin, "Introduction," xcvi.

dedications in the same vein. William wasn't simply a patron, he, to the best of his ability, was a collaborator as well.

When John Dryden's play, *Sir Martin Mar-All* was first produced in 1667, it was generally believed to be a composition by Cavendish, while James Shirley is credited as being a collaborator on William's best-known play, the pre-Civil War comedy *The Country Captain*. Like his mother before him, William fulfilled his noble obligation of supporting the arts, however, incorporated it in such a way that it was useful to his own endeavours. As Helen Ostovich points out "the ideal relation between the patron and the patronized, as Jonson implicitly argued throughout his career, cannot flourish in a money market that in itself pledges no allegiance to reciprocal service bound by intellectual or artistic ties", thus we see William, one of Jonson's most ardent Sons, setting his patronage obligations to the standard that Jonson set.<sup>436</sup> William collaborated with Jonson, Shadwell, Shirley, and Dryden, in such a way in such a way that all parties learned, developed and thrived.

In Shadwell's dedication of *The Virtuoso*, he declares "when I show'd your Grace some part of this comedy at Welbeck, being all that I had then written of it, you were pleased to express your great liking of it which was sufficient encouragement for me to proceed in it".<sup>437</sup> While certainly, Shadwell was partially flattering William, in his dedication to *The Libertine* he writes "and now, my Lord, after all this, imagine not I intend this small present of a play (though favored here by those I most wish it should be) as any return; for all the Services of my life cannot make a sufficient one. I onely lay hold on this occasion, to publish the World your great Favours, and the grateful Acknowledgement", thus emphasising how the dedication in *The Virtuoso* suggests a different process.<sup>438</sup> The dedication to *The Libertine* reads like most dedications: the inequality between writer and patron, the unworthiness of

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<sup>436</sup> Helen Ostovich, "Patronage", 301.

<sup>437</sup> Thomas Shadwell, *The Virtuoso*, 3.

<sup>438</sup> Thomas Shadwell, *The Libertine*, 3.

work that will be presented anyway in hopes that it will please, the craving for acceptance and praise. Yet the dedication for *The Virtuoso* doesn't follow that tradition. Shadwell states that he "show'd your Grace some part of this comedy at Welbeck" and thus we are led to conclude that Shadwell not only wrote the play in William's nurturing environment but also consulted with William on the progress of the play. Where *The Libertine*'s dedication would lead us to believe that the relationship between this patron and writer was no different to the hundreds of other relationships that existed between countless other patrons and writers, *The Virtuoso* confirms that William attempted to make himself a vital part of the literary production of the time. This, therefore means, that despite whatever hyperbole and flattery that might be present in these dedications, Shadwell's acknowledgment that he involved William during the writing process demonstrates that William did not merely fulfil his noble obligation to support the arts; he also worked to help develop it, out of sheer love of the process.

In his dedication to William in *An Evening's Love, or the Mock Astrologer*, John Dryden also remarks on William's importance in the life of writers when he says "I am oblig'd my Lord, to return you not only my own acknowledgments; but to thank you in the name of former Poets. The names of Johnson and Davenant seem to require it from me, that those favours which you plac'd on them, and which they wanted opportunity to own in publick." Dryden readily admits that his reason for mentioning the two men is to show "how gracious you have been to them, and are to me, I in some measure joyn my name with theirs" and in this act not only links his name with theirs but also reminds William of his generosity to them, thus insinuating that he believes he is worthy of similar rewards.<sup>439</sup> What this extract does show us, however, is the contemporary acknowledgment that William was an important patron. Writers sought William's patronage not simply for his money, nor the prestige that

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<sup>439</sup> John Dryden, *An Evening's Love, or the Mock Astrologer* (London: T.N. for Henry Herringman, 1671), 3.

would go along with naming him as their patron, but, especially when considering the dedications and correspondence between patron and writers quoted above, because writers knew that not only did William understand their struggle with the muses, but they would be able to develop their own skills with him, or with the myriad of other writers that he supported and set up at Welbeck: he "was easy access to struggling authors."<sup>440</sup>.

William was a patron of literature, not principally for political means, but for enjoyment as well. As an amateur writer himself, William understood the difficulty of writing. As a man who enjoyed building, he understood the effort it took to create something of beauty out of nothing. The transition between architecture and literature wouldn't necessarily have seemed quite so significant: they both have the connotations of creation, making something grand from nothing, and both required hard and dedicated labour. Having found a place of acceptance and a place of motivation at Welbeck, the writers that William was patron to would have been able to see firsthand the magnificence that he was capable of and it is, therefore, unsurprising that they would put their faith in him when wanting to create their own literary masterpieces.

### William's Writing: His Poetry and Plays and It's Influence on his Daughters

Patronage, especially literary, took on something of an evolution throughout William's life. To begin with, it was simply a way for him to gain position and placement within the Caroline court and gain the recognition that he believed his birthright deserved. David Norbrook suggests that there was an "emphasis on the poet as voice of the patron's ideas rather than an intellectual innovator" and this is exactly what William would have wanted: to appear intellectual and important, so much so that leading playwrights of the time would lend

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<sup>440</sup> Henry Ten Eyck Perry, *The First Duchess of Newcastle and her Husband as Figures in Literary History*, (Boston: Ginn & Co., 1918), 85.



their voices to his message.<sup>441</sup> Patronage, from the start, was always about aligning himself with the more powerful members of his family, continuing the work they had done so that it was clear that he was their descendant. But then it seems to have taken a turn and even once William had obtained his court appointment, had been granted the Earldom and then Dukedom of Newcastle, and after he came back after the Civil War and appears to have had little interest in political participation, still his literary patronage continued and became one of his life's greatest endeavours and pleasurable passions.

Yet, Norbrook points out that “the claim that poetry should ‘transcend politics implies that the political sphere is irredeemably fallen, that art alone can redeem us from contagion: thus all political activity, of whatever kind, is reduced to the same degraded status. The issue is not so much why one should politicize poetry as why critics have for so long been trying to depoliticize it.”<sup>442</sup> Regardless as to whether William saw literary patronage as one of his true passions, at its essence, patronage always had a political motive behind it. While on the surface William appears to have stepped back from public life after the War and secluded himself to his estates, William's position as a patron still allowed him to demonstrate his importance, that despite not being directly involved in the political world, he was still deemed important enough for writers to wish to gain his attention. While William certainly enjoyed the role of patron, he also understood the importance it held to showcase his influence not just on society but on the control of literary output. In a society where his importance was continuing to wane, he still had one output where his influence still dominated.

While William was a fervent patron and did his utmost to support his writers, his intentions behind these acts could have been of a somewhat more calculating manner. William revelled in the idea of being a patron to some of the most important literary and

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<sup>441</sup> David Norbrook, *Poetry and Politics in the England Renaissance* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 3.

<sup>442</sup> David Norbrook, *Poetry and Politics in the English Renaissance*, 6.

philosophical minds of the time, but he also had a great interest in writing himself and endeavoured, quite persistently, in improving, practicing and furthering his literary abilities. He was recognised as a playwright during his time, with a letter, believed to have been written by Thomas Killigrew in 1642, citing a line from one of William's plays as a way of expressing his disfavour with the current situation that has befallen England: "Your Countrey Courtier kisses your hands for the favor you did him in your last Epistle, and tells you he is of the opinion with the Secretary in my Lord Newcastle's last new play, The times they are dangerous and therefore shall say nothing but Mum."<sup>443</sup> Katrien Daemen-De Gelder and J. P. Vander Motten believe that this small reference between two courtiers gives substance to Johnson's suggestion "that several years 'before 1646 Newcastle had already gained something of a reputation – among friends and detractors alike – as a playwright."<sup>444</sup> This acknowledgement would have been music to William's ears, who, as we saw in the last chapter, endeavoured to bring his literary interest to every part of his life, including letters of information from court back to his wife. Indeed H. R. Woudhuysen has suggested that "the sheer quantity of poetic and dramatic work in his own and Rolleston's hands among the Portland Papers testifies eloquently enough to the seriousness of his literary endeavour."<sup>445</sup> In fact, the Portland Papers are a shining example of the significance that literature and his own compositions played on William's life.

The Portland papers contain all manners of literary musings and endeavours: from a poem to Prince Charles after he cared for William during an illness, "I was sicke and you were with mee, since/ I thought to thanke you, Not as you are Prince/ Or my Lord Master, but

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<sup>443</sup> Katrien Daemen-De Gelder & J. P. Vander Motten, "'The Times Are Dangerous': An Unnoticed Allusion to William Cavendish's *The Variety* 1641-42," *ANQ: A Quarterly Journal of Short Articles, Notes and Reviews*, Volume 21, No.3 (2008): 36.

<sup>444</sup> Katrien Daemen-De Gelder & J. P. Vander Motten, "'The Times Are Dangerous,'" 40.

<sup>445</sup> H.R. Woudhuysen, "Introduction," in *The Country Captain*, by William Cavendish, ed. H. R. Woudhuysen (Oxford: Malone Society by Oxford University Press, 1999), xxviii.

as you inrolle/ Good Nature's Subjects to your Monarch's Soule" stating that such an act "Though but a Prince makes you a little King."<sup>446</sup>; as well as ideas for songs that would work for the end of comedies, "Song for the End of a Comedy at the Marriages"<sup>447</sup>; to songs written just for the sake of writing a song, such as "Loves Almanach."<sup>448</sup> The Portland Papers' collection of literary works demonstrates the importance of the ideas and practices of literature and composition on William and begins to explain how literature became such a vital and synonymous activity with the entirety of the Newcastle Cavendishes.

Two entries in Pw V 25, highlights the importance of one particular poet to the formation of Newcastle Cavendishes literary endeavours. 'An Epitaph on The Prince of Poets – Ben Jonson' and 'To Ben Jonson's Ghost' both relay the influence that Ben Jonson had on the Cavendishes' writings, as seen throughout William's work, as well as in the manuscript collection collated by Jane and Elizabeth. The constant presence and influence of Jonson can continually be felt in their work.

In 'An Epitaph on The Prince of Poet – Ben Jonson' it states that 'Our Language barbarous, so poore, so weake/ Nay dumbe. Hee was the first that taught to speake,'<sup>449</sup> Here William writes the importance that Jonson had on the development of poetical verse in the English language, taking a language of little sophistication and using it to create masterful pieces of literature and being the first to use it in such a way that would make it as important and as useful to society as the ancient languages of Latin and Greek. The last couplet of the poem, "Where Malice most in Breasts of Venom lurkes/ Even there my lov'd Ben is saved by

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<sup>446</sup> William Cavendish, Poem from William Cavendish to The Prince his Highness, The University of Nottingham MSS Portland Collection, Pw V 25, 6-f7r (1638-1641).

<sup>447</sup> William Cavendish, Song for the End of a Comedy at the Marriages, The University of Nottingham MSS Portland Collection, Pw V 24.

<sup>448</sup> William Cavendish, Loves Almanach – A Song, The University of Nottingham MSS Portland Collection, Pw V 25, 60-f82r.

<sup>449</sup> William Cavendish, An Epitaph of The Prince of Poets, Ben Jonson, The University of Nottingham MSS Portland Collection, Pw V 25, 26-f25r.

his Workes”<sup>450</sup> indicates that despite Jonson’s renowned personality trait of being tempestuous and irritable, all of these traits could be forgiven because of the importance and eloquence that could be found within his literary works – while the man himself might have been something of a nightmare, the beauty in his words forgave all of his less than hospitable personality traits.

In ‘To Ben Jonson’s Ghost’ again we are delivered verse dedicated to a man of great literary integrity and importance, a man who in himself, is “a Monument without a Tombe” - his literary works being the only monument that he needs to leave behind.<sup>451</sup> William also makes the claim that “I would write of Thee Ben; not to approve/ My witt of Learneny; but my Judgement, Love”.<sup>452</sup> William uses Jonson’s name to testify to his good judgement in such things, that he is not wishing to use the memory of his old friend to show how well learned he is, but how good his judgement is when considering men of good literary importance.

With the death of Jonson, William needed another to take his place. It has long been established that James Shirley was a great contributor to William’s theatrical work, with the text for *The Country Captain*, originally being miscredited by A. H. Bullen in 1883 as a play written by Shirley. Montague Summers can also see an influence of Shirley on William's work when he states “*The Variety* also has distinct traces of Shirley’s manner”<sup>453</sup> Yet, Helen Ostovich claims that there is more than Shirley’s theatrical medium present in *The Variety*. When discussing William’s admiration for the heavily Cavendish inspired plays of Jonson’s

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<sup>450</sup> William Cavendish, An Epitaph of The Prince of Poets, Ben Jonson, The University of Nottingham MSS Portland Collection, Pw V 25, 26-f25r.

<sup>451</sup> William Cavendish, To Ben Jonson’s Ghost, The University of Nottingham MSS Portland Collection, Pw V 25, 25-f25r (1640).

<sup>452</sup> William Cavendish, To Ben Jonson’s Ghost, The University of Nottingham MSS Portland Collection, Pw V 25, 25-f25r (1640).

<sup>453</sup> Montague Summers, “Introduction,” in *The Complete Works of Thomas Shadwell*, by Thomas Shadwell, ed. Montague Summers (London: Fortune Press, 1927), xxxiv.

later work (*The Magnetic Lady* and *The New Inn*), she goes on to say, “The poetic exchanges with the Cavendishes did not end with *The Magnetic Lady*; William Cavendish admired the play so much that he wrote an imitation of it in his own play, *The Variety*... William’s other works – *The Humourous Lovers* and *The Triumphant Widow; or The Medley of Humours* – suggest his adherence to Jonsonian humours comedy.”<sup>454</sup> Ostovich goes so far as to suggest that she believed the Jonsonian connection with the Cavendishes did not even finish with William, but his influence continued on into the works of William’s daughters, Jane and Elizabeth, in their own theatrical works: *A Pastorall* and *The Concealed Fancies*. While Ostovich argues that the play is a symbol of “a compliment influenced by the respect given to the poet patronized by their father” this thesis shall be arguing that perhaps it was less of a work influenced by Jonson and more of a work influenced by a man who was himself influenced by Jonson.<sup>455</sup> Ostovich states “in the Cavendish family, cultural and intellectual pursuits, self-expression through poetry and drama, witty consideration of performance as well as scripting, all had favour within the family milieu.”<sup>456</sup> It would, therefore, be hardly surprising that the man to whom they looked to for inspiration the most, just happened to be the man that was guiding them in the direction of poetical and theatrical writings.

