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UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA
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"Such Daughters and Such a Mother": The Countess of Derby
and her Three Daughters, 1560-1647

A Dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction
of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in

History

by

Vanessa Jean Wilkie

August 2009

Dissertation Committee:

Dr. Thomas Cogswell, Chairperson

Dr. Randolph Head

Dr. Dale Kent

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The Dissertation of Vanessa Jean Wilkie is approved:

Committee Chairperson

University of California, Riverside

Acknowledgements

Many students pursue graduate school because they know exactly what they want to study. I was not that student. I meandered through public history, nineteenth century continental Europe, economic history, gender history, and had a brief affair with heavy postmodern theory until I finally settled down in early modern England. I have been so fortunate to work with a number of faculty members in History, English, and Women's Studies. I thank all of them for the patience they showed me while I tried to find my place in academia. Cliff Trafzer gave me sage advice my first two years of graduate school. Roger Ransom, Kiril Tomoff, and Georg Michels "went to bat" for me on several occasions. They made it impossible for me to blame any obstacles to my progress on a lack of funding and support. Ken Barkin patiently guided me through many materials courses. Ann Goldberg not only introduced me to Women's History, but she challenged me in ways I never thought possible. She helped me break through the glass ceiling of my own mind and graciously pointed out the tropes I brought to my writing. Christine Ward Gailey showed me how to bring the past into the present. I am truly grateful for her guidance and friendship.

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To Mom and Dad

ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

"Such Daughters and Such a Mother": The Countess of Derby
and Her Three Daughters, 1560-1647

by

Vanessa Jean Wilkie

Doctor of Philosophy, Graduate Program in History
University of California, Riverside, August 2009
Dr. Thomas Cogswell, Chairperson

This dissertation focuses on the lives of Alice Spencer Stanley Egerton, the dowager countess of Derby (1559-1637), and her three daughters: Anne Stanley Brydges Touchet, Lady Chandos and then dowager countess of Castlehaven (1581-1647), Frances Stanley Egerton, countess of Bridgewater (1583-1636), and Elizabeth Stanley Hastings, countess of Huntingdon (1587-1634). This work contributes to the fields of early modern English history, gender history, women's history, and family history. My primary sources include, correspondence, household accounts, legal records, contracts, leases, literary dedications, masques, literature, personal prayer books, tombs, almshouses, household inventories, wills, personal papers, and cheap print. The remarkable quantity and quality of sources by and about the Stanley women make it possible to re-examine their various life experiences by melding empirical research and gender theory.

In 1631, the countess of Castlehaven accused her husband and one of her servants of raping her. Scholars of early modern English history and literature are quite familiar with this trial. This dissertation examines the relationship between the countess of

Castlehaven and her mother and sisters to better understand this infamous trial in light of their familial experiences. The chapters are organized thematically rather than chronologically, in order to flesh out the major themes in the lives of the Stanley women. These themes include discussions of how they used marriage to build kinship networks, the various ways they maintained these networks, their religious lives, the literary and political patronage, their family culture of commissioning masques, their numerous legal battles, and their individual deaths and legacies. All of these larger issues are examined against their trials with the Castlehaven scandal to understand how the Stanley women experienced and influenced this critical moment in their lives. In the end, this dissertation presents a rich micro-history and a collective biography of the Stanley women. It argues that scholars must remain open to the complex and fluid identities of early modern women in order to understand fully the complicated nuances of early modern relationships. The Stanley women serve as ideal case studies and the Castlehaven affair is an interesting backdrop for this endeavor.

Table of Contents

List of Abbreviations	
xii	
List of Charts	xiii
Introduction	1
Prologue: The Family, Women, and Gender in Early Modern England	13
1 The Marriages of the Stanley Women: Building Kinship Networks	48
2 "Resting Assurance to Find Your Friendship Firm Toward Me": The Stanley Women and Maintaining Kinship Networks	79
3 Piety in Practice: The Religious Lives of the Stanley Women	108
4 "To the Right Honourable...": Print, Literary, and Local Political Patronage of the Stanley Women	139
5 The Theatrical Patronage and Masque Culture of the Stanley Women	164
6 Inheritance, the Law, and the Stanley Women	196
7 "Besmear'd With a Sensual Life": The Stanley Women and the Castlehaven Scandal	236
8 "Until the Joyful Resurrection": The Deaths and Legacies of the Stanley Women	287
Conclusion	333
Bibliography	339
Appendix	361

List of Abbreviations

Add MS	Additional MSS Collection, British Library, London
BL	The British Library, London
<i>DNB</i>	Dictionary of National Biography
<i>CP</i>	The Complete Peerage
EL	Ellesmere MSS, Henry E. Huntington Library, San Marino, CA
ELH	Journal of English Literary History
HA	Hastings MSS, Henry E. Huntington Library, San Marino, CA
HA AF	Accounts and Financial Papers in the Hastings MSS
HA Corr	Correspondence in the Hastings MSS
HA PP	Personal Papers in the Hastings MSS
HEH	Henry E. Huntington Library, San Marino, CA
HMC	Historical Manuscript Commission
TNA	The National Archives, Kew
NRO	Northamptonshire Record Office, Northampton
<i>OED</i>	Oxford English Dictionary
ROL	Record Office for Leicestershire, Leicester, and Rutland
SPD	State Papers: Domestic
<i>TRHS</i>	Transactions of the Royal Historical Society
UoN	University of Nottingham, Special Collections, Nottingham
AE	Alice Spencer Stanley Egerton, dowager countess of Derby
Elles	Thomas Egerton, Lord Chancellor Ellesmere
FE	Frances Egerton, countess of Bridgewater
JE	John Egerton, earl of Bridgewater
ESH	Elizabeth Stanley Hastings, countess of Huntingdon
HH	Henry Hastings, earl of Huntingdon

Days of the months are old style but all years are taken to begin on January 1.