This inspiration subsequently created a connection between William and his daughters through their interest in writing. Not only are there the composition exercises examined below, but William also wrote a letter addressed to his “Sweet Daughters” in which he expressed his surprise and delight at their request for a Christmas masque of his own composition to be copied into a book for them:

You know, I was nott nice or coye,  
Butt made a Countrie maske, a Christmas Toye

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<sup>454</sup> Helen Ostovich, “Patronage,” 300.

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Att your desiers; Butt I did not Looke  
You would recorde my follies in a Booke.<sup>457</sup>

This act again confirms Ostovich's claim that love, appreciation, and familial respect in this family were expressed and shared through each other literary endeavours. Literature worked as a currency and the best way to gain the affections of their ostentation and eccentric father was to do so through a means that William loved - literature.

There is every likelihood that the sisters were present at the entertainments that William put on for Charles I in 1633 and 1634, and thus would have been able to understand the importance that could come with literature production and presenting it in the right way. The spectacle of these two entertainments, by most accounts, astounded adults.<sup>458</sup> The effect that it must have had on these Cavendish daughters is quite a different thing altogether. There is also the concept of the Welbeck Academy that would have been a large impact on their lives. Shadwell's description of Welbeck being "the only place, where the best poets can find a good reception" again leads us to assume that the Cavendish children found themselves constantly surrounded by the literary heavy-weights of the time and being subjected to artistic and literary influence from every side.<sup>459</sup> It is therefore unsurprising, that when their lives were turned upside down during the Civil War, with their King under threat, their father exiled and their homes under siege, that they would revert back to the family currency of literature, the only constant that appears to have been in their lives, in hopes of creating a world for themselves inside that wasn't so alien and scary as the one outside.

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<sup>457</sup> William Cavendish Autograph MS Poem, Untitled, The University of Nottingham MSS Portland Collection Pw V 25, 19.(1630-1639).

<sup>458</sup> Edward Hyde, Earl of Clarendon, *The History of the Rebellion and Civil Wars in England*, 139.

<sup>459</sup> Geoffrey Trease, *Portrait of a Cavalier*, 190.

## The Couplet Writing Exercises: William's Encouragement of Composition.

The choice that the sisters took to write, not only as a form of escape but as a way to demonstrate their form of female empowerment in the familial wheel, appears to be less of a choice and more of an inevitability. Betty Travitsky suggests, William was a “dominant personal and intellectual influence on her life.”<sup>460</sup> While Travitsky is only writing in reference to the influence that William had on Elizabeth, judging by their literary output, it is fair to say that he had as much of an effect on Jane as he did Elizabeth. Given William's own interest in the literary arts, along with the strong female influence placed on him by his mother, aunts, and grandmother the idea that he would want to pass that interest on to all his children - daughters, as well as sons, is hardly surprising. This equality is demonstrated most clearly within the writing exercises that he set his children in their youth. To assist and develop their own abilities in composition and verse writing, Newcastle created verse dialogue exercises for each of his children, to which he expected them to reply to:

Sweet Charles,

This letter iff you like It nott then race Itt  
But answer Itt, for Usus promptus facitt.  
W.N.

My Lord,

I can not tel what to wright.  
Charles Mansfield

Sweet Jane

I know you are a rare Inditer.-  
And hath the Pen off a moste redye writer.

W.N.

My Lord,

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<sup>460</sup> Betty Travitsky, *Subordination and Authorship in Early Modern England: The Case of Elizabeth Cavendish Egerton and her "Loose Papers"* (Tempe: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 1999), 81.

I know you doo but Jest with mee  
& so in obidence I right this nothing

Jane Cavendyshe

Bess, you muste write to, write butt what you think.  
Nowe your'e a Girle, dissemble when you Linke  
W.N.

Franke, prethe write too mee thy running hande  
That non Can reade, & all Less understand.  
W.N.

S<sup>r</sup> you muste write to, My beloved Harry,  
That asketh blessing & will never Tarry.  
W.N.<sup>461</sup>

These rhyming couplets demonstrate the importance that Newcastle placed on the idea of raising children who would follow in his own literary footsteps. The exercises clearly encouraged the development of their own literary skills and literary voice. This is most pertinently expressed in Jane's reply rather than the short one line response by Charles. While Charles simply writes to produce something for his father (which could illustrate the children's needs to gain their father's approval, evidenced further later with the sisters' manuscript writings), Jane's response is witty and challenging to her father's statement of her being a 'rare Inditer' and 'most redye writer'. While in essence, both Charles and Jane's responses are stating that they are unable to give anything of an interesting response to their father's initial couplet, Jane's response questions her father's praise and places it merely down to hyperbole "I know you doo but Jest with mee".

We do, however, see an early example of her obedience to her father by at least producing something to present to him and demonstrating the work that she has done: "so in obidence I right this nothing". Jane's response has a playfulness to it. Clearly, we have a girl

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<sup>461</sup> William Cavendish, Autograph letters in verse of William Cavendish, 1<sup>st</sup> Duke of Newcastle upon Tyne and his Children; n.d – The University of Nottingham MSS Portland Collection Pw V25 f21-r (1628-1644).



with an interest in literature and writing and it is an interest that she not only shares with her father but is able to execute with her father's permission and encouragement.

The common theme of the last three children's notes is that they aren't an analysis of their writing like Jane and Charles' but an encouragement for them to begin writing and composing. Through William's note to Elizabeth, we begin to see a picture of something of a shy girl. He writes 'you muste write to, write butt what you think.' This gives us the image that Elizabeth might not have been a vocal child and William believed that a way for her to be able to express herself would be using the same methods that he used to express himself and describe the world around him, as seen in the letters he sent to his first wife, analysed in the previous chapter. Literature and composition were clearly very important to Newcastle, both as a way of expressing himself and a way to communicate with his family, and perhaps he saw it as a way for his middle daughter to come out of her shell.

In Frances' note he comments on her illegible handwriting, stating that despite the fact that no one can read what she writes, she too must write to him. For Frances, her exercises are not only, like the one set for her brothers and sisters, to practise and develop her composition skills but to also improve her handwriting, so that, in the future, her literary works can be read and understood by William and by anyone else who wishes to read it.

To Henry, he too compels his youngest son to 'write too', in the same vein as Elizabeth, however, not in such a way as to express himself, but to emulate his brother and sisters. Henry was the youngest child and as can be seen through these notes, we have a clear indication that Jane, Charles, Frances, and perhaps even Elizabeth, had composed pieces, either for themselves or for their father's pleasure. With Henry's note, William is encouraging his last son (and the man who would, after Charles' death in 1659, become his heir) to find his own place in this extremely literate family.

It is when looking at these five notes and two responses; we are able to grasp the

importance that literature and composition had on the inner workings of the family. This gives us a greater understanding of why, during a time of such strife, panic and fear, William's eldest daughters, Jane and Elizabeth, would turn to poems, plays, and pastorals as a way to come to terms with the world of war that surrounded them.

These exchanges clearly meant a lot to William as well. The fact that he had them copied into his own literary book suggests that not only was he proud of the responses that he received from his children, but he was also proud of the method with which he tried to educate them in the way of composition. In the same way that William wrote instructional manuals for horse-riding, perhaps recording these exercises was his way of composing a manual for teaching aristocratic children in the art of literary accomplishment. As Helen Ostovich comments: "in the Cavendish family, cultural and intellectual pursuits, self-expression through poetry and drama, witty considerations of performance as well as scripting, all had favour within the family milieu."<sup>462</sup> Margaret Ezell confirms this with her breakdown of the Newcastle family environment: "Newcastle provided an environment where literary achievement was encouraged equally for his sons and daughters; he also offered his own writing practices, the activity of manuscript circulation as an acceptable intellectual pursuit."<sup>463</sup> The Newcastle household would have been the opportune environment for a young writer to develop their skill.

#### The Bodleian and Beinecke Manuscripts: The Importance of the Sisters' Composition.

The importance of the Cavendish sisters to the Cavendish female familial evolutionary wheel as well as their importance as writers within the family is embodied within the two surviving manuscripts held at the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library at Yale University and

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<sup>462</sup>Helen Ostovich, "Patronage," 300.

<sup>463</sup> Margaret J. M. Ezell, "'To Be Your Daughter In Your Pen': The Social Functions of Literature in the Writings of Lady Elizabeth Brackley and Lady Jane Cavendish," 294.

the Bodleian Library at the University of Oxford, in which the sisters' own literary endeavours are preserved. The volumes contain a vast amount of literary practices, comprising of a play, a pastoral and a number of poems, all of which were written by the girls, both together and separately. William encouraged his daughters to use literature as a way of expressing themselves and the world around them, but given their period of writing, as well as his absence during the Civil War, this particular pastime wasn't necessarily the safest route the sisters could have taken. Given the period's perception that women were to be chaste, silent and obedient, the very act of writing, especially in a form primarily intended for the public stage, the Cavendish sisters were not adhering to the correct nature of behaviour deemed acceptable for women. The contents of the plays would also not have been deemed acceptable by Parliamentary forces.

Through the composition of their plays, regardless as to whether they intended the plays to be acted out or not, the very act of writing a play "drew the female voice into the public arena".<sup>464</sup> Female subordination was ripe during the seventeenth century and behavioural handbooks gave women suggested actions and ways of behaviour both in public and private spheres. In *The English Gentlewoman*, Richard Braithwaite "had purposely made it more portable, that it more become your more sociable follower," allowing women to consult the book should any occasion arise in which they did not know how to act accordingly.<sup>465</sup> In his book, *The Monument of Matrones*, a book of prayer and meditation suggestions primarily targeted towards women, Thomas Bentley states that "There is nothing that becommeth a maid better than lovernes, silence, shamefastnes, and chastitie, both of bodie & minde. For these things being once lost, she is no more a maid, but a strumpet in the

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<sup>464</sup> Marion Wynne-Davies, ed., *Women Poets of the Renaissance* (London: J. M. Dent, 1998), xxvi.

<sup>465</sup> Richard Braithwaite, *The English Gentlewoman drawne out to the full body: expressing what habiliments doe best attire her, what ornaments doe best adorne her, what complements doe best accomplish her* (London: 1631), xviii.

light of God”.<sup>466</sup> In his treatise *Histrion-Mastix*, in which he condemns theatre in all sense, William Prynne states that “all popular, and common Stage-Playes, whether comickall, Tragicall, Satyricall, Mimicall, or mixt of either (especially as they are now composed, and personated,) are such sinfull, hurtful, and pernicious Recreations, as are altogether unseemely, and unlawful unto Christians”.<sup>467</sup> However, being the daughters of the renowned ‘Maecenas’ of the age and from a line of women who time and time again laughed in the face of patriarchal norms, such patriarchal threats of apparent female sin would seem inconsequential to them.

The encouragement by their father, however, is likely to have quelled any fears they would have had of repercussions from their writing, with many suggesting that the sisters took direct influence for their literary endeavours from their father. Randall states that they “proved to be inspired and heartened by the dramatic interests of their father”<sup>468</sup>, while Milling suggests “poetry and drama were forms of Cavendish conversation, when together and apart. The poetry Jane and Elizabeth produced while their father was in exile continues this tradition.”<sup>469</sup> However, while their choice to follow in their father’s literary footsteps, “daring to venture into a field they knew he loved”<sup>470</sup>, rather than the “blossoming ‘feminine’ forms of journal or verse”<sup>471</sup> can, of course, be attributed to him, the question arises as to where this ‘daring’ nature that Randall refers to came from.

These volumes not only demonstrate how the sisters went about developing their own idea of female empowerment in the Cavendish family through the act of writing rather than

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<sup>466</sup> Thomas Bentley, *The Monument of Matrones: Conteyning Seven Severall Lamps of Virginitie*, 1.

<sup>467</sup> William Prynne, *Histrion-Mastix. The Players Scourge; or Actors Tragaedie, divided into two parts* (London: E.A. and W.I., for M. Sparke, 1633), 9.

<sup>468</sup> Dale B. J. Randall, *Winter Fruit: English Drama 1642-1660*, 336.

<sup>469</sup> Jane Milling, “Siege and Cipher: The Closet Drama of the Cavendish Sisters.” 414.

<sup>470</sup> Dale B. J. Randall, *Winter Fruit: English Drama 1642-1660*, 323.

<sup>471</sup> Jane Milling, “Siege and Cipher: The Closet Drama of the Cavendish Sisters,” 413.

primarily through patronage, but also gives us the first tangible piece of evidence that demonstrates an awareness of the female collective consciousness within the Cavendish family, as well as women as a whole in society. In *Women Playwrights in England*, Nancy Cotton suggests that by the 1690s “women playwrights [were] conscious of themselves as a group with a novel place in the culture.”<sup>472</sup> Using Cotton’s hypothesis, Margaret J. Ezell goes as far as to suggest that the female voices in *The Concealed Fancies* “commenting on love, marriage, and power suggest an interest in the more general issue of women roles” during this period.<sup>473</sup> It is within these volumes and the actions of the Cavendish sisters that we are able to get a glimpse of their awareness of their ‘novel place’ in the formulation and culture of the Cavendish family’s female lineage, as well as society as a whole, during a period of Civil War, when there were no men around who could guide them through the situations that befell them. Their literary works were their attempt to reconcile their ideas of that consciousness and come to terms with the reality of male abandonment that they inevitably faced during this period. With the Cavendish volume and later examples of female writing at the end of the seventeenth century in mind, the idea that women, as a collective, were beginning to understand the roles they could, and did, play within the wider world of England’s patriarchal society, begins to take shape.

### William’s Influence.

Despite this concept of the female collective being prevalent within the girls’ work, the evidence of the influence that William had on the sisters, despite the wider picture at hand, was never far from the surface during the composition of the Bodleian and Beinecke manuscripts. When analysing their work, written during the time they were garrisoned within

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<sup>472</sup> Nancy Cotton, *Women Playwrights in England 1363-1750*, 10.

<sup>473</sup> Margaret J. M. Ezell, ““To Be Your Daughter In Your Pen”: The Social Functions of Literature in the Writings of Lady Elizabeth Brackley and Lady Jane Cavendish,” 289.

Welbeck Abbey, despite William being on the continent, he features prominently throughout it. Indeed, the very concept of their writing poetry and drama emphasises how important Newcastle was to the development of the two sisters' 'voice'. As Jane Milling observes, the unconventional choice of drama is explained when acknowledging that "the manuscript book [was] a gift and tribute in its forms and content to an absent play-writing father."<sup>474</sup>

Nathan Comfort Starr, in the first edited, printed edition of the *The Concealed Fancies*, offers a different perspective to Milling and makes the claim that the manuscript was intended as a gift for Elizabeth's father-in-law, John Egerton, 1<sup>st</sup> Earl of Bridgewater, suggesting that it was done "in order to pass time which must have hung heavily on their hands, and perhaps to amuse the old Earl of Bridgewater, dashed off a Comedy."<sup>475</sup> His theory that the play was written at Ashridge, the Egerton's Hertfordshire estate, takes away the importance of William to the sisters' writing process and work and has been strongly argued against since Starr's original printing. In fact, many of the theories originally put forward by Starr have been contended in recent years, thanks to the progression of feminist scholarship and a greater interest in female writing during the early modern period, allowing for a greater debate to be had about the circumstance and issues presented in works such as the Cavendish sisters' manuscript.

Starr's main argument for placing to composition site of the manuscript at Ashridge is from Thomas Baskerville's description of the house in 1682 in which he describes it as a "great house, formerly some monastery...It is a square containing in it a small quadrangle, and in that a little pond of water...Here doth also enclose this pool and quadrangle a fine cloister, remarkable for this, because my lord wil not have it blurred out, for having in paint upon walls some scripture and monkish stories." This description led him to the conclusion that

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<sup>474</sup> Jane Milling, "Siege and Cipher: The Closet Drama of the Cavendish Sisters," 413.

<sup>475</sup> Nathan Comfort Starr edition of *The Concealed Fancies*,  
<http://digital.library.upenn.edu/women/cavendish/fansyes/fansyes.html>

“the fact that Ashridge had formerly been a religious house, and that Lucenay and Tattiney in *The Concealed Fansyes* for a time take the veil makes it very likely that the play was written at the Earl of Bridgewater’s seat.”<sup>476</sup> In their own edition of the play S.P. Cerasano and Marion Wynne-Davies discredit this theory, stating:

Starr’s only evidence being that one of the play’s scenes is set in a convent and Ashridge had formerly been a religious house. Moreover, it is clear from the contemporary allegory, that the play was written and probably performed, before Newcastle remarried in December 1645, and this would suggest a date commensurate with the sisters’ residency at Welbeck.<sup>477</sup>

Jane Milling supports this theory further when she states: “A prologue to *The Concealed Fansyes* confesses it ‘looks like [the work of an] eighteen and twenty-two youth”, which places its composition before the middle of 1645 when Jane was 22 and Elizabeth was 18.<sup>478</sup> Indeed, given that Welbeck itself, before the Dissolution of the Monasteries in the late 1530s, had been a monastery, suggests that there is no reason that the sisters were not able to get inspiration for the religious aspects of their play from their own Welbeck home. This, therefore, makes it even more likely that the manuscript was composed while at the family home of Welbeck, rather than Ashridge, where the absence of their father would have been felt at its strongest.

Many critics of the play, including Cersano and Wynne-Davies, have argued strongly against Starr’s suggested frivolity surrounding the sisters’ decision to compose such a piece. They refer to how Starr’s analysis states that, “it is quite possible that if the two authors were sojourning at Ashridge, they found the house and grounds so interestingly arranged that they could not resist putting on a play” going so far as to suggest that its only importance as a text comes from its “artless revelation of the activities of seventeenth-century ladies of fashion

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<sup>476</sup> Nathan Comfort Starr, <http://digital.library.upenn.edu/women/cavendish/fansyes/fansyes.html> (footnote 15).

<sup>477</sup> Lady Jane Cavendish and Lady Elizabeth Brackley, “The Concealed Fancies,” in *Renaissance Drama by Women*, ed. S.P. Cersano et al. (London: Routledge, 1996), 127.

<sup>478</sup> Jane Milling, “Siege and Cipher: The Closet Drama of the Cavendish Sisters,” 413.

living in the country.”<sup>479</sup>

Starr's assumption that the play would have been written with such frivolous beginnings is the very problem that this thesis is trying to address. For Starr, there couldn't have been any other substantial reason why the sisters would want to write a play, other than to pass the time. But it is this simplifying that really emphasises why more analysis into female activity during this period was and is still needed to be done. While certainly, Starr's commentary of the play was written in 1931 and female literary debate has moved on vastly since then, there are still modern critics who are only looking at the finished article and not at the reason for the work itself. In her critique of the play, Nancy Cotton suggests that "the authors here had promising raw material but were unable to construct a coherent play [with] a storyline clumsily handled [showing] a sound and simple comedic pattern."<sup>480</sup> While, certainly Cotton analysis has merit, to only look at the play on the surface, and to not look into the origins of its composition, is to miss, not just the importance of what the play like this mean for modern research, but the contemporary remarkableness of what the girls are doing through their literary exercises.

Since its resurgence in popularity, there have been many scholars who have fought against these negative views and have discovered that there is more to the sisters' writing than two aristocratic girls simply whiling away countless hours of inactivity. Jane Milling suggests that:

while the plays are to some degree autobiographical, and the theatrical writing is a familial discourse, the presentation of family life in the plays is not a simple fictionalisation of their author's biography. In *The Conceal'd Fansyes*, the three motherless cousins do defend a castle, whilst bewailing their absent father, but they have no brothers. They are shadowed in the main plot by only two sisters. Luceny and Tattiney, and their gallant brothers, the Stellows. Neither family is complete; Jane and Elizabeth are doing something more interesting than simply retelling their recent past

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<sup>479</sup> Nathan Comfort Starr, <http://digital.library.upenn.edu/women/cavendish/fansyes/fansyes.html>.

<sup>480</sup> Nancy Cotton, *Women Playwrights in England*, 40.



as a form of wish fulfilment. Looking too earnestly for biographical parallels can lead us to oversimplify their work.<sup>481</sup>

There is also Cotton's analysis of the sisters' inability to 'construct a coherent play'. On the surface this is certainly true; like many of their father's literary outputs, the action never really reaches its full potential and characters and plot lines aren't fully explored. But rather than being a sign of their literary failings, this lack of development could be read as a literary device. The sisters wrote a play filled with autobiographical aspects and, at the time of writing, they were uncertain where their own story was going to end. They did not know what the outcome of the war would be: whether they would find themselves under a royal or parliamentary rule, or, more importantly, whether they would ever see their father and brothers again. This uncertainty could be the 'clumsy' nature that Cotton refers to, mirroring the audience's sense of uncertainty with the uncertainty that the sisters themselves felt. We see them following the suggestion that William gave to Elizabeth when she was a little girl: 'write butt what you thinke.' It is almost too easy to take the view of Starr and only understand the sisters' work as a product of aristocratic boredom during a period of unrest, with the close biographic nature making it appear as if the sisters have little imagination and are indeed writing as a practice of wish fulfilment through their play. Yet the dynamics of the relationships within the play, and the sense that nothing is complete or whole until the end when Lord Calsindow returns, does add depth and create a sense of poignancy within their work.

The devotion towards William is clear in reality, and indeed it is also somewhat self-explanatory in literature as well. In "'Hymen's Monkey Love': The Concealed Fancies and Female Sexual Initiation' Katherine Burroughs makes the case that the relationship between the daughters and Lord Calinsdow (a mirror image of the relationship between the Cavendish

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<sup>481</sup> Jane Milling, "Siege and Cipher: The Closet Drama of the Cavendish Sisters," 414-415.

sisters and Newcastle), has something of an undercurrent theme of the sisters' latent incestuous feelings for their father, stating that, in the play "several of the plays female characters attempt to indulge fantasies that they associate with the sexual life of their male relation, Lord Calsindow, and their speculation about his sexuality is precipitated by the entry of three of these characters into Lord Calsindow's literal closet."<sup>482</sup> While I feel that this is reading slightly further into the relationship than what is actually on the page, she does make some worthy points about the almost hero-worship nature that the sisters appear to hold for Newcastle.

Margaret Ezell also agrees that there is something, especially in the dedications, "unusual [in] the application of these forms and conceits to a father/daughter relationship" commenting how the form they take is normally those produced in "verse by men, Jonson in particular."<sup>483</sup> While the connection with the literary patterns of Jonson again demonstrates the influence their writing received from their father, and thus Jonson, their decision to mimic the dedication patterns of verse written by men again makes us question their motive behind it. Were they simply following the dedicatory rules from examples they had read from countless poets and playwrights dedicating pieces to William, or are we witnessing a confirmation of the importance William's patronage was to them: their desperate need to impress him for their own satisfaction, in the same way the countless playwrights and poets were desperate to impress him in hopes of rewards or career furtherance.

### The Feeling of Absence: The use of Writing as a Form of Escapism and Wish-Fulfilment.

Throughout both the Oxford and the Yale manuscripts the importance of William to the sisters' work is continually felt through their dedicatory poems. These poems that hold

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<sup>482</sup> Catherine Burroughs, "'Hymen's Monkey Love': The Concealed Fancies and Female Sexual Initiation," 23.

<sup>483</sup> Margaret J. M. Ezell, "'To Be Your Daughter In Your Pen': The Social Functions of Literature in the Writings of Lady Elizabeth Brackley and Lady Jane Cavendish," 290.

William as their subject and the omnificent presence of the absent, father figure who had the power to make everything better should he simply try. The dedicatory poems at the beginning of *A Pastorall* indicate the sisters' desperate need to impress their father. *A Pastorall* sees the sisters ensure that their individual contributions to the text can be easily attributed to them by writing their initials next to different sections. Jane's section at the beginning of the masque shows her requirement to please her father through her literary output, proclaiming, "so what becomes me better then/ But to be your Daughter in your Pen". The phrase 'to be your Daughter in your Pen' exhibits the importance of writing to the sisters, especially Jane, in hopes of gaining their father's approval. Clearly, the sisters felt that the best way to live up to their father's own interests and morals, to truly appear as children of this noble, literary gentleman, was to mimic his own interest in literary production. She goes on to express how "if you're pleas'd I care not what/ Becomes of me or what's my lot".<sup>484</sup> What comes through quite vividly is not only the utter devotion that Jane had for her father but also the sense that they seem quite uninterested in their own safety and well being, in the hopes of doing something that would make their father proud.

Throughout *A Pastorall* and *The Concealed Fancies* there is the overwhelming feeling of heartache at the loss of a loved one, along with the great respect that they held for their father. In *A Pastorall* while not only are the three Shepherdesses referred to as being 'sad', they talk of the sadness they feel at being separated from their father and brothers: "Our bow will admit no such Toy /For Absent friends gives us no joy,"<sup>485</sup> while also showing how their seasons are affected by the absence of their male family members:

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<sup>484</sup> S.P. Cerasano et al., ed., *Readings in Renaissance Women's Drama: Critical, History, and Performance 1594-1998*, 255.

<sup>485</sup> Lady Jane Cavendish and Lady Elizabeth Brackley, *A Pastotall*, MS Rawlinson Poet 16, Bodleian Libraries, Oxford, 82.

**Inn:** Our Summer is, if that could be

**Ver:** Father, brother, for to see.<sup>486</sup>

Both the masque and play were dedicated to William, with both sisters having a separate dedication to him, either at the beginning or the end, expressing their hope that he enjoys their literary endeavours.

In the same fashion as in *A Pastorall* with the Shepherd and Shepherdesses, we see the father-figure character take to the main stage in the speech of other characters, despite the fact that he is not present within the action of the play until the very end. Burroughs points out how Lord Calsindow, the father-figure of *The Concealed Fancies* “dominates the thoughts and actions of the female protagonists” throughout the play even though he doesn’t appear until Act 5.<sup>487</sup> While it could be suggested that, as it was a collection of work made for their father, they would, of course, ensure that they expressed how his absence was saddening for them, the depth of Lord Calsindow’s essence and the continual theme throughout both *The Concealed Fancies* and *A Pastorall* of sadness and longing shows how the feelings are deeply ingrained within the sisters’ mentality, rather than it simply being used for dramatic effect.

This emphasis on sadness is further demonstrated in Act 3 Scene 2, when the stage directions instruct Luceny and Tattiney to enter “melancholically”. The twenty line scene encapsulates the sisters’ grief at the absence of their friends, their father Lord Calsindow and their brothers. Tattiney exclaims that she has tried to be patient in waiting for the return of her loved ones but “sadness is the best, which I’ll be and am” (III.ii. 12) while Luceny craves for

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<sup>486</sup> Lady Jane Cavendish and Lady Elizabeth Brackley *A Pastorall*, MS Rawlinson Poet 16, Bodleian Libraries, Oxford 78.

<sup>487</sup> Catherine Burroughs, ““Hymen’s Monkey Love”: The Concealed Fancies and Female Sexual Initiation,” 24.

life to return to its previous normality and wishes to "put unquiet life quite out" (III.ii. 8).<sup>488</sup>

In Act 3 Scene 4, the three cousins, Cicilley, Sh and Is also relay their own melancholy at not only being held in captivity within their home but also at the absence of dear friends.

Sh: How should I do otherwise, for I practiced  
Cleopatra when she was in her captivity, and  
could they have thought me worthy to have  
adorned their triumphs. I would have  
performed his gallant tragedy and so have made  
myself glorious for time to come. Come, prithee  
let's talk no more of our captivity. I wish I could  
not think, that I might not remember, I had  
been once happy

Cicilley: I am not in your opinion, for then I should  
remember nothing but misery, therefore let's  
recreate ourselves with other discourse

Sh: And make ourselves happy by promising hopes of  
our absent friends. (III.iv. 13-26)<sup>489</sup>

The overwhelming feeling of grief is even felt by the people that surround Luceny and Tattiney. In Act 4 Scene 1 the two sisters, dressed as nuns, speak with poor men and women about their own grief. The two poor men are both grief-stricken due to unrequited love, the second poor woman has "lost my wit by plunder" (IV.i.19), however the first poor woman, in the same vein as the grief experienced by Luceny, Tattiney, Cicilley, Sh, and Is, finds herself longing for "my friends, who I held more dear than my life, / are in a far country" (IV.i.12-13).<sup>490</sup> This continual display of grief and loss throughout the play, sourcing from so many different characters in such differing circumstances, indicates that inner feeling of grief that must have been inherent in the sisters for it to have found itself so potently and predominately displayed throughout the different facets of the play. The sisters' despair at the absence of their father exposes how integral he was to their life and happiness.

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<sup>488</sup> Lady Jane Cavendish and Lady Elizabeth Brackley, "The Concealed Fancies," 141.

<sup>489</sup> Lady Jane Cavendish and Lady Elizabeth Brackley, "The Concealed Fancies," 143.

<sup>490</sup> Lady Jane Cavendish and Lady Elizabeth Brackley, "The Concealed Fancies," 145.