The spelling and grammar from early modern sources have been kept in their original forms.

List of Charts

The Stanley Women	362
The Spencer Family	363
Tudor/Stanley Bloodlines	364
William Stanley and the Cecil Family	365
The Egerton Family	366
The Brydges Family	367
The Bridgewater Family	368
The Hastings Family	369
The Touchet Family	370

Introduction

On 1 November 1630, the nineteen year old Lord Audley approached the Privy Council with the claim that his father, Mervin Touchet, the second earl of Castlehaven, was trying to swindle him out of his rightful inheritance. Conflicts over inheritance were common, but as councilors began prying deeper into the charge, they began to find that this particular accusation was far from the norm. Three years earlier, Lord Audley had married his twelve-year-old stepsister, Elizabeth Brydges. Audley claimed that shortly after their marriage, his father, the earl of Castlehaven began encouraging his servant and close personal friend, Henry Skipwith, to begin a sexual relationship with Lady Elizabeth. The historical records are unclear about whether Lady Audley consented to this relationship; it seemed she did, since Skipwith was never charged with rape. Audley believed that his father hoped that Skipwith would impregnate his wife, and if the child was a boy, Castlehaven planned to make that child his heir, cutting his eldest son completely out of the picture. Audley told the Privy Council that his father had a strong tendency to prefer his “favorites” over his own children. Lord Audley went even further, alluding to the notion that his father was known to have intimate relationships with several of his male servants. Audley presented a past example of a man named John Anktill, who had been a favorite of Castlehaven's. Although Anktill came from a low social rank, Castlehaven bestowed great favor and fortune on him. By 1631, Anktill had not only been married to one of the earl's daughters, Lucy, but was also managing several of Castlehaven's family estates.

In response to this seemingly bizarre situation, the council sent several investigators to the Castlehaven estate at Fonthill Gifford in order to study the situation more closely. By early December 1630, investigators had uncovered a myriad of disturbing situations within the Castlehaven home. On 9 December, the court sent Lady Elizabeth and her servants away from Fonthill. They forced them to move in with Sir William Slingsby and his family.¹ They intended this arrangement to be temporary while investigators sorted out the affairs at the earl's estate, although in actuality Lady Elizabeth spent several months in the Slingsby's care. As events unfolded, she never returned to Fonthill Gifford, nor did she ever reside with her husband again.

As investigators started to question household servants and family members, it became clear to them that Castlehaven may have been guilty of far more than trying to make his son a cuckold. The investigators also questioned the countess of Castlehaven, Anne Stanley Brydges Touchet. The Castlehavens were married in 1624, three years after the death of Anne's first husband, Grey Brydges, fifth Lord Chandos. After several meetings with investigators, the countess of Castlehaven came forward with the story that her husband had assisted her footman, Giles Broadway, in raping her one night in the autumn of 1630. Although Castlehaven and the countess had been married for over six years before this event took place, the countess claimed that her husband had always paid little attention to her in their marriage, preferring male company over her own in the bedchamber. The countess alleged that the earl had wanted to watch her lie with other men, and when she continuously refused, he resorted to plotting her rape.

¹ Petition of Sir William Slingsby to the Lords Committees, SPD 16/185:124, [Feb] 1631.

This allegation sparked immediate concern among the investigators. They arrested the earl on 21 December 1630. They also seized control of Fonthill Gifford to continue their investigation. On 17 January 1631, after several more weeks of inquiries, the earl moved to the Tower to await trial. The countess accused Broadway of raping her. She and Lord Audley also told the investigators that Lawrence Fitzpatrick, one of the earl's servants, engaged in sodomy with the earl. Broadway and Fitzpatrick also found themselves in the Tower. On 25 April 1631 a jury of peers tried the earl for rape and sodomy. They found him unanimously guilty on the first charge and guilty by only two votes on the second. On 14 May 1631, the earl of Castlehaven was executed on Tower Hill. Broadway and Fitzpatrick stood trial on 27 June 1631. The jury quickly reached a verdict of guilt. The two men were hanged on 6 July 1631.²

Thanks to Cynthia Herrup, this story is fairly well-understood.³ But what is not understood is how formidable the countess of Castlehaven's mother and sisters were; nor is it understood that this mother and her daughters deployed all of their contacts and knowledge to pull the countess of Castlehaven and Lady Audley out of the fire. This is dissertation tells their story. The countess of Castlehaven's mother, Alice Stanley was a remarkable woman in her own right, outliving two husbands: first Ferdinando Stanley, the fifth earl of Derby, and then James I's Lord Chancellor Thomas Egerton, Lord Ellesmere and Viscount Brackley. The marriages of countess of Castlehaven's two sisters

² See Chapter 7 for a full discussion of the Castlehaven affair.

³ See: Cynthia Herrup, *A House in Gross Disorder: Sex, Law, and the 2nd Earl of Castlehaven* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), "The Patriarch at Home: The Trial of the 2nd Earl of Castlehaven for Rape and Sodomy," *History Workshop Journal* 41 (1996): 1-18, and "To Pluck Bright Honour From the Pale-Faced Moon': Gender and Honour in the Castlehaven Story," *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 6th series, no. 6 (1996): 137-159.

are equally impressive. Frances married Lord Ellesmere's son, John Egerton. John later became the first earl of Bridgewater and the Lord President of the Marches of Wales. Her youngest sister, Elizabeth, was the wife of Henry Hastings, fifth earl of Huntingdon.