Jane's concept, "to be your Daughter in your Pen" opens up an interesting dialogue between herself and her father.<sup>491</sup> In one respect it portrays the idea that 'the Pen' has become something of a substitute father for her. While her actual father is away, Jane clings to the thing that not only meant a great deal to her father but was also an integral part of the relationship that father and daughter shared. This substitution is the reason why Newcastle emanates from every page and every line. The writing of the manuscript is another composition exercise but one that she and Elizabeth have devised for themselves. With their father out of reach, they are forced to create another version of him, one that they can keep with them, experience over and over again, listen to and take with them wherever they may find themselves, a possibility they couldn't have with the real thing. While the sisters may question a number of things in their plays, such as the purpose of the war, the validity of the parameters of the female/male marital relationship, and the general concept of gender roles, the relationship that exists between the sisters and their father is never altered, never questioned. They reproduce it in such a way that makes allows them to feel as if their father is not banished and living on the Continent and they aren't in a continual state of besiegement or arrest but are returned to a place and time of safety with their father on hand tutoring them in the art and importance of literature.

#### *The Concealed Fancies and A Pastorall – A Snapshot of Civil War Life.*

The importance of *The Concealed Fancies* also stems from what it tells us not only about the Civil War but the Civil War from the perspective of a woman. Given its composition date, as well as its autobiographical nature, themes surrounding the Civil War are certainly an inherent part of the manuscript's contents. Kamille Stone Stanton argues that *The Concealed Fancies*, at its heart, is championing the royalist cause and that the sisters' depiction of "Luceny and

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<sup>491</sup> Lady Jane Cavendish, Dedicatory poem from Lady Jane Cavendish to William Cavendish, Earl of Newcastle, MS Rawlinson Poet 16, Bodleian Libraries, Oxford, 84.

Tattiney's championing of their father, as their ruler re-enacts, and thereby domesticates, the Royalist support of King Charles I."<sup>492</sup> This domestication of the Civil War and the sisters' royalist identity is hardly a surprising feature of their writing. Not only had their father been an important General, but also, at the point where they were composing the manuscript, their whole life revolved around the war that surrounded them.

In *A Pastorall* we see them using popular themes of the time, such as associating the Parliamentary forces with witchcraft. The antemasque opens with "witches the nomber beine fiue" discussing the "braue world for vs now for wee meatormorphise euerybody", in which they are able to send "Lords beyond Seas at our pleasure".<sup>493</sup> Diana Purkiss states that the anxieties felt during the Civil War "found an outlet in the manufacture and circulation of stories about witches, so that the figure of the witch was constantly caught up in and reshaped by the swirling, ceaselessly changing discourses of the politics and persons of the Civil War era."<sup>494</sup> This knowledge of using witchcraft as a common theme when discussing the Parliamentary side of the Civil War, not only demonstrates their desire to be kept informed of the popular techniques of the time, it also highlights an awareness of these literary techniques, thus allowing us to theorise that perhaps they were involved in a larger circulation of manuscript exchange.

The fact that there are two copies of the sisters' manuscript work still in existence, even with the absent texts in the Yale version (which doesn't contain *The Concealed Fancies* or a number of the poems), could suggest that their readership extended beyond their father. Certainly, one volume was clearly intended as a present to him, most likely the Yale copy, in

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<sup>492</sup> Kamille Stone Staunton, "The Domestication of Royalist Themes in *The Concealed Fancies* by Jane Cavendish and Elizabeth Brackley," 186.

<sup>493</sup> Lady Jane Cavendish and Lady Elizabeth Brackley, *A Pastotall*, MS Rawlinson Poet 16, Bodleian Libraries, Oxford, 52.

<sup>494</sup> Diane Purkiss, *Literature, Gender and Politics During the English Civil War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 212.

which, at the very start, Jane begins with a dedicatory poem to her father. This then leaves us in doubt as to the reasons behind the composition of the second copy, the additional poetry and the inclusion of *The Concealed Fancies*. It could of course quite simply be that the sisters thought up new material that they wanted to be combined within the same body of work that they had already produced, an embodiment of the work they completed together while in captivity during this horrific period of their life. However, the idea that perhaps the second manuscript could have been produced in order for the sisters themselves to enter into the circulation of manuscript closet drama certainly dispels any belief that they composed simply to 'while away the time.' It also calls into question their place in the Civil War royalist literary environment. This, therefore, forces the question of whether the sisters were simply receivers of circulated closet dramas, or whether they were also active participants as well. Their knowledge of contemporary literary trends certainly throws up some questions as to their place in the literary culture as a whole. Their possible inclusion in the wider literary community again brings more depth to their work and suggests that there is perhaps more to be learnt from this situation than assuming that this is a text simply written by two girls during a trying and testing time. Their inclusions in Oxford and Yale's archives also indicate that they were not found with the wider collection of Cavendish papers, suggesting that the manuscripts left the Cavendish family homes indefinitely at some point, whether that be when the sisters got married and left the family home, or during a distribution of closet drama to like minded individuals during the war.

#### The Lack of The Mother: The Absence of Elizabeth Basset Cavendish from the Sisters' Work

As expressed above, Jane's pen was a way to emulate her father. As Ezell comments, her intentions behind writing the manuscript that would be presented to him "is an effort to live



up to the intellectual and literary standard” set by him throughout her life.<sup>495</sup> William doesn’t hold the greatest of literary reputations. Most of his own literary work is met with little interest or appreciation by modern critics. During his own time, he was ridiculed after the defeat at Marston Moor with rumours circulating, most likely sourced to Prince Rupert, that the downfall of the battle resulted from William being too “busy listening to poetry and music to fight.”<sup>496</sup> Despite this, it cannot be argued that William wasn’t an integral part of the development of literary, artistic and scientific talent. All one has to consider are the testimonies already mentioned above from Jonson, Langbaine, and Shadwell to understand the influence that Newcastle had. Considering that he was also a patron to the natural philosopher Thomas Hobbes and court painter Anthony Van Dyck, a picture begins to emerge of a man who was respected by both lesser-known artists as well as important cultural definers of the Caroline age.

Despite Newcastle's own work not being up to par with those that he was a patron to, his passion for patronage seems to have come from wanting to find a common experience between himself and other people of a like-minded creative spirit. Even if now no one else does, William saw himself as an accomplished writer. Jane and Elizabeth were clearly of the same disposition and used their work to honour the father that had encouraged them to follow their own literary pursuits. It is no surprise that, given Newcastle’s reputation, that the sisters would look to honouring him in an attempt to justify and give substance to their own abilities. Yet, considering the theory of the previous chapter, that suggests that the sisters’ mother Elizabeth Basset Cavendish was as integral to the children’s literary endeavour as William, her absence from their literary work, when William features so predominately, is cause for concern.

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<sup>495</sup> Margaret J. M. Ezell, ““To Be Your Daughter In Your Pen”: The Social Functions of Literature in the Writings of Lady Elizabeth Brackley and Lady Jane Cavendish,” 293.

<sup>496</sup> Jane Milling, “Siege and Cipher: The Closet Drama of the Cavendish Sisters,” 413.

It was not only the Cavendish sisters, however, who forewent mention of their maternal influence over their paternal one. Mary Roper Clarke Basset, the sixteenth century Latinist, was the daughter of William and Margaret Roper. When introducing herself, she referred to herself as “Mary Clarcke...most humble oratrix widow, and daughter to William Roper, Esquire.” What is interesting about this introduction is the fact she refrains to mention her mother Margaret. As an inspiring scholar herself, Mary’s failure to acknowledge her mother not only distances her from the woman who impressed Erasmus and to whom he dedicated *Commentary on the Christian Hymn of Prudentius*, but also fails to display her direct connection with Sir Thomas More. Yet, as Sarah Gwyneth Ross points out: “As biological legitimacy followed the patriline...so too did intellectual credentials.”<sup>497</sup> This then raises the question about the influences placed on the Cavendish children. Though, in their plays, Jane and Elizabeth only pay homage to their father, this could be for the same reason that Mary Roper Clarke Basset only makes reference to her father, despite her far more accomplished mother and maternal grandfather. The sisters could have felt that if any merit was to be placed upon their work, even only within its intimate readership, the best way to show their calibre and literary ability would be to align themselves with their father’s image, displaying the intellectual and literary substance that would have been passed onto them from their father.

There is also the Cavendish lineage inheritance that they would also have wanted to align themselves with. In the same way, we see William aligning himself with Bess, we see the sisters using the same technique, in hopes of demonstrating their importance to the seventeenth-century literary elite. Jane Milling suggests that:

one might read this obsession with family, and with the Cavendish family in particular, partly as a function of class; a concern with dynastic continuity, though temporarily

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<sup>497</sup> Sarah Gwyneth Ross, *The Birth of Feminism: Woman as Intellect in Renaissance Italy and England*, 161.

impoverished in exile. It might also be read as an ideological defence of natural processes of inheritance, as right order re-imposed on the chaotic, dislocating metamorphosis of a civil war.<sup>498</sup>

While the sisters wanted their literary work to be associated with the man who was such an integral part of the early modern literary society, so too did they want to be associated with the line of strong, empowered female women who had come before them through their father's line. By ensuring the reader knew that the sisters were the daughters of William Cavendish, they also ensured that the reader was aware of the fact they were the granddaughters and great-granddaughters of Bess of Hardwick and Katherine Ogle Cavendish.

Jane's poems confirm this desperate need, like William before her, to tie her name to those who came before her. As we see in *The Concealed Fancies*, the sisters clearly seem to have developed a personality that matched the feminist leanings that were prevalent within their female kin, and by connecting themselves, through literary production, with those names and achievements, Jane and Elizabeth were both able to make a claim on the reputations of those who came before them. So it is not necessarily that the sisters did not feel the need to pay homage to their mother and what she did for them to ensure that they were equipped to find their place within this female-conscious family, but that it was with their father and his lineage, that they were able to make the greatest claim for their position within it.

### Jane's Poems.

The beginning of the sequence of poems written by Jane starts with two poems to William, one to her brother Charles, another to her brother Henry, and then one more to William. This dominance of the men in her family at the beginning of the manuscript is not out of the

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<sup>498</sup> Jane Milling, "Siege and Cipher: The Closet Drama of the Cavendish Sisters," 415-416.

ordinary. Jane and Elizabeth are writing the contents of the manuscripts in hopes of it being sent as a present to their distant father on the Continent, there with their two brothers, so of course Jane's first dedicatory poems would be directed to the manuscript's intended recipients. Thereafter there are various poems dedicated to their uncle, Sir Charles Cavendish, numerous poems dedicated to 'A Noble Lady', poems dedicated to the King, the Queen and the Prince of Wales, as well as poems about Jane's sisters, Elizabeth and Frances.

Midway through the sequence, however, Jane turns her attention to her extended family. What truly stands out with these poems is the emphasis she places on her female kin. Out of the eleven poems dedicated to various members of her maternal and paternal families, seven of them are dedicated to women. It could, therefore, be suggested that the strong, independent ideas showcased in Cavendish sisters' plays have less to do with the inspiration given to them by William, with his acknowledgement of the potential strength of women, particularly those in his family, and more to do with simply being aware and grateful of the strong female ancestral role models they had to look up to, independently of William and his own intercessions in his daughters' lives.

As examined in the previous chapters, the earlier generations of the Cavendish family were filled with strong-minded, powerful, intelligent women who, in their own way, managed to forge for themselves a world away from the constraints of the patriarchal sixteenth and seventeenth century England. This would have been a lot to live up to. William placed a lot of emphasis on his place within this world, indicated by the epitaph written on the tomb of Bess of Hardwick on which more information is written about the Duke's achievements than of Bess, demonstrating his worthiness to be associated with this woman. While Mary Roper Clarke Basset found the patrilineal line was the best way to establish herself within the learned community, William Cavendish understood that, despite their gender, it was the

women of his family, and their achievements, that best encompassed the persona and image that he was trying to project onto the world. When considering the poems that Jane wrote about her patrilineal female ancestors, it is clear that she too saw the importance of aligning herself with them and this was through William Cavendish, the son, nephew and grandson of the myriad of strong Cavendish women who came before him. The sisters' gateway to align themselves with these women of outstanding reputations, like William, was through acknowledging the importance of their patrilineal line.

The first relative Jane looks at is her grandmother, Katherine Ogle. While the poem itself is only six lines long, two words immediately spring out: "wisdome" and "ambition". She describes her grandmother as having "wisdome such as every sex might teach / Yet hir ambition was hir votes for each."<sup>499</sup> These are traits that would have been held dear. Jane's decision to write, and in the way that she and her sister did, shows the ambitious side of the Cavendish daughters, not simply because they composed their own plays during a time when it was still seen as inappropriate for a woman to engaged in such activities but because of the subject matters they discussed within those plays. Despite the traditional endings of their plays, the Cavendish sisters are constantly questioning the very concepts of patriarchal male-female relationships and where they thought it appropriate for women to stand in those relationships. Katherine herself questioned that relationship, after the death of her father, when she petitioned for the barony of Ogle. This ambitious nature from Katherine directly affected Jane, for in her will Katherine bequeathed to her "most dearlye beloved graundchilde Jane Cavendyshe: thous towe Lordeskepes which my lorde my father lefte me: Medalltone and Lorbottle: during her life."<sup>500</sup> Jane was a direct recipient of Ogle lands and thus would

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<sup>499</sup> Lady Jane Cavendish, "On The Lady Ogle, my dear Grandmother", MS Rawlinson Poet 16, Bodleian Libraries, Oxford, 30.

<sup>500</sup> The Final Will and Testament of Lady Catherin Cavendish, Baroness Ogle. Nottinghamshire Archives Office, MSS Portland of Welbeck (6<sup>th</sup> Deposit), DD/P6/1/19/17 (22<sup>nd</sup> July 1624).

surely have appreciated the struggles that her Ogle grandmother would have gone through in the questioning of the validity of early modern patriarchal norms. Katherine died in 1629 and thus left this legacy when Jane was only 8 years old. Such an occurrence would have had a profound influence on a girl who was still feeling her way around the world that she lived in and discovering what it had in store for her. For such a direct influence to have been thrust upon her at such an early age, such behaviour would have been an inspiration when deciding the type of world that she could develop for herself.

Interestingly Jane also discusses Mary Talbot, Countess of Shrewsbury, her great aunt. Considering the image that appears to be forming of the type of women that Jane aspired to be, it would have been understandable that Mary would be left off of the list. The end of Mary's life could not be described as anything less than controversial. The reason why it is so interesting that Jane would include Mary in this list of dedicatory poems is that she did not include Arbella. For the Cavendish family matriarch, Bess, Arbella was her crowning jewel in the powerful dynastic family that she was trying to create. Yet after her fall from grace, it would not be unfair to assume that her descendants would want to distance themselves from her. For her part in helping the disgraced Arbella, it would, therefore, be understandable that Mary would be removed from this list too, yet we find her in Jane's collection of the important women of her family. The reason for this could be due to her husband, Gilbert Talbot, 7<sup>th</sup> Earl of Shrewsbury, her grandfather, Charles Cavendish's, step-brother and best friend. Due to this closeness between Charles and Gilbert, Charles was also very close to his sister, perhaps closer than they were with their other siblings, and evidently, in the same way that Jane prospered because of a female relatives, according to her Jane's poem, so too did Charles, and by extension, William and his children. Jane writes "Wee eate our bread, the better every day / For the bounty you did your brother give." Jane presents us with a number of adjectives that wouldn't be expected in the description of a woman:

"courage" and "wit", while also commenting how she "did each soule controll." For these reasons she describes her as the "example for great gallant soules".<sup>501</sup> Once more Jane presents us a woman who is described out of the parameters of the ideals of an early modern woman, who also, through her own ability, has managed to bring something to Jane and her family which has enabled them to achieve a better life and standing. Jane is portraying to her reader that the women in her family are different, they live outside the constraints of patriarchal rule and they thrive there. None more so than her great-grandmother, Bess.

Bess was the matriarch of the Cavendish family and without her none of her is likely that none of her descendants would have led the lives they did. If Jane expressed thanks in her poems to Katherine and to Mary for what they did for her and her family, then the same courtesy, but to a greater extent, would be expected for Bess. Certainly, to begin with, Jane does fulfil this courtesy, if in a somewhat backhanded way. While Katherine and Mary are hailed for their personality traits of wit, courage, and ambition, Jane makes no reference to any such redeeming features in Bess, apart from perhaps wisdom, yet she taints this feature in the following line. The only feature that Jane seems to think is appropriate when describing her great-grandmother is her wealth; in fact, it is how the poem begins: "Madam/ You were the very Magazine of rich". Where Katherine and Mary made strides in society by simply using their own talents, Jane tells a story of Bess achieving those same strides but through money, which, in fact, she received from men.

Where it appears that Jane could be expressing some admiration for an aspect of her great-grandmother's character, she soon reverts back to explaining this away to her wealth. For example, she writes "With spirit such & wisdom wich did reach / All that opprest you, for

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<sup>501</sup> Lady Jane Cavendish, "On my honorable Aunt Mary Countess of Shrewsbury", MS Rawlinson Poet 16, Bodleian Libraries, Oxford, 33.

your wealth did reach / Our Englands Law, so Lawyers durst not preach."<sup>502</sup> At first, it appears that Jane is hailing her grandmother for fighting against those who oppressed her, but then she informs us that rather than fighting back with her own wit or courage, like other members of the family, she did it through money. To Jane, apart from her money, Bess seems to bring nothing to the table in terms of ways of subverting the patriarchal rule. Indeed, these backhanded compliments only last for the first 8 lines until we reach the part of the poems that indicates where this hostility towards the Cavendish matriarch comes from.

As witnessed in the plays written by Jane and Elizabeth Cavendish, William's children developed something of a hero worship relationship between themselves and their father, and to them, he appears to have been able to do no wrong. When looking at the poems about Katherine and Mary, it becomes clear that William appears to have had some help from female relatives in helping him rise to his position and status and for that Jane is eternally thankful, so much so that she immortalises the women in a flattering way in verse. Yet, in her poem about Bess, Jane paints a picture of a female ancestor who appears to have done everything in her power to prevent their father from getting to where he was. For the majority of the poem, we witness Jane chastise her great-grandmother and her decision to name William Cavendish, Earl of Devonshire, as her heir. Her first son, Henry, by default of being first born, inherited much of her fortune, despite not being deserving of the fact as Jane declares "cous Henry wench's lou'd more than his wife." This Jane doesn't quarrel with. She does, however, appear somewhat dismayed by Bess' decision to name William as her heir simply because, in Jane's own words, "your second son children had" despite the fact that "Charles his action have been soe / Before your William's sonn doth doe before." In her poem to Bess, Jane expresses her unhappiness at Bess' decision not to name Charles her heir

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<sup>502</sup> Lady Jane Cavendish, "On my Grandmother Elizabeth, Countess of Shrewsbury.", MS Rawlinson Poet 16, Bodleian Libraries, Oxford, 35.



because, in her opinion, the great dynastic family that Bess was attempting to create, would have blossomed that much more vividly through Charles' line than it would have through William's - it is Charles' descendants who have achieved greater things:

Thus your great howse is now become the lower  
And I doe hope the world shall ever see  
The howse of Charles, before your Williams bee  
For Charles his William hath it thus soe chang'd  
As William Conquerer hee may well be named

Jane portrays William as the Cavendishes' saving grace after Bess nearly ruined them all by choosing the wrong heir. The poem is a bold move and in it we see Jane taking on the legacy of the family's most famous and most powerful woman, the instigator of the family's familial consciousness. There is no question that Bess is the milestone of what it meant to be an empowered woman of the sixteenth century. It would have been only fitting, out of all of her female ancestors, that it was Bess that Jane would have aspired to, if for no other reason than the fact that she appeared to achieve the marriage ideals put forward in *The Concealed Fancies*: that of a marriage on the woman's terms, or at the very least equals. Yet we see the opposite happening. Despite what Bess achieved and the inspiration she could give to her female descendants through her display of what can be achieved by a woman, Bess, and her actions, were in no way directly beneficial to Jane and her family and so Jane dismisses her. If Jane described Bess in the same way as Katherine or Mary, witty, courageous and ambitious, then she would have to explain why the female head of the family did not put her trust in her family in the same way as other female ancestors did. The idea of family was of great importance to the Newcastle Cavendishes. William strove to find his place within it to verify his new position at court, and Jane highlights her father's importance by praising those who had faith in him and his family and disregarding the rest.

Jane did not only write about women of importance and power within her family but also about her relatives who perhaps were not quite as important in portraying her ideals of

what a woman could achieve. The poem she wrote about her half-sister, Lady Harpur, even from the title, informs us that Jane is doing something different with this poem. The three poems just examined are entitled, 'On the Lady Ogle my deare Grandmother', 'On my honorable Aunt Mary Countess of Shrewsbury' and 'On my Honorable Grandmother Elizabeth, Countess of Shrewsbury.' There is a formalness to the titles of these poems that emphasize they are written for reasons of importance, rather than mild trifles of time spent composing. With the poem to Lady Harpur, Jane refers to her as 'my sweet Sister Lady Harpur' and immediately it is clear that this poem is more personal in nature. This is demonstrated, again, through the adjectives used to describe Lady Harpur. Other than sweet she is known for her "virtue", "goodness" and "could not bee of pride."<sup>503</sup> In the poems to Katherine and Mary, Jane writes in such a way so as to emphasise her idolisation of these women. She is in awe of them, their achievements and what they have done for her family. This is why she introduces them in such a formal manner as, despite being family, these are women she aspires to be like. Lady Harpur is written in a much more personal form and Jane, in fact, refers to her as a "friend" rather than someone she looks up to. Lady Harpur's adjectives are common to the seventeenth-century ideals of what a woman should be, virtuous, good and pure, all things that are commendable, but not necessarily what Jane values. The poem written for Lady Harpur is a poem of familial love rather than familial aspiration.

Jane writes another poem of love but infused with it is also a poem of aspiration. In 'My dear mother the Countess of Newcastle' Jane describes the woman who, alongside William, developed and inspired her to be the woman she was. When considering her within the company of the other women in her collection, Jane praises her mother above the rest. It

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<sup>503</sup>Lady Jane Cavendish, "On my sweet Sister the Lady Harpur.", MS Rawlinson Poet 16, Bodleian Libraries, Oxford, 32.

is unlikely that Jane would praise her mother simply because she was her mother. Her scathing poem to Bess is a testament to that fact. To gain praise from Jane the dedicatee had to have brought something of significance to her family name and somehow carrying William's children doesn't seem like the type of thing that Jane would consider noteworthy. Surrounded by women of far greater achievement, Jane reserves the best of praise for her mother, describing her as the "quinticence of best" and a woman "that would you prayse you could not prayse too much."<sup>504</sup> Unlike in her other poems, Jane fails to give us any specific personality traits and so, from this poem alone, it is difficult to decipher whether she fell into the category of women outside the parameters of patriarchal England, like Katherine and Mary, or within them, like her daughter Lady Harpur. However, Jane's reference to her in the last line, as "sweet Saint" could signify the idea that, even during her life, the Cavendish children's mother was of a higher sort and not tied down to human personality traits, displaying all of the best virtues that could be found in a woman of the Cavendish family.

If Elizabeth had been as vital to the educational progress of the Cavendish children as I have argued in my previous chapter, to Jane she would have indeed seemed heavenly and divine as, without her, she might not have the ability to express herself in the way she clearly so desired. The writing of the manuscript would have taken place not long after the death of her mother so, through her writing, not only does she feel closer to her father but she might also have felt closer to her mother, the woman, without whom, she might not even have the ability to satisfy these emotions. In this short, six line poem, Jane demonstrates that, while her mother might not have built her own property empire, fought for an inheritance that should have always been hers, or helped a male relative during a time in need, she possesses more importance to Jane and her ideals of womanhood than any of her more powerful and established female ancestors.

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<sup>504</sup> Lady Jane Cavendish, "My deare mother the Countess of Newcastle.", MS Rawlinson Poet 16, Bodleian Libraries, Oxford, 31.

Margaret Ezell reads the figures in these poems as “a type rather than an individual; the subjects are held up as absolutes, the perfection of their virtues they embody.”<sup>505</sup> This could be considered as the technique adopted by an inexperienced and untalented writer who is unable to portray their subjects in a light that is true to them and uses the same forms of language over and over again no matter the differences between the subjects. This, however, does not appear to be the case when looking at the poem dedicated to Bess. This poem is far from Ezell’s description of ‘the perfection of their virtues they embody’, but a more passive-aggressive, scathing report explaining why and how much Bess was wrong to decide to relinquish her legacy to the Devonshire Cavendishes over her Newcastle Cavendishes. On the surface, the poem appears complimentary, yet under the surface and between the lines; it is evident to see that the poem is Jane’s form of attack against her great-grandmother. This ability to allow the poem to be read in more than one way, certainly suggests that Jane must have had more skill and poetic ability than Ezell gives her credit for.

Of course, when writing about the women she did approve of, Jane does adopt the style that Ezell suggests and describes them as the embodiment of absolutes of perfection, but surely this could simply be a literary choice rather than the evidence of a less than an accomplished writer. To Jane, these women did, in fact, embody everything that she believed would make the perfect woman: someone who is able to take herself out of the female sphere and survive and thrive in the patriarchal realms of men. They would most likely have had an almost goddess-like status within their home, as we have seen William was certainly not shy in his admiration of the women who came before him. Jane’s identification of them as absolutes could very well have been the way in which she perceived these women to be.

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<sup>505</sup> Margaret J. M. Ezell, ““To Be Your Daughter In Your Pen”: The Social Functions of Literature in the Writings of Lady Elizabeth Brackley and Lady Jane Cavendish,” 285.

Jane's description of women in her poems and her relationship with them thus leads us to question the whole idea of the female collective, as well as the idea of female communication. The poems in the manuscript directed to her dead female ancestors mark a communication to the past, an appreciation for the things that they did that have allowed and shaped Jane to become the young woman who writes these poems. They are interesting in the sense that they allow us to comprehend the importance felt by Jane to acknowledge the paths that have been set out for her, and all women, thanks to these female predecessors. The glorification she places upon them is almost similar to the hero-worship status the sisters appear to place on their father, yet different, for it is less of an acknowledgement of a hero like status but a realisation of the influence that their lives continued to have on the sisters'. Yet what of correspondence and acknowledgement to women still living? A poem written by Jane to her elder half-sister Lady Harpur has already been analysed above, in which we discover a cordial poem of love and affection for her sibling. The poem written by Jane about her manuscript's co-writer, her sister Elizabeth, however, demonstrates a different purpose to the poem than that seen in Lady Harpur's.

### The Female Space

When considering the descriptions of Elizabeth by the men in her life, both before and after the production of the manuscript, the image of a shy, introverted girl/woman is presented, one who would, in fact, fit perfectly within the assumed norms of early modern female behaviour. We already have William's composition exercises for his children, in which he tries to persuade his second daughter to come out of her shell and use writing as a way of expressing herself. In her later life, and away from Jane, Elizabeth continues to write but changes genre from theatrical and poetical to biblical and religious writings. Her genre has changed from one that is meant to be experienced by the masses (a play), to one that is used as a form of

self-reflection (biblical writing). Upon her death, her husband John Egerton, 2<sup>nd</sup> Earl of Bridgewater, discovers his late wife's pastime, claiming her work “never (‘till since her death) seen by any eye but her own, and her then dear, but now sorrowful husband”.<sup>506</sup>

These two descriptions and actions by Elizabeth are very different from the ones described in Jane's poem of her sister, which is titled ‘The Peart one, or otherwise my Sister Brackley’ – peart itself meaning someone who is lively, cheerful and sharp of comprehension, the exact opposite of the images that we receive from the men in her life. In fact, the contents of the poem describe Elizabeth as the very definition of peart: "soe pritty, younge, and witty / As you are fitt for nothing but a Citty / For you can tell, how to bee free & wise."<sup>507</sup> In the poem ‘On my Sweete Sister Brackley’, Jane also goes on to say “‘tis you will for soe I playnely see/ May make a Chaos, or all things to bee.” The idea of a woman ‘mak[ing] a Chaos’ hardly goes with the image of a self-reflecting pious, shy woman. Brenda Josephine Liddy presents the theory that the conflict of the Civil War “was instrumental in a sisterhood being forged in which Jane and Elizabeth turned the negative experiences of war into a positive literary career.”<sup>508</sup>

Of course these two very different personalities presented for Elizabeth could all be explained away as Jane seeing what she wants to see in her sister, and wants her to be ‘witty’ and ‘wise’ and ‘fitt for nothing but a Citty’, trying, like her father before her, to bring her little sister out of her shell. It could also be a product of what described as a "crucial form of self-defence for Cavendish and Brackley, aligning them firmly with royalist culture and establishing the fictional and familial conversational alliances they develop as weapons of

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<sup>506</sup> George Ballard, *Memoirs of Several Ladies of Great Britain, who have been celebrated for their writing skill in learned languages, arts, and sciences* (Oxford: 1752), 200.

<sup>507</sup> Lady Jane Cavendish, “The Peart one, or otherwise my sister Brackley.”, MS Rawlinson Poet 16, Bodleian Libraries, Oxford, 11.

<sup>508</sup> Nancy Cotton, *Women’s War Drama in England in the Seventeenth Century*, 68.

war."<sup>509</sup> Elizabeth quite simply did not have the luxury of being her shy, sheltered self during this period and thus used the literary abilities she had received from her father, while mimicking the behaviours of her stronger sister, in hopes of finding a way to make it through this war.