The dowager countess of Derby and her daughters were all major forces in early modern literary patronage, and in the lives of those around them. Indications of the Stanley women's prominence abound, but perhaps the clearest example is in their literary patronage. Among Alice's clients was no less than Edmund Spenser. Likewise, when the countess of Huntingdon welcomed her mother to Leicester, John Marston wrote the entertainment. When the countess of Bridgewater's children danced before their family in Ludlow, John Milton penned the masque. Thomas Gainsford plainly had it right in his description of the Stanley women: "Daughters in one circle with the Mother: Yea, such Daughters and such a Mother, that mee thinkes you moove together like faire Planets in conspicuous Orbes."⁴

When I initially set out to write my dissertation, my plan was to study this mother-daughter relationship and to explore the impact their relationships had on the Castlehaven affair. Fleshing out the details of these women's lives could provide important insights into their involvement in the notorious trial. On the surface, the family life of the Stanley women closely seemed to follow the scripted behavior that modern scholars of English history widely accept as typical. The Stanley women were indeed mothers and daughters; they were also wives, widows, single women, sisters, and grandmothers. A demographical term applies to each phase of their lives. But because I

⁴ Thomas Gainsford, *The Historie of Trebizond, In Foure Bookes* (London, 1616).

was studying four individual women, I quickly came to see that these phases frequently overlapped. At certain moments in her life, Alice was a mother, wife, *and* grandmother. I also began to see that her first experience as a wife was very different from her second experience as a wife, just as her first experience as a widow was very different from her second experience as a widow. The existing classifications for describing the life-phases of early modern women lack fluidity and diversity. I began to see that these rigid categories threatened to limit the ways in which I could understand the experiences of the Stanley women. I would need to rethink these categories if I was going to rethink the impact the Stanley women had the events surrounding the Castlehaven scandal.

Three primary reasons help explain why scholars of early modern English history have been slow to study the fluidity of female identities: struggles with establishing new fields, a general distrust of women's history as a legitimate field of study, and above all else, a lack of sources about early modern women. First, my predecessors required these more formal categories for their subjects because they were building a field from the ground up. Broad examples and generalizations were imperative in order to establish various models for early modern families. This led to significant works that placed *the family* in a historical context.⁵ In order to construct these models, historians of the family were more interested in understanding the "the norm" than in exploring the unique experiences of individual people.

The second obstacle is more troubling. Many social and political historians see that women are noticeably absent from the more "traditional" early modern English

⁵ See the Prologue for a historiographical overview of this field.

sources. They are, therefore, reluctant to find new ways to look for them. Scholars in a field that prides itself on traditional empirical research are somewhat hesitant to make a theoretical leap to adopt women's history the way that historians in other fields have.⁶ The champion of this leap is Joan Wallach Scott, who famously advocated, "Gender is a useful category of analysis."⁷ Her seminal article holds a place of honor in countless footnotes and remains an essential work for any graduate seminar on gender and women's history. In the more traditional field of early modern English history, however, Scott's work has been less than well received. G.R. Elton, for example, commented: "The conceit of those theorists which identifies power with knowledge has attracted the more fanatical feminists who are convinced that traditional historians have twisted all their accounts into support for what is called patriarchy." He then calls Scott "reasonably fanatic...[she] manages to marry deconstruction and Marxism, which is like spiking vodka with LSD."⁸ Elton's remark demonstrates his ignorance about what it takes to find a history for women. Elton is notorious uncomfortable with the application of broad theory in historical analysis. He believes: "Historians captured by theory may tell you

⁶ Most scholars attribute Natalie Zemon Davis with making the initial suggestion that even flawed and problematic sources can yield to perfectly valid insights if read carefully. See: Natalie Zemon Davis, *Fiction in the Archives: Pardon Tales and Their Tellers in Sixteenth-Century France* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1987).

⁷ The article first appeared as: Joan Wallach Scott, "Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis," *American Historical Review* 91, no. 5 (December 1986): 1053-1075. In 1996, the article was reprinted in: Joan Wallach Scott, ed, *Feminism and History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 152-180. (Following citations are taken from *Feminism and History*.)

⁸ G.R. Elton, *Return to Essentials: Some Reflections on the Present State of Historical Study* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 28-29. Despite the controversial nature of Elton's arguments, only a few journals reviewed the book. See: Donald Meyer, "Review Essay," *History and Theory* 32, no. 3 (October 1993): 330-339; Quentin Skinner, "Sir Geoffrey Elton and the Practice of History," *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, Sixth Series, vol. 7 (1997): 301-316; and Trygve Tholfsen, "Reviews," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 24, no. 4 (Spring, 1994): 685-686.

that they test their constructs by empirical research, but they do nothing of the sort; they use empirical research to prove the truth of the framework, never to disprove it."⁹ Scott, however, advocates for the use of theory, particularly when looking at gender relations because, "real men and women do not always or literally fulfill the terms either of their society's prescriptions or of our analytic categories." She argues: "Historians need instead to examine the ways in which gendered identities are substantively constructed and relate their findings to a range of activities, social organizations, and historically specific cultural representations."¹⁰ Scholars not only continue to ask new questions, but must also develop new techniques to facilitate answering these questions.