Yet, interestingly, the only parts of the manuscript that we know Elizabeth contributed to were not the solitary poetical musings surrounding her family and current events, but plays that, given their genre, were intended for public displays. This interest in writing plays could tell us a lot about the way that Elizabeth interacted differently when in a female space and when in a male space. Again we look to the example of Samuel Pepys, stated in the introduction of this thesis, in which we are left unaware of women's actions and conversations among each other, because the only accounts of women's conversations that have generally survived are accounts made by men, observed while the women were in the company of those men. With the works of Jane and Elizabeth Cavendish we finally have an example of what true, female conversation was like, without male interference. The manuscript works that have been produced by the sisters demonstrate the thoughts and feelings of two girls during a time when they had no male influence on their immediate lives. What is fascinating is that those interactions show us that women during this period did question the lot they had been dealt in terms of patriarchal rule and thus demonstrated an awareness of their shared female condition. The manuscript is a clear indication that women during this period had a shared female collective consciousness as well as a female agenda to improve their situation. They also show us that women, when not under the male gaze, behaved differently. If the Cavendish sisters' manuscripts do nothing else for modern scholarship, they at the very least demonstrate that the women described to us by the men of the period are unlikely to be anything like the women who actually lived.

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<sup>509</sup> Katherine R. Larson, *Early Modern Women in Conversation*, 116.

Elizabeth is a perfect example of this. It could very well be that Elizabeth was a quiet, shy, reserved and self-reflecting woman, while in the presence of men, but with her sister, during a period where there was little to no male involvement in her life, perhaps a different Elizabeth emerged, the Elizabeth who was, peart, chaotic and witty. Miller and Yavneh suggest that "an early modern woman might situate herself as a writer or artist, negotiating a position between public and private" and this could be the key to discovering the differences in personality in the life of Elizabeth Cavendish Brackley.<sup>510</sup> Not only was there the importance of the "textual conversation in the form of letters, poems, and fictional dialogue play[ing] a crucial role in maintaining relationships across geographical distances, providing material assistance and defending political and familial interest" to contend with, but being besieged within their home, most of the time the sisters spent together was in fact in private. It was this private Elizabeth, who did not have to worry about the influence or judgement of men, and who was able to relax into a personality that was not often seen in the public eye, or more correctly, in the male eye, that comes across in these poems written by Jane and these plays written by the two of them.<sup>511</sup>

Another example of the female space is a letter sent from Franc Andrilla Harley to Jane Cavendish. Like the verse letters sent from William to his wife Elizabeth while he was at court, examined in the previous chapter, we again see a correspondence written in rhyming couplets. While this could suggest that this form could be a Cavendish-wide preferred way of communicating, the fact that this is a letter written to a member of the Cavendish family, rather than from it, says something completely different. The use of verse letters from Jane or Elizabeth would not be out of the ordinary; they have already shown their desire to mimic

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<sup>510</sup> Naomi J. Miller and Naomi Yavneh, ed., *Sibling Relations and Gender in the Early Modern World: Sisters, Brothers and Others* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006), 3.

<sup>511</sup> Katherine R. Larson, *Early Modern Women in Conversation*, 116.



their father in his literary endeavours. What is interesting, however, is Francisca's adoption of the same writing form. The correspondence of the daughter of Doctor Richard Andrews, whose own compositions take up a substantial part of The Newcastle Manuscript in the British Library (otherwise referred to as MS Harley 4955), suggests that there is an interesting literary relationship happening here that is used by both fathers and daughters.

This is the second time that a female connection was created by Andrews with the women of his family and the women of the Cavendishes. Held in a different manuscript, Andrews writes to William's wife, Elizabeth: "my wife hath a great desire to come, and waite upon your Lady at this time of your travailes and readiness to doe your Lady all such poor services as she shall and be more Solitaire, than other-whiles so wishing that her service and attendance may be agreeable to your Lady and that you may finde all these memes happie and successful."<sup>512</sup> Again we see attempts by men, using the women in their families as pawns - in this case attaching himself more predominately to the Cavendish family through his wife. It would appear the same is being attempted with the letter from Francisca, who does not appear to have met Jane as of yet and wishes to become a pen-pal: "Well to return to you againe I doe salute you Lady Jane/ Hopeing one day God will mee bless/ To come and see your Noblenes/ I'le waite on you then at a becke/ Either at Bolsover or Welbecke/ Meantime I doe continue still a / Your humble servant."<sup>513</sup> She sends the letter with her father, who she "hopes is safely come/ Where I presume hee is welcome."<sup>514</sup>

Doctor Andrews' use of his wife and daughter in this way indicates a realisation of the importance of the female collective and female network and acknowledges that perhaps a way for him to become closer to William was by first using his wife and daughter to infiltrate the Cavendish female space. Again, like Mildred Cooke Cecil and William Cecil, we see an

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<sup>512</sup> Letter from Richard Andrews to Elizabeth Cavendish, London, British Library, Additional MS 70499, 160v.

<sup>513</sup> Letter from Franc Andrilla Harley to Jane Cavendish, London, British Library, Harley MS 4955, 87.

<sup>514</sup> Letter from Franc Andrilla Harley to Jane Cavendish, London, British Library, Harley MS 4955, 86r.

example of a man using links with women to access their male kin. This infiltration appears to work, at least in the case of Jane. Judging by her opening lines "I must you thanke/ As longe as ere my name is Francke, / Both for your love; and your token/ With favours more than can bee spoken" this appears to be a continuing correspondence, not only of letters but also of gifts, with Doctor Andrews also delivering a token of a bunch of grapes along with the letter.<sup>515</sup> Barbara Harris suggests that "for women who spent most of their lives serving patriarchal families and institutions, their female networks may well have provided them with the emotional and material cushion that enabled them to accept, even flourish in, their subordinated position."<sup>516</sup> While Jane appears to have led a less subordinated life than many women of her time, it still stands to reason that in the patriarchal world of early modern England, this female connection, to someone outside of her immediate family, who appears of the same literary inclination as herself, and with whom she is able to hold an extended letter correspondence, gave her not only a support in this world that fought against her rights, but a chance to create a network of women around her. This is why her collection of poems is inundated with poems directed towards women. Clearly, she understood the importance of the female collective and how vital that support was. She acknowledges the achievements of these women to the furtherance and enhancement of her own, her sisters', and all women's progression during this time. By understanding what worked for women in the past, and acknowledging their collective support for one another, Jane was able to prepare herself for her own battle against subordination, as women who came after her would also do.

That subordination is something that, despite Jane's attempts to fight against it for herself and her female kin, Betty Travitsky argues was the fate for Jane's sister, Elizabeth. Travitsky makes the argument that, on the surface, the Cavendish family was one that

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<sup>515</sup> Letter from Franc Andrilla Harley to Jane Cavendish, London, British Library, Harley MS 4955, 86r.

<sup>516</sup> Barbara J. Harris, "Sisterhood, Friendship and the Power of Aristocratic Women 1450-1550," 22.

“facilitated a woman’s ability to write in public...yet there is a variation in the subject position of Elizabeth Cavendish Egerton at different times in her life – i.e. at times when different men exercised authority over her.”<sup>517</sup> Of course, this is an interesting argument to make, given that it would appear as if Elizabeth is being subordinated into an act that in itself is contrary to whole idea of female subordination. Writing was a way for women's voices to be heard, so it is an intriguing argument to make that by allowing her voice to be heard, even in a pious sense, the men in Elizabeth’s life were still subordinating her. Travitsky’s argument for this stems from Elizabeth’s extreme change in writing genre from that during her youth (theatrical and literary writing) to that during her life as an adult writer (pious and religious writing).

Yet this transition doesn’t entirely make sense. While the family that Elizabeth grew up in were entirely submerged in the popular literary happenings of the day, the family that Elizabeth married into were just as involved, with her husband John Egerton, as well as her brother- and sister-in-law, not only being actor’s in John Milton’s *Comus*, but also being its dedicatees. It, therefore, seems surprising and odd that Elizabeth would find herself in a subordinated position in a family where both members of sex were as involved in literary and performance arts (John's sister was a student of Henry Lawes) as they were. Edith Snook suggests that:

the early modern woman's struggle for literary authority is never far from the surface in her printed works, and in this battle, representing oneself as a reader is an effective weapon. Because reading was more acceptable for women than writing, reading, especially Bible readings could provide suitable feminine subject matter. The woman who fashions her writing voice in the dress of a reader has the ability to draw herself divine authority.<sup>518</sup>

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<sup>517</sup> Betty Travitsky, *Subordination and Authorship in Early Modern England*, 20.

<sup>518</sup> Edith Snook, *Women, Reading, and the Cultural Politics of Early Modern England* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005), 4.

With this in mind Travitsky's argument certainly has weight to it and very well could explain the sudden change in writing subject. George Ballard's description of Elizabeth in his *Memoirs of British Ladies* written just under 100 years after Elizabeth's death, helps Travitsky's theory of subordination. He states that despite having "searched very carefully, though ineffectually, for some concurrent testimonies of her merit" all that he was able to find was the testimony written by John stating that she wrote "divine meditations upon every particular chapter in the bible...written by her own hand, and never ('till since her death') seen by any eye but her own, and her then dear, but now sorrowful husband".<sup>519</sup> This suggests that, like Elizabeth while she was alive, John continued to hide Elizabeth's work after her death, which is why Ballard could only base her entry on John's words. Even in death, the only image that Ballard was able to create of Elizabeth is one that has been presented by a man.

This change in writing type, and indeed personality, could be explained by the loss of her immediate female support that was given to her by her sister. One line in the epitaph on her tomb supports this theory. It states "yet so meek and humble a Disposition that never any Woman of her Quality was greater in the Worlds opinion, and less in her own."<sup>520</sup> Without the collective female support from her sister, the only person to have described her as peart rather than meek and shy, Elizabeth, who clearly still loved to write and wanted to find some form of outlet for it, decided to move her attention to a more female-friendly form of writing. Judging from the inscription on her tomb, in which it is claimed she held little opinion of herself, this low self-esteem could also have transferred to her writing and without the help of her sister, she was unable to continue writing in a sphere that women, traditionally, were not set to be a part of. Perhaps, rather than subordination coming directly from the men who were closest to her, Elizabeth suffered from society's patriarchal subordination, despite the

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<sup>519</sup> George Ballard, *Memoirs of British Ladies*, 199-200.

<sup>520</sup> George Ballard, *Memoirs of British Ladies*, 199.

men closest to her. It was thanks to a lack of female support in her subordinated position that after becoming the peart contributor to plays, that at their core questioned society's place for women, she reverts back to the meek and shy girl William once tried to pull out of her shell through the very act of writing.

When together, however, it was this awareness of the female collective consciousness that helped them to tackle the female restrictions of writing and to produce a piece of theatrical literature. Jane and Elizabeth clearly had the inspiration to alter the "family trade" from both sides. William encouraged them to write and express themselves through the form of writing, while the sisters' female ancestors most definitely had some influence on them. At this point of the generational evolution, it would not do to simply mimic the women of the past; that had been done and their feats would not stand out in the history books of future generations if they merely continued on the same trajectory as their foremothers. As seen in her poems, the legacy left by a woman for the Cavendish name clearly meant a lot to Jane. For the sisters to stand out in this sea of powerful women they would need to take inspiration they acquired from their female ancestors and apply it to the skills they had been taught by their own mother and father. In doing so, not only did they paid homage to the female legacy that gave them the courage to undertake such a feat as to remove themselves from the female sphere, but also paid tribute to their father, the man they adored so deeply and missed so much.

The Civil War is most likely the biggest factors in the sisters' decision to steer the female evolutionary wheel in a different direction than what had come before. Jane held a comradeship with her dead female ancestors, therefore surely in this period of uncertainty and fear she would also strike up that same relationship with her own living sister. Each generation of the female Cavendish line empowered, in one way or another, the next in the

sequence. Surely Newcastle's daughters recognised that they could create a stronger legacy together, after all, all this effort was to ensure a more prosperous situation for their own future female kin. It would be nonsensical to assume they did not want that for their own siblings. Where in previous chapters I have displayed something of a female coming together spread over various generations, with Jane and Elizabeth they aren't concerned about the next generation, and making it a better place for them, they are concerned about their own situation and trying to make it a better place for them now. Liddy suggests that they responded to these pressures "by bonding together and creating a fictional world that dramatized contemporary events."<sup>521</sup> While, as previously stated, there is a risk of merely reading the sisters' play as an autobiographical exercise in wish-fulfilment; it would be negligent to entirely disregard the effect the imagination and dreaming for a better time had on the composition of the two plays. They might not have been able to change the events that were happening outside of their home, changing the world they knew and lived in forever, but they could change it in the worlds they created on the page, the way their father taught them too. While the very act of writing brought them closer to Newcastle during his exile, it also allowed them to create a world that brought them closer to the life they had lost at the fall of their king.

#### Reading The Cavendish Sisters' Work As a Piece of "Feminist" Literature.

What must not be forgotten when analysing the work of the Cavendish sisters is the situation they found themselves in when they were composing their manuscript volumes. With their father and brother, their male support systems, in exile on the continent, Jane and Elizabeth were surrounded by a force that would not have approved of their chosen activities, not only because of their sex but also because of their subject matters. The idea of women partaking in

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<sup>521</sup> Nancy Cotton, *Women's War Drama in England in the Seventeenth Century*, 70.

theatre activities was already denounced by men of a Parliamentary disposition. William Prynne wrote in his treatise “dare then any Christian woman be so more than whorishly impudent, as to act, to speak publicly on a stage”.<sup>522</sup> When surrounded by Parliamentary forces, while writing material with a highly anti-Parliamentary stance, clearly they cared more for the acknowledgement and respect of their father than they did of their own position in this new changing country surrounding them. Jane’s declaration that she doesn’t care about what ‘becomes of me or what’s my lot’ has a greater sense of urgency to it when considering the sisters’ behaviours during this uncertain time.

While *The Concealed Fancies* shows an obliging manner from the sisters towards William, it suggests that that manner was not readily given to other men in their lives. When discussing their suitors and the feelings held for them, both negative and positive, Tattiney and Luceny begin to discuss their father, Lord Calsindow. While Luceny states that “man and wife should draw equally in a yoke,” (II.iii. 37-38)<sup>523</sup> meaning that she believes husband and wife should have equal respect for one another in marriage, when it comes to her father he is her “alpha and omega of government” (II.iii. 33).<sup>524</sup> Though, given the period of history in which this text is written, Luceny’s father and husband should both have been her alpha and omega of government, her reluctance to allow another man to control her in the same way she allows Lord Calinsdow to make all her decisions for her shows great respect to her father that she would not necessarily hold for her husband.

One of the reasons why such interest has been placed in the works found in Jane Cavendish and Elizabeth Brackley’s manuscript is because of the feministic leanings exhibited within *A Pastorall* and, most notably, *The Concealed Fancies*, with a sense that the sisters showed some understanding, or at least awareness, of the collective female

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<sup>522</sup> Nancy Cotton, *Women Playwrights in England 1363-1750*, 39.

<sup>523</sup> Lady Jane Cavendish and Lady Elizabeth Brackley, “The Concealed Fancies,” 139.

<sup>524</sup> Lady Jane Cavendish and Lady Elizabeth Brackley, “The Concealed Fancies,” 139.

consciousness. This idea, however, of Lord Calsindow, the sisters' father and authority figure, being the 'alpha and omega of government' for the girls is interesting. Kamille Stone Staunton claims that "the ideas of female community and retreat exist necessarily outside the rule of the father, and therefore the achievement of this play lies in the ways in which it undermines the behavioural structures implicit in that system of domestic and societal governance."<sup>525</sup> While, certainly, in the grander scheme of the seventeenth-century English society that is certainly true, it is not necessarily the case in this family. As already examined, William openly, and somewhat forcefully, encouraged his daughters, alongside his sons, in writing and composition. In fact, in the confines of the worlds created within Bolsover and Welbeck, not to write, to adhere to the female social norms of the period, would have been a greater undermining of the behavioural structure created for them by their father, their own true governing force.

Even when disregarding the idea that the composing of the play could be seen as an act of compliance, when reading the text itself, the behaviours of Jane and Elizabeth demonstrate two women who were less concerned with fighting the patriarchal confines of their generation and more anxious about pleasing their father. While certainly there is the 'feminist' ideals regarding marriage discussed among the two sisters in the play, which could indicate something of a resistance against the perceived societal standard, in the end *The Concealed Fancies* finishes with a traditional ending: the patriarch returns, the women are wed, and the parameters of patriarchal rule come back into line after the initial complaints against it. Ezell observes that "at the end of the play, all are wed or are on the way to being so – but on the women's terms."<sup>526</sup> Regardless as to whether Jane and Elizabeth finished their

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<sup>525</sup> Kamille Stone Staunton, "The Domestication of Royalist Themes in *The Concealed Fancies* by Jane Cavendish and Elizabeth Brackley," 178-179.

<sup>526</sup> Margaret J. M. Ezell, "'To Be Your Daughter In Your Pen': The Social Functions of Literature in the Writings of Lady Elizabeth Brackley and Lady Jane Cavendish," 289-290.



play, with the outcome being secured under the women's terms or not, their decision to allow it to come to its conclusion in such a way, demonstrates how, even in the slightest sense, this ending withdraws from the ambitious view of the play as a demonstration against female behavioural norms. With the characters in the play adhering to the patriarchal norms of the time, by extension so too does the play itself. Indeed there were many plays written and produced during the period, and even before, that begin with the unruly female character that is then calmed, wedded and placed in a position of patriarchal control. The play might have feministic elements, but the play in its entirety is still a product of its patriarchal time. The important thing about the play, however, is not its contents, but the fact that it was created by two women working in collaboration with one another.

Yet, this conclusion still leaves the situation and mindscape of the Cavendish sisters' ideas about patriarchy somewhat confused. In one respect we have two women who appear to be fighting against the constraints of Parliamentary rule through their writing, as well as using that writing to set out their ideals of womanhood, especially after marriage, all of which go against the contemporary conventions of a patriarchal society. Yet, at the same time, we have two women who appear to be entirely enthralled and in awe of the main form of immediate patriarchal rule in their life: their father. The activities of, most predominately Jane, but also to some extent Elizabeth, before, during and after the Civil War all indicate an inherent desire to please, impress and adhere to their father's example and wishes. As already discussed above, the very practice of writing was an ode to their father. Yet the affection and allegiance to him, especially by Jane, went further than simply their act of writing.

After William's defeat at Marston Moor and flee to the continent, Jane, the now oldest member of the Cavendish household still living in England, became the de facto head of the Cavendish household and estates and she appears to have taken no pains in preserving as much of the Cavendish legacy as she was able to. Upon the garrisons setting themselves

around Welbeck and Bolsover, Jane worked quickly to ensure the family treasures that meant so much to her father were saved from the savage hands of the Parliamentarians who were ransacking their home. This included plates and various Van Dyck paintings that had been commissioned by William. This was a common occurrence during the period, with the women left behind to look after the family properties and interests while their male kin were fighting or exiled. One such case was Lady Brilliana, a parliamentarian left at her home at Brampton Bryan in the royalist Herefordshire, while her husband was acting as an MP in Westminster. Despite wishing to join her husband:

her duty was to her husband, and to the cause kept her there...Lady Briliana refused demands for her surrender, appealing variously to parliamentary principles that 'the law and liberties of this kingdom protected her property...she encouraged the garrison 'with such a masculine bravery, both of religion, resolution, wisdom and warlike policy, that her equal I never yet saw.'<sup>527</sup>

Yet, Jane's wish to preserve the world that her father left behind did not simply stop with her protection of the family estates and possessions. Acting as the head of the ever royalist Cavendish family in her father's absence Jane, along with her sisters' help, took over their father's position in the royalist fight "aiding the King's cause as best they could; for example, by sending military information to the King's commanders at Oxford".<sup>528</sup> While in exile, despite "his finances [being] in disarray, Cavendish spent his wealth freely on lavish living".<sup>529</sup> It then fell to Jane to sell many of her own possessions, including jewellery, to aid her father's finances while he lived in exile. It also fell to her to represent her father in front of the compounding committee when trying to gain his properties back. In a book about the Cavendish family history, written by Francis Bickley, the only mention of Jane comes when explaining how once Cavendish's sons were married to wealthy brides, "they were able to

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<sup>527</sup> Ann Hughes, *Gender and the English Revolution* (London & New York: Routledge, 2012), 38.

<sup>528</sup> S.P.Cerasano et al., ed, *Renaissance Drama by Women*, 127.

<sup>529</sup> Betty Travitsky, *Subordination and Authorship in Early Modern England*, 32.

assist their needy father; in which they were seconded by his eldest daughter, Jane".<sup>530</sup>

Despite the fact that this was written nearly three centuries after the events of the Civil War and Restoration, it is a testament to Jane's tireless work in securing her father's estate and belongings that she is still remembered for the never ending assistance that she gave him.

However, even after the end of the Civil War, when Newcastle was back in England living life in the same lavish fashion as he did before the beginning of the war, with no worries as to creditors demanding money from him, Jane still made an extraordinary sacrifice for her father. In a written note, dated 1698, in regards to a case against the Cavendish family by Jane's son the Right Honourable Lord Viscount Cheyne, we discover that, despite being left various properties, including the estate left to her by Katherine Ogle Cavendish, Lorbottle Hall in Northumberland, along with a sum of 1500 pounds, Jane never took possession of these during her lifetime and it was only once her husband had died that their son decided to claim what was due to him by right of his mother. In fact, in the family history of the Ogle family, written by Sir Bart Henry Asgill Ogle, it states that upon her death all of Katherine, Baroness Ogle's property was left to her son, William Cavendish, which, as evidenced by my examination of Katherine's will in chapter three, is quite simply not true.<sup>531</sup> Katherine's will explicitly states: "and I give unto my most dearly beloved graundchilde Jane Cavendyshe: thous towe Lordeskespes which my lorde my father lefte me: Medalltone and Lorbottle".<sup>532</sup> While Katherine's will does state that the estates are to be left to Jane during her lifetime, Lord Viscount Cheyne's letter implies that Jane, during her life, never reaped the benefits of that bequest and it was William who gained the profits of the estates.

Having a family of her own who would have benefitted from the 1,500 pounds, along

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<sup>530</sup> Francis Bickley, *The Cavendish Family* (London: Constable & Co., 1911), 115.

<sup>531</sup> Sir Bart Henry Asgill Ogle, *Ogle and Bothal; or a History of the Baronies of Ogle, Bothal and Hepple*, 361-362.

<sup>532</sup> The Final Will and Testament of Lady Catherin Cavendish, Baroness Ogle. Nottinghamshire Archives Office, MSS Portland of Welbeck (6<sup>th</sup> Deposit), DD/P6/1/19/17 (22<sup>nd</sup> July 1624).

with the rents for the estates, it is hard to understand why Jane would happily leave the items left to her in her grandmother's will in the hands of her father and thereafter the hands of her brother (there is a twenty-two year gap between Newcastle's death and the case for the return of the property being made, though this would have been at the hands of her husband, Charles Cheyne, as Jane predeceased her father). In fact, in a letter written by Jane to her brother Charles, Viscount Mansfield, in 1656, she discusses her and her husband's reluctance to leave their home in Chelsea, despite her brother's encouragement towards a house belonging to Alderman Allen, due to the cheap rents they paid for their Chelsea home, in comparison with some of the properties that her brother suggested, all of which would have been significantly larger and more expensive.<sup>533</sup> Indeed it also appears interesting that it was not as soon as Jane had died that her husband petitioned for the return of the property as, according to the case made by their son, "the late Lord Cheyne knowing this debt so justly due he by his will particularly devised it to the present Lord Cheyne".<sup>534</sup> Once again we are left with the feeling that Jane was thinking about her father before she considered her new family and knew that he, who spent his money so lavishly, would have been in greater need of the items bequeathed to her, than she believed herself and her family to be, thus allowing us to assume that she asked her husband to also not ask for the return of her rightful estates.

Despite this, what seems to be continued worship of their father, and the disappointing, from a feminist perspective at least, end to the sisters' plays, to never the less not consider the work as an early form of feminist persuasion would be foolhardy. Having come from the line of women that the sisters did and to have been as inspired by them as Jane's poems appear to attest to, feminist leanings would have begun to work their way into

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<sup>533</sup> Letter written by Jane Cavendish Cheyne to her brother Charles Cavendish, Viscount Mansfield, University of Nottingham MSS Portland Collection Pw1, 89, 1656.

<sup>534</sup> Letter written by Lord Cheyne to Charles Cavendish, Viscount Mansfield, University of Nottingham MSS Portland Collection Pw1, 334.

their judgements, both in real life, as evidenced through Jane's commanding attitude when safeguarding the family home and treasures, as well as in their fiction. Mary Prior acknowledges that "The increase in the number of wills in the seventeenth century is itself an index to the changing attitudes of wives."<sup>535</sup> It is a statistic that she says is confirmed by the case put forward by Patricia Crawford, who states that there was an increase in published work by women during the Civil War and the Interregnum.<sup>536</sup> Prior goes on to say that "we might expect the circles in which wives made wills to overlap to some extent with the world of women who wrote" and I think it's safe to assume that in this case, it does.<sup>537</sup> At least two women from the three generations that preceded Jane and Elizabeth wrote a will that in one way or another contributed to and helped along one of her female descendants. Where Prior and Crawford make the case that these influxes in irregular female behaviour happened thanks to the effects of the Civil War and women suddenly becoming the heads of houses due to male absence, I would argue that in this case, while the Civil War was certainly a factor in their behaviour, it was not all that was at work. While the war might have been the trigger for them to write material of this nature, to suggest that characters with the spirit of Luceny and Tattiany would not have been created were it not for the war, would be to miss the importance that their lineage clearly had on Jane and Elizabeth. Larson suggests that:

During the English Civil Wars, when both royalist and parliamentarian women were forced to assume greater political responsibilities by defending estates, enduring sieges, or relaying information to army leaders, textual conversation in the form of letters poems, and fiction dialogue play a crucial role in maintaining relationships across geographical distances.<sup>538</sup>

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<sup>535</sup> Mary Prior, "Wives and Wills 1558-1700," 223.

<sup>536</sup> Patricia Crawford, 'Women's Published Writings 1600-1700,' in *Women in English Society*, ed. Mary Prior, 266.

<sup>537</sup> Mary Prior, "Wives and Wills 1558-1700," 223.

<sup>538</sup> Katherine R. Larson, *Early Modern Women in Conversation*, 116.

This, therefore, means that it is with this increase of independence, along with an increased need for writing for communication's sake, which likely led to the influx of female writers towards the end of the seventeenth-century.

However, Jane and Elizabeth aren't writing at the end of the seventeenth-century, but sometime around 1645. Their writing was not caused by their sudden awareness of ability thanks to the Civil War; it was as a way of getting through the Civil War. It is likely that the Cavendish sisters would have written, regardless as to whether the Civil War happened or not, with women as headstrong and female-centred as Tattiney and Luceny, because those are the only form of female role models they had when they were growing up. It just so happen that their timing meant the Civil War acted as their backdrop.

### Their Lasting Impact

The impact of their acts of writing followed them until their grave. As already stated above, George Ballard included Elizabeth in his *Memoirs of English Ladies* quite simply because of the emphasis placed on her literary endeavours on her funerary monument. John's inclusion that Elizabeth was a writer indicates that it was an aspect of her life that had so pertinently shaped her and her sister's childhood and early adulthood. However, like Elizabeth's life and writing in her adulthood, the tomb itself is rather modest, comprising mostly of black marble on which the text is inscribed in very small letters, mostly recounting John's fervent grief at the loss of his most cherished wife. While the tomb "dominates the church's interior" this is more to symbolise the importance of the Egerton family, rather than to create an ostentatious Memoriam to flaunt.<sup>539</sup> She shares the tomb with her husband, who died after her, and her husband's own mother and father. Where the majority of tombs for families of this calibre

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<sup>539</sup> Marion Wynne-Davies, "'With such a Wife 'tis heaven on earth to dwell' Memorialising Early Modern Englishwoman," *Journal of the Northern Renaissance* 2 (2010) doi:<http://www.northernrenaissance.org/with-such-a-wife-tis-heaven-on-earth-to-dwell-memorialising-early-modern-englishwomen/>.

were ornate with large sculptures upon them, the Egerton tomb carries only two grieving cherubs and a skull. Marion Wynne-Davies most poignantly describes, the “overall funeral monument enacts memorial in words rather than images, and eschews ostentation for sombre simplicity.”<sup>540</sup> Never has there been a more fitting tomb for a woman and her husband, whom both lived a life filled with words and each other.