For decades, women's historians have employed more abstract theories in order to access subjects who are absent from "traditional" sources. Joan Thirsk addresses this very issue in her remarks: "The records of women of the past are very sparse, and every kind of ingenuity is needed to reconstruct even fragments of their lives."¹¹ This lack of traditional sources pertaining to women also hinders historians' ability to think more fluidly about women's experiences. Discussion of sources, or lack of sources for that matter, shapes much of the history of western women.¹² Those who write women's history have traditionally accessed their subjects by dealing with a limited quantity of correspondence, journals, the few writings by women, and court or legal documents. In

⁹ Ibid., 15.

¹⁰ Scott, 169.

¹¹ Joan Thirsk, "Forward," in *Women in English Society: 1500-1800*, ed. Mary Prior (London: Methuen, 1985), 2.

¹² See for example: Mary Prior, "Preface" in *Women in English Society: 1500-1800*, xv.

some cases, they also rely on early modern materials written about women, although these sources carry with them their own unique issues.¹³ Thinking conceptually about themes of gender, race, and class, help women's historians "read the silences" of these elusive sources.¹⁴

Elton's disdain for theory and Scott's reliance upon it creates a polarizing dichotomy for historians who study gender in early modern England. While Elton's writings ring with hostilities towards feminists, his primary objection to women's history is the quality of work historians produce. In a review Elton gave to *Women, History and Theory: The Essays of Joan Kelly*, Elton wrote: "No one will doubt that the history of women merits as much attention as the history of any collection of human beings, but it has to be said that its claims to scholarly validity have in the main been taken for granted too readily." Elton states his point: "The issue is not whether women's history should be written, but whether what is being written is good."¹⁵ Elton blames the field's shortcoming on the reliance on theory. But the other part of the problem for Elton was the lack of available sources pertaining to the lives of early modern women. Elton proclaimed: "The humanist cry was 'ad fontes', back to the sources; and anyone today

¹³ For example, scholars frequently use early modern instructional guides to discuss how people expected women to behave. The most frequently cited sources dealing with sixteenth and seventeenth century England are: Baldassare Castiglione, *The Book of the Courtier*, trans. Sir Thomas Hoby (London: 1561); and Juan Luis Vives, *Instruction of a Christian Woman*, trans. Richard Hyrde (London, c. 1529).

¹⁴ See for example: Renate Bridenthal, Susan Mosher Stuard, and Merry Wiesner, eds., *Becoming Visible: Women in European History* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1998); Joan Wallach Scott, *Gender and the Politics of History* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999); Joan Wallach Scott, ed. *Feminism and History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997).

¹⁵ G.R. Elton, "History According to Saint Joan," *The American Scholar* (1985): 549-555. Elton's review sparked a heated discussion on the nature of professional reviews. See: Natalie Zemon Davis, "On Reviewing," *Feminist Studies* 14, no. 3 (Autumn, 1988): 602-606.

who is anxious to restore sense and soundness to history will be well advised to pick up that message."¹⁶ For Elton and his followers, women's historians are completely misguided because they not only rely heavily on theory, but they also lack the quantity of sources necessary to writing good history.

Any scholar who accepts the value of employing literary, anthropological, or even feminist theories will obviously find serious fault with Elton's rants. However, his demand that historians base their work on an analysis of sources is sound. Remarkably, the Stanley women offer us the chance to re-think the experiences of early modern aristocratic women because large family archives survive from the Egerton, the Hastings, and to a lesser extent the Stanley families. These four women represent arguably the best-documented women outside of the royal family in early modern England. Collectively, details about the Stanley women can be found in letters, court documents, poems, dedications, household accounts, religious notes, libels, cheap print, tombs, buildings, and eulogies. By reading all of these sources together in fresh ways, we are able to gain new insights into the lives of the Stanley women. These surviving sources also allow us an unprecedented opportunity to explore the relationships among these women. Reading through the lens of recent theoretical work on gender and family allows me to recapture the fluidity of their experiences as women, and to better understand the complex ways that women negotiated family, gender, and authority. The events surrounding the Castlehaven affair provide a historical scene in which we see all of these themes in action.

¹⁶ Elton, *Return to Essentials*, 50.

The plethora of sources not only provides insight into the specific lives of the Stanley women, but they also allow us to begin to conceive of the lives of other early modern women in new and exciting ways. We can use the personal experiences of the Stanley women to free not only them, but other women, from the more rigid confines of past studies. This is not about imposing new categories, but is rather about re-conceptualizing old categories. The lives of the Stanley women offer new scripts by which we can reframe the often over-simplified and over-generalized models of early modern women. It is misleading to study women as *either* mothers, daughters, wives, or widows because women often experienced these categories in different ways *at the same time* in their lives.

The rise of women's history in the past four decades has renewed a demand to study the lives of individual women. Yet biography has been marginalized as a historical approach. Elisabeth Salter recently wrote, "It is to be hoped that current academic interests in the process of writing will begin and continue to infiltrate the 'Biography' shelves...just as it is to be hoped that the elitist attitude of academics to this form of literature will continue to be eroded."¹⁷ Salter is quite right; the infusion of literary criticism and postmodern theories on the constructions (and deconstructions) of "the self" make many academic writers hesitant to accept biography as an acceptable format for writing history. Still, numerous scholars have found biography to be quite useful and

¹⁷ Elisabeth Salter, *Six Renaissance Men and Women: Innovation, Biography and Cultural Creativity in Tudor England, c. 1450-1560* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007), 15.

necessary in their re-creations of the past.¹⁸ For example, scholars frequently use biography as a form for composing micro-histories.¹⁹ Biographies have also played a crucial role in the study of women's history because, "the study of individual lives...had the advantage...in being able to embed a woman more carefully in her culture and society."²⁰ It is impossible to write a history for women when there are so few women of the past known to modern scholars. Biographies provided the first step in acquainting a larger scholarly audience with these previously unknown subjects. At the same time, the trained historian works meticulously to place these subjects in their appropriate historical context.