Jane’s tomb could be described as quite the opposite to Elizabeth’s. Built by Jane’s husband, Charles Cavendish, it was less of a testament of love and grief for his deceased wife, and more of a repayment of the debt to the Cavendish family for ensuring his current social standing, thanks to his marriage to Jane. When entering Chelsea Old Church from the Lawrence Chapel, identifying the Cheyne tomb is instantaneous. The monument, with the image of Jane lying on her side, propped up by her elbow while reading a book, is as beautiful and eye-catching as it is disproportionate to its surroundings. Aside from the Dacre Monument, built in memory of George Fiennes, Lord Dacre and his wife Ann Sackville, the Cheyne monument is the most outlandish structure in the church. However, the Dacre Monument is at least in keeping with the fashions and traditions of funeral monuments of its time. Having commissioned the monument to be produced by the great masons of Italy, for nearly a century Jane's monument was wrongly credited to the great Gian Lorenzo Bernini, when it was, in fact, most likely produced by members of his school, notably Anthonio Raggi, and Bernini's son, Paolo. While the text, compared with Elizabeth's, is minimal the inclusion of Jane reading a book, relating to her scholarship and love of literature, demonstrates the acknowledgement by the men of these two women's lives the importance that literature and composition had to their inherent being. Thus, Jane and Elizabeth, contrary

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<sup>540</sup> Marion Wynne-Davies, “‘With such a Wife ‘tis heaven on earth to dwell’ Memorialising Early Modern Englishwoman,” *Journal of the Northern Renaissance* 2 (2010) doi:<http://www.northernrenaissance.org/with-such-a-wife-tis-heaven-on-earth-to-dwell-memorialising-early-modern-englishwomen/>.

to the beliefs and manifestos projected in their manuscript works, led their lives, seemingly, according to the natural order of female life. Despite this, due to their tombs and the works they left behind, their activities as teenagers will be remembered throughout history and it will never be forgotten that, even with patriarchal rule, these two girls were able to pursue their love and interest in literary production. Indeed, Jane and Elizabeth, like their mother and grandmother and great aunt before them, would have fallen into obscurity had those literary works been forgotten and gone undiscovered despite their sensational teenage years. This thesis itself would be unlikely to exist had that happened. While writing might not have been a universally condoned pastime for women during this period, the acknowledgement by the men in their lives of the activities that their daughters and wives partook in, allows us, as a modern audience, to discover that women's lives were more complex and varied than previous scholarship has perhaps given them credit for.

For Jane and Elizabeth, writing was more than an activity that helped to pass the time: it was a connection. A connection to each other, to their father and to the numerous strong female relatives they knew, loved and aspired to be like. Writing allowed Jane and Elizabeth to band together at a time when they felt they had no one else. This gave them the chance to create a world with each other in which everything they knew, loved and cherished was as it always had been and the turbulent world that surrounded them did not prosper in the way that it eventually did. It was a connection to their father, the man who had taught them the best way to create a world in which they had total control. But most importantly, it was a connection to the female legacy that existed around them. Jane and Elizabeth knew that they had a lot to live up to. Their father put a lot of emphasis on the achievements of his female kin and they knew that to please him and establish their own place within this line, they would have to aspire to not just be as great as them but to be greater. They saw what their female ancestors did, taking themselves out of the female sphere and creating their own



world in the male-dominated society of Elizabethan and Stuart England, and thus strove to create situations in which they could do the same to just as great a success.

Jane and Elizabeth couldn't do that in the confines of the Cavendish houses while under besiegement and house arrest, but they could do it in the worlds they created in their plays, in which they not only defied the notion of female behaviour through their actions but openly questioned these norms on each and every page of their work. It is in this act, the questioning of patriarchal rule, that the true feminist elements of the play shines through. Regardless of how the play ends, and regardless of whether the play does conform to patriarchal norms of the time, the questioning that the sisters undertake of those norms demonstrates, as a modern audience, that women of this period were not copies of the women presented in behavioural books of the time. They had thoughts of their own and they questioned the world around them; forever trying to understand their place within it.

While Bess, Mary, Katherine and Jane challenged the stereotypical norms of a females place within society on the open battlefield of patriarchal rule, Jane and Elizabeth did so in such a way that it would be immortalised in words and ink. Though this may not appear to be as ambitious as the pursuits of their foremothers, Bess, Mary, Katherine and Jane have all had their memory told and analysed by men, picking out their best bits, highlighting their worst and having an image created of them that they, despite their successes in the ruthless male-dominated world, have ultimately had no control over. Even Bess, who meticulously designed her tomb to every last detail, had her epitaph replaced and altered by William and thus, the woman with most control in the male world, lost her rule during a time she couldn't defend it. Yet, through their writing, Jane and Elizabeth have ensured that the image they wanted to be portrayed to the world is the image that generations later are still seeing.

# **Chapter 6**

## **Conclusion**

When I first started this thesis it was with the intention of looking solely at the uses of patronage for women during the early modern period and the ways in which it affected their lives. However, in the same way the women of the Cavendish family evolutionised within their own female evolutionary cycle of power and importance, so too did this thesis, when I began to realise exactly what the effect patronage had on the behaviours of the women within this family and the way in which each generation developed from the next. It led me to not only consider the patronage of these women but also reconsider how one thought about women and what they were truly capable of achieving. It made me think about the way women were able to channel these activities in such a way as to alter the patriarchal world that surrounded them and fabricate their own reality in which they were able to succeed.

The quote from Mendelson and Crawford that I included in my introduction: "When special female concerns were at stake, groups of women constructed private spaces from which they excluded men. Women might also exercise spatial and cultural dominance in spheres which were under men's nominal authority, such as the household or market" describes that fabricated reality that women created, allowing themselves to thrive in the domains and spheres where the presence of men would not be able to interfere with their own, albeit female, political spheres and agendas.<sup>541</sup>

However, what truly sets the Cavendish women apart was that, while they fabricated their own female-centric reality, they also created them in the spheres and domains of men, and rather than being subjugated and subordinated there, they thrived. Bess of Hardwick took on the world of building and construction; still using her son as her means of actually acquiring the properties, but entirely taking the reins for each of her building projects herself and being the driving force behind their completions, entirely placing herself in the role of a

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<sup>541</sup> Sara Mendelson and Patricia Crawford, *Women in Early Modern England*, 205.

man, all the while dressed in a frock. While she also placed herself within the political happenings of the time, of course, the male sphere that was least penetrated by women, she did so from the comfort of her own home, creating her own political environment at home rather than placing herself within the already existing one.

This was not the case for Arbella Stuart and her aunt Mary Talbot, whose efforts, though ultimately failed, not only placed them directly within Elizabethan and Jacobean courts' inner political circle but challenged the very patriarchal society that attempted and succeeded in stopping their plans against the patriarchal norm, leading to their arrest, incarceration in the Tower of London, and ultimately Arbella's death while still held as a prisoner. Where Arbella and Mary failed and their grandmother and mother Bess succeeded, was not due to their direct positioning within the political sphere, but the manner in which they did it. Where Bess was subtle, calculating and created situations where she was integral to the furtherance of a plan, Arbella and Mary's quest for political importance was attempted in a way that would generally be performed by men. While women certainly succeeded in placing themselves within the political sphere, it was thanks to their subtlety and invisibility. This type of behaviour was allowed by men who, though not fully embracing it, were at least not frightened by it and fighting against it. Bess did not have the royal bloodline that caused Arbella most of the difficulties that she faced. Yet despite their failure, Mary and Arbella's demonstrated their ambition to try, and if anything has been discovered from this thesis, it is not whether women achieved what they set out to do that is important, but that they were at least aware of their female-condition and sought ways out of it.

Despite not much being known about Katherine Ogle Cavendish, Jane Ogle Talbot, and Katherine's daughter in law, Elizabeth Bassett Cavendish, what we have managed to gather about them from their literary pursuits, their correspondence and their dealings with the legal system, displays three women who, like Bess, understood the subtleties of placing

themselves within male spheres. Though their contributions to the Cavendish female evolutionary progression were nowhere near as noticeable as those performed by Bess, Arbella, and Mary, they were just as instrumental to the continuance and development of the female line and perhaps a welcomed slowdown from the activities of Arbella and Mary.

It is, however, through these women that we are able to appreciate the greatest sense of the idea that "women shared a female consciousness."<sup>542</sup> It is this first group of women who were married into this family, whom themselves came from noble and wealthy families, that this concept of the female consciousness and attempts to improve life for future generations of women really begins to take hold. While Bess, Arbella, and Mary gave inspiration as to the heights that women were able to achieve (or attempt to achieve) creating the driving force of Cavendish propulsion, it is through the will writing and patronage of the second group that we are able to see the acknowledgement of the female collective consciousness and their attempts to create a better future for their female descendants as well as their male ones.

Of course the pinnacle of the idea of female empowerment within the Cavendish line comes from Jane and Elizabeth Cavendish, who, unlike their great-grandmother, grandmother or mother, did not have the luxury of operating within the male sphere from the distance of their home, as it was to their home that the male sphere came and made its mark. Perhaps, had they had different ancestors, the story for Jane and Elizabeth, held prisoner within their own home, could have been very different. Yet they created a private space for themselves to thrive, on the pages of a manuscript, using the worlds they created in their mind to tackle the realities of the real world of angst and war that surrounded them. They even managed to save their family during a time when their male relatives were unable to enter the male sphere thanks to their exile.

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<sup>542</sup> Sara Mendelson and Patricia Crawford, *Women in Early Modern England*, 205.

Yet, perhaps the most intriguing subject in this thesis is the one who is not even part of the struggle for female empowerment and in search of creating a better female collective. William Cavendish, despite being born with the advantage of being a man, understood, relished, and even aspired to be like the female kin who came before him, all the while channelling the spirit and ingenuity of his own female ancestors to his female descendants. It was William that the Cavendish sisters appear to thank for their own empowerment, through their writing, and acknowledge him as giving them the inspiration to do the very thing that in the end created the strong women that we witnessed within this thesis. Perhaps this is because the acknowledgement of the female collective consciousness was expected within the sisters' female kin and there was a consensus that they would do their utmost to ensure a better future for their daughters. For William, however, to not only be aware of this collective consciousness but to nurture it and help it thrive, along with being in awe of the capabilities of his female ancestors, demonstrates the importance that William brought to this line in helping to continue that female agenda.

Yet, while this thesis has mainly focused on the women of the Cavendish family and what they attributed to the idea of the female collective consciousness, the most important aspect of this thesis is the concept of women during the patriarchal society of early modern England and how, despite all the odds, there is example after example of women who flourish and succeed within this world of men. While the Cavendish women are certainly a shining example of the female collective, to assume that they were part of the minority of women who were not only aware of their situation but tried to do something against it, would be entirely misinterpreting the acts of women during this period. The fact that we begin to see the real development of the female collective consciousness through the group of women who marry into the Cavendish family, suggests that they learnt it from their own families, and thus the acknowledgement of the collective condition and that female agenda to alter it must

have been wider spread than simply within the Cavendish family. What the Cavendish women are in the minority of is the evidence, even the small amounts that we have, in relation to their acknowledgement of the female collective. The Cavendish women should not necessarily be seen as one of a few cases of empowered women but as models of a practice that was prevalent, but undocumented. The sheer number of examples, both mentioned in this thesis and those that were not, cannot simply be a coincidence. It is not so much that these women were unique, but more they were unique in their circumstance to document their abilities and achievements.

Where they do appear to be somewhat out of the ordinary, however, is their concept of the female collective consciousness: not only do these women use that consciousness amongst their immediate kin, but also making provisions and preferable situations for descendants as well. While Barbara Harris' reference to the legacies left to goddaughters by their godmothers indicate that "legacies of this sort did more than enrich the recipient, they also expressed the donors attachment to their goddaughter in a more personal, even intimate, way than cash and embodied the ties between them in carefully chosen objects the girls could use for the rest of their lives,"<sup>543</sup> could demonstrate some wish to enrich the lives of the next female generation in any way they were capable of, it reads more of a remembrance gesture, rather than that of an empowering one. We see this collective female consciousness span over the length of 4 generations, each generation attempting to provide something for the next.

While the emphasis on patronage has not been as fundamental to this thesis as it was originally intended to be, that is not to say that the importance that it held – in enabling women to venture their way into the male sphere in a way that not only enriched their lives but enriched the lives of women still yet to come – has not shone through, if anything it has

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<sup>543</sup> Barbara J. Harris, "Sisterhood, Friendship and the Power of Aristocratic Women," 24.

enhanced the argument of how difficult it was to find a level playing field during the patriarchal to and fro of women's place within society. The role that patronage played within that to and fro emphasises the critical role patronage still played within aristocratic families as a way to demonstrate their own aristocratic importance. Perhaps this is the reason that it lasted as a fundamental part of aristocratic pastime, century after century. Without it, the trajectory of the female line within the Cavendish family would never have reached the heights, the accomplishments, or the respect that it did. While the story of the women of the Cavendish family ultimately comes down to that of a line of strong women each trying to create a world in which their female presence was as important as their male kin, it is a story that very well may not have come to pass, or yet been remembered had they overlooked the importance of patronage and the effects that it could have on the everlasting memory of a few women from the sixteenth and seventeenth century.

It is for this reason that this thesis truly matters to modern scholarship because, while it doesn't present any new knowledge specific to any one member of this family, it makes us understand them and their actions as a collective in a greater detail. Understanding Jane and Elizabeth as women who were inspired to live through the Civil War in the way they did is a lot easier when you consider the idea that they did so thanks to the inspiration of the lives of their foremothers. The apparent hero-worship they had for their father is not necessarily the only analysis of their father-daughter relationship, but rather that their appreciation of him comes from their acknowledgement of the great line of women that he, through his birth, associates them with. In a family as concerned with lineage and family as this, the connection that he gives them to that lineage and dynasty deserves such credit. He was the link to a greater female network that, during a time when the idea of female networks was more imperative than ever was desperately needed.

Understanding each generation as an improvement on the one that came before allows



us to understand the out of the ordinary actions that these women did. This thesis revolutionises the way we consider family during the early modern period. Contrary to current scholarship, it was not something that only concerned itself with direct kin, but thought of ancestors and descendants; it thought in generations rather than generation, singular. The Cavendishes prove how every person and every action were intertwined and connected. To understand them as individuals, one first has to understand them as a collective and understand that their role within that collective is what made the individual. The Cavendish women are an example of how collective consciousness can spread over generations, not just immediate kins.

Ultimately, however, when everything is stripped back, the essence of this thesis is not about patronage, or politics, or even about the female collective consciousness or empowerment. It is about a family. Family is the reason William was always looking back to his strong female ancestors. Family is the reason Jane and Elizabeth did the same. Family was the reason Bess was looking forward to the dynasty she wanted to establish, and family was the reason Katherine and Elizabeth looked both forward and back, identifying the best ways to create the world they wanted for their future female kin. The Cavendishes were a family who were not only powerful and strong, but they were also a family who were in constant awe of one another – wanting to find their place within this family of so many stand-out members.

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