These methodologies provide the overarching framework for my dissertation. This study presents a rich micro-history about the Stanley women. I study them as mothers, daughters, wives, widows, *and* grandmothers while examining their familial relationships, family economies, legal entanglements, reading habits, patronage, religious lives, and legacies. The Castlehaven trial serves as an ideal moment to see how all of these larger themes intersect as the Stanley women maneuvered through the crisis. In many ways, this study is thus a collective biography. I have organized it thematically rather than chronologically in an effort to compare and contrast the experiences of the Stanley women. Collectively, their lives share a number of common themes. But as

¹⁸ Peter France and William St. Clare, "Introduction," in *Mapping Lives: The Uses of Biography*, eds. Peter France and William St. Clare (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 2-3.

¹⁹ Carlo Ginzburg's telling of the experiences of Menocchio is perhaps the most famous example of this. See: Carlo Ginzburg, *The Cheese and the Worms: The Cosmos of a Sixteenth-Century Miller*, trans. John and Anne Tedeschi (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992).

²⁰ Natalie Zemon Davis, "Women's History' in Transition: The European Case," in *Feminism and History*, ed. Joan Wallach Scott (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 80.

discussed above, each woman frequently experienced these issues differently. It is only when we discuss their marriages collectively, for example, that the unique nuances of their experiences as wives begin to emerge.

The Stanley women demonstrate shared ways that aristocratic women negotiated their roles as wives, widows, mothers, daughters, grandmothers, and sisters, but their biographies also tell four uniquely different tales. It is in this regard that the reconstruction of their worlds offers remarkable insight into the lives of other early modern women. Because sources left by and about the Stanley women are both numerous and diverse, these women can serve as examples for the many ways that early modern women experienced the social and demographical categories that historians see as ubiquitous in the early modern period. For example, Alice had two different husbands, and two very different marriages. She therefore, had two unique experiences as *a wife*. Certain moments of her life, like the Castlehaven affair, also required her to find a balance between her role as a mother, a widow, and a powerful aristocratic woman. By reading the sources about the Stanley women through the lens of gender theory, they emerge as extraordinary subjects. They allow us to finally blend gender theory with the quantity of sources that more traditional early modern English historians are comfortable with. Perhaps they can even help bridge the divide between G.R. Elton and Joan Wallach Scott. The Stanley women allow an ideal balance between empiricism and women's history. And in doing so, sixteenth and seventeenth century women can become even more alive for historians of early modern England, the family, and gender.

Prologue

The Family, Women, and Gender in Early Modern England

Reconceptualizing the demographical categories of early modern women is a precarious endeavor. This is partially because our own society has usurped many of the discourses associated with *mother*, *wife*, *single woman*, etc. It is also because decades of scholarly works have been built upon an implied understanding of these roles. We need to be wary, however, of going the way of Gertrude Stein: *a wife is a wife is a wife...* If we are to truly understand the experiences of early modern women, we must find ways to allow these categories to carry different meanings in different situations. We must also find ways to conceive of how women (and men) fluidly negotiated their many roles. But we should not merely dismiss the almost fifty years of historiography that plays a crucial part in constructing our understanding of the social categories associated with the early modern family. Since the 1970's, scholars of English history have started to study and write about the various social and political roles held by women, the political climate of marriages and households, and the impact historical events had on gender relations. The field of family history emerged from the debate over the "gentry crisis." The numerous major theses stemming from this early debate have become paradigm-shifting components for early modernists. As the fields of women's history, gender history, and family history grow, so too will our historical perspectives. Therefore, this historiography merits a closer examination so that we can conceptualize early modern women's familial roles, question some of the field's shortcomings, and consider some of

the alternative views offered by the lives, families, and kinship networks of the Stanley women.

The Stanley women lives were set against the backdrop of one of the most tumultuous eras of English history. Their lives reflect some of the major moments that have come to serve as critical historical markers for scholars. Historians became interested in how the familial unit fit into this large historical scene in the mid-1960's. In 1964, historian Peter Laslett and Tony E.A. Wrigley founded the Cambridge Group for the History of Population and Social Structures at Cambridge University. Their initial purpose was to study demographic history and the history of the family and household.¹ For the first time, scholars looked beyond the realm of high politics, diplomatic, and economic history to study how the early modern family functioned. The CGHPS first scoured local parish records to compile information about individual people's ages at their marriages, christenings of their children, and deaths. Wrigley explains that once this data was assembled, "the information can be drawn together to give the demographic experience of individual families, then the different family experiences can be aggregated to give the demographic experience of the community as a whole."² This was the first step in indentifying trends of family culture in early modern England. The group continues to fund work that explores the relationship between birth, marriage, and death and the family, culture, and politics of English history.

¹ Cambridge Group for the History of Population and Social Structure, <http://www.hpss.geog.cam.ac.uk> [accessed 18 June 2009].

² E.A. Wrigley, "Small-scale but not Parochial: The Work of the Cambridge Group for the History of Population Studies," *Family and Community History* 1 (1998): 27-36.

A year after the Cambridge group first met, Lawrence Stone wrote his controversial and ground-breaking work *The Crisis of the Aristocracy*. In it, he says that, "the eighty-odd years between 1558 and 1641 form a very satisfactory unit of time for historical purposes... It sees the most critical phase of fundamental changes in politics, society, thought, and religion."³ The lives of the Stanley women fell right into the center of the era which Stone demarks as one of deep-seated transformation at all levels of society. Examining the lives and kinship networks of four noblewomen and their families during this period reveals remarkable insights as to how early modern people experienced these macro-societal shifts, while at the same time allowing the humanity of our subjects to influence our scholarly analysis. Stone argues that using statistical analysis of the era serves "merely as controls to check the significance of the tangled jigsaw of anecdote and quotation thrown up by three talkative, quarrelsome, idiosyncratic generations of noble men and women."⁴ He is quite right in his approach, but four decades of work has been generated since Stone's initial studies. Revisiting these "three talkative, quarrelsome, idiosyncratic generations" in light of new themes can yield fresh perspectives and new insights.

Whether he intended it or not, Stone's work had a significant impact on the field of family history in early modern England. In *The Crisis of the Aristocracy*, Stone argues that a social catastrophe for the English aristocracy developed during this period as a result of the decreased number of peerage titles granted by Elizabeth I. He claims that

³ Lawrence Stone, *The Crisis of the Aristocracy 1558-1641* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1965), 1.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 3.

this led to a vast expansion of the gentry class and threatened the social hierarchy of English society. It would be a grave understatement to say that English scholars around the world energetically contested his claims, but once the controversy cooled, many historians were still left wondering how the political and economic condition of England in the early modern period affected family life. Scholars of English history became interested in family structure, marital relations, childhood, and death practices within the home. The history of the family stemmed directly out of this intense interest in political and economic history, which had a dramatic impact on the early work in the field. Eventually the intense family-centric obsessions of early modern contemporaries caught the attention of modern scholars. Family history started as an attempt to understand the early modern English family in a historical context that was shaped by an ever-changing political, social, economic, and religious climate. Whereas historians were once exclusively interested in high politics and economic history, now the trend became trying to understand how the early modern English family fit into this mix.

In 1977, Stone published his magnum opus on family life in England, *The Family, Sex and Marriage in England*. Stone explains that many ideological, political, and economic shifts took place between 1500 and 1800. He argues that these shifts altered family structure as well as the ways that individual people related to one another. While part of his work can be read as another implication of the crisis of the aristocracy, Stone goes beyond class-based analysis. He explains that the Reformation, Civil Wars, Restoration, Enlightenment and Scientific Revolution all left their marks on marriage, courtship, reproduction, and the family economy. He sees three major phases of the

impact of these larger social movements, and he divides the history of the family into three primary categories: the Open Lineage Family from 1500 to 1580, the Restricted Patriarchal Nuclear Family from 1580-1640, and the Closed Domestic Nuclear Family from 1640 to 1800.⁵ Stone argues the family and marriage became highly politicized during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and as a result, economic and political survival were pivotal in selecting a marriage partner for both men and women.

According to Stone, beginning around 1500, personal feelings of love and fondness came to hold very little meanings for husbands and wives and between parents and children.⁶ Stone believed that aristocratic marriages became political, sexual and financial unions for people, and even plebian marriages occurred for the sole purpose of economic survival. Emotional connections, love, and fondness were merely coincidental and of no significant importance. Stone introduced the idea that early modern family life did not include love in England. Philippe Aries, however, made this same argument fifteen years earlier in his study of French families during the Ancien Regime.⁷ Stone imported the concept and applied it to early modern England.

Despite the historiographical controversy that followed Stone, his work demonstrates an ideological approach that other historians of family life frequently emulate. Stone incorporates a wide range of anthropological theory in his book, and draws from Geertz and Levi-Strauss in his introduction. He outlines his theoretical

⁵ Lawrence Stone, *The Family, Sex and Marriage in England 1500-1800* (New York: Harper & Row, 1977), 4-8.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Philippe Aries, *Centuries of Childhood: A Social History of Family Life*, trans. Robert Baldick (New York: Vintage Books, 1962).

framework by establishing that, "The treatment of women by men, and the treatment of children by adults, can only be understood in the light of the cultural norms of the society as a whole."⁸ The use of anthropological methodologies facilitates an important change in our understanding of the early modern family because it demands that we start to study the family as both a political *and* cultural unit. Before the integration of anthropology and history, the cultural aspect of the family did not appear on the historians's radar because they believed it to be absent from the spheres of high politics and diplomatic history. Once our perspective is broadened, understanding family life becomes essential for understanding the ways that real people experienced the impact of politics and economic policy. This becomes particularly important as a means of integrating women into the story of the early modern period.

John Gillis argues this very point in his work, *For Better, For Worse: British Marriages, 1600 to the Present*. Gillis focuses on the rituals of courtship and marriage as means of creating a familial unit. He is less interested in the large social role of marriage and more interested in exploring why men and women of different times chose to marry. He argues that, "The marriage process is simultaneously private and public; it is personal but also political."⁹ Gillis outlines four distinct historical eras for marriages: the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, 1750 to 1850, 1850 to 1960, 1960 to the present. Gillis argues that social changes mark each of these phases and cultural transitions impacted people's need for marriage. In the early modern period, marriage "was a social

⁸ Ibid., 19.

⁹ John Gillis, *For Better, For Worse: British Marriages, 1600 to the Present*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), 8.

drama involving family, peers, and neighbors in a collective process aimed at making things right economically, socially, and psychologically, as well as legally."¹⁰ He then argues that the Industrial Revolution and gradual integration of capitalism fundamentally changed relations between men and women; this changed the role of marriage in their lives. Gillis then sees that the mid-nineteenth and twentieth centuries "saw a retreat from marriage as partnership."¹¹ In the post-1960 western world, love and marriage are two separate things. In a somewhat cyclical way, Gillis sees that, "The new cohabitation had many of the features of the old betrothal."¹²

While Gillis's study extends beyond the early modern period, his goal is to refocus larger discussions of the history of marriage. He believes that past historians (like Stone) misrepresent the social importance of marriage to people: "By coming in only at the official act of what is a much longer drama, they miss most of what ordinary people signify as they really important aspects of courtship and marriage."¹³ There is little doubt that the institution of marriage is crucial in people's lives, both in the past and the present. But Gillis believes that historians should not just look at the social and cultural reasons in getting married, nor should they focus solely on courtship and wedding ritual. Rather, historians should consider the historical meaning of marriage to a couple. While his work contributes to family history, Gillis is really writing a history of

¹⁰ Ibid., 17.

¹¹ Ibid., 233.

¹² Ibid., 308.

¹³ Ibid., 6.

the couple. He argues that, "Because marriages are relationships, they have a dynamic quality that can only be expressed in a temporal way."¹⁴

Gillis's point is well taken. However, a "temporal" discussion of marriage does not allow for a deeper understanding of the role marriages (and families) played within a specific historical moment. The 1994 study, *The Gentry in England and Wales*, by Felicity Heal and Clive Holmes does help to situate families within a specific time. Heal and Holmes respond directly to Stone's work in *Family Sex and Marriage*, and in *The Crisis of the Aristocracy*. The analysis of gentry families done by Heal and Holmes seeks to demonstrate that it is impossible to accurately argue that the rise of gentry families in the early modern period threatened the aristocratic class because the historical context of the classification of gentry was far too vague.¹⁵ People living in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries did not have a precise definition of "gentry," and therefore contemporaries applied it in a variety of ways. Rather, Heal and Holmes argue that all social mobility took place within the constructs of family. The families that did attempt to climb the social ladder offered by the new Stuart kings did so as a family unit; no individual achieved favor without the assistance of family. This went beyond the traditional interpretations of primogeniture and also came to mean that younger sons and daughters had to find suitable matches as well in order to solidify a family's reputation. Heal and Holmes argue that the sixteenth century witnessed a tight codification of acceptable and expected family behaviors, and any person who wished to hold a high

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Felicity Heal and Clive Holmes, *The Gentry in England and Wales, 1500-1700* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994).

public status had to ensure that their family adhered to widely accepted social standards. Early modern families perpetuated this behavior, but responsibility did not just end with a strong public image. Holmes and Heal argue that it became the responsibility of the family unit to educate younger family members in social practices, as well as continue family ideologies and beliefs. After the Reformation in England, for example, the family became the central mechanism for promoting a particular religious ideology and practice. In regards to marriage, Heal and Holmes contend that if a marriage was an unhappy one, it was because the husband and wife were not effectively living by the social standards they were taught, or because their families had failed to teach them correctly. Social expectations shaped all personal behaviors and this was rooted in the family.

One thing which Stone, Heal, and Holmes all agree on is that the increased practice of enclosure had one of the largest impacts on both issues of class and family in England. Enclosure acts may not seem as flashy as many other early modern societal shifts, but the slow-growing practice of enclosing land for private use in the sixteenth century gave rise to a number of gentry families, and its impact cannot be ignored.¹⁶ Other historians then began to explore what major events of sixteenth and seventeenth century had on the family unit. David Cressy, for example, has come to view the family as the stage on which early modern people enacted important social rituals. Cressy's 1997 book, *Birth, Marriage and Death*, zooms in on the social practices associated with

¹⁶ The impact of enclosure acts and the use of the term gentry have been heavily debated. See: David Hall, "Enclosure in Northamptonshire," *Northamptonshire Past and Present* 9 (1997): 350-367; Felicity Heal and Clive Holmes, *The Gentry in England and Wales, 1500-1700* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994); Leigh Shaw-Taylor, "Parliamentary Enclosure and the Emergence of an English Agricultural Proletariat," *Journal of Economic History* 61, no. 3 (2001): 640-662; Lawrence Stone, *Family Sex, and Marriage and The Crisis of the Aristocracy*; J.R. Wordie, "The Chronology of English Enclosure, 1500-1914," *Economic History Review* 36, 2nd ser., no. 4 (1983): 483-505.

birth, marriage and death in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. He argues that this period saw an increased sexual division of labor within the home, which also led to the gradual decrease in female authority.¹⁷ Like Stone, Cressy is heavily influenced by anthropological methodology. Cressy, however, believes that it is not possible for Lawrence Stone to draw upon anthropology and still disregard emotional connections within the family.¹⁸ Part of his objective is to put feelings back into the early modern family (where he claims it always was) in an effort to reevaluate the types of processes associated with birth, marriage, and death within the period. He argues that their births and the births of their children, marriages, and deaths demarked the life cycles of early modern men and women. All rituals and rites of passage practiced within the family revolved around these three moments of life, and all of these underwent major changes in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Cressy argues that it is in times of change that we are best able to see the ways that people adapt and cultural ritual changes. Secular and ecclesiastic reforms eventually lead to reforms in childbearing practices, churching, baptism, courtship, marriage, and death rituals. Focusing solely on birth, marriage, and death in individual lives, however, dramatically ignores significant moments and themes that are present and changing throughout the courses of early modern lives.

Cressy's work sheds light on the meaningful role of rituals in the lives of early modern men and women although it does not explain how these rituals fit into the course of individual lives. Cressy's work starts to add humanity to the lives of early modern

¹⁷ David Cressy, *Birth, Marriage, and Death: Ritual, Religion, and the Life-Cycle in Tudor and Stuart England*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997).

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 261.

contemporaries by giving meaning and depth to their rituals. While Cressy looks at these three major phases of life, Ralph Houlbrooke's work centers around a detailed study of the various meanings of death and the family in his 1998 book, *Death, Religion, and the Family in England*. Whereas Stone and Cressy argue that specific historical events of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries each left their mark on the shape of the English family, Houlbrooke believes that changes happened very slowly and did not affect the core structure of the English family. He contends that these outside changes only affected the practice of familial rites. Houlbrooke explains that, "The changing causes and nature of mortality can be identified with growing confidence. The main lines of development of religious doctrine are fairly clear. However, what happened in the history of the family, and when, is far more obscure."¹⁹ This statement articulates just how difficult it is to accurately write the history of the family. Naturally, certain generalizing statements must be made, but these statements can also be misleading because the family unit can be quite elusive. Changes in politics or church policies can be documented and plotted, but how individual members of society experienced these changes is less tangible.

Houlbrooke believes that the Reformation did not transform the organization of English families, but it did significantly alter the way that families dealt with death. He explains that the gradual acceptance of Protestantism meant that people abandoned their belief in purgatory. The Catholic Church said masses to release a person's soul from purgatory, and potentially sway God to accept the soul into heaven. If purgatory did not

¹⁹ Ralph Houlbrooke, *Death, Religion, and the Family in England, 1480-1750* (Oxford: Clarendon Press: Oxford, 1998), 2.

exist, as Protestants believed, then death was the final moment when a soul's fate was determined (as long as the family did not believe in predestination.) This shift made people extremely fearful of death, and changed their relationship with it. This was a significant issue for families because death was a common part of family life. Pregnancy and childbirth were very dangerous. This meant that after conception both the man and woman had to prepare for the possibility that the mother could die in childbirth. Houlbrooke argues that this brought women closer to death more frequently than men. Pregnant women needed to constantly prepare their souls for death and husbands/fathers needed to prepare themselves for the possibility of losing their wives. While he does not argue for any universal English beliefs regarding death, he does state that death and the rituals associated with mourning and passing became increasingly fundamental to the family in the early modern period. He claims that in order to better understand the English family, scholars must understand the rituals they practiced as well as their interpersonal relationships. Houlbrooke, like Cressy emphasizes birth and death rituals as the primary access points into understanding the inner workings of the early modern family.

Diana O'Hara's work, *Courtship and Constraint*, also rearticulates this point.²⁰ Whereas Houlbrooke looks at family rituals associated with death, O'Hara centers her study on courtship and marriage negotiations in the early modern period. She is primarily interested in the lower and often times overlooked economic classes, and spends very little time discussing the courtship process for the upper classes of society.

²⁰ Diana O'Hara, *Courtship and Constraint: Rethinking the Making of Marriage in Tudor England* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000).

Stone's work plays an influential role for O'Hara, and she reaches many of the same conclusions he does. She finds it problematic that Stone used a study of the upper classes to make sweeping generalizations and apply them to all levels of society.

O'Hara looks at the courtship process and the means that lead to marriage. She also uses anthropological methodologies to understand the monetary and social exchanges that took place during courtship and to understand it as a cultural phenomenon. She draws upon John Gillis's above mentioned work to argue that marriage and courtship were not private activities for two people, and that family, friends, and outside networks both supported and limited courtship and marriage. She ultimately concludes that all marriages centered around economic support, if not financial gain, but she does go to the extent as to say that love did not enter the picture at all. The family oversaw all stages of courtship. Families closely regulated the age of their marrying sons and daughters, and the ages of their prospective spouses. O'Hara builds upon the foundation David Cressy laid and argues that early modern people expected courtship and marriage to take place during the appropriate time of life. She also agrees with Cressy that courtship and ultimately marriage defined life for early modern men and women.

When we penetrate the facade of the family, however, we begin to see that the personal lives of early modern people comprised complex networks, power negotiations, adaptation in the face of religious and political reform, transformation of family rites and rituals, and a constant struggle between individual contentment and larger social expectations. These complexities can be abstract and difficult to grapple with. Helen Berry and Elizabeth Foyster recently addressed the complicated process of writing about

family history by explaining that, "Any collection on the theme of the early modern family must simultaneously demonstrate the chronological and thematic breadth which is emblematic of a vibrant field of research, but also the selectivity that comes with specialist focus."²¹ Stone, Cressy, Houlbrooke, and O'Hara introduced important thematic issues and debates to our conception of the early modern family. The next step in building a historiography for the family is to explore how these issues played out in specific families.

The work done by Vivienne Larminie on the Newdigate family in the seventeenth century exemplifies the value of understanding the experience of a specific family in the early modern period. In her book, *Wealth, Kinship, and Culture*, Larminie believes "That early modern families might present society in microcosm is a perspective that many contemporaries would have endorsed"²² because the family was the fundamental unit in early modern English culture. Therefore, micro-histories centered on the family remain true to that mentality. For her, the goal is not always about trying to access larger social relevance, but can sometimes be about understanding the period in the contemporaries' own terms. This perspective alone moves the field away from Stone's model-based descriptions of the family. Larminie looks closely at the lives of the Newdigates of Arbury to better understand what their lives can reveal to modern scholars about the structure of marriage, family, inheritance, and power.

²¹ Helen Berry and Elizabeth Foyster, eds, *The Family in Early Modern England*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 8.

²² Vivienne Larminie, *Wealth, Kinship and Culture: The Seventeenth-Century Newdigates of Arbury and Their World*, (Suffolk: The Boydell Press, 1995), 1.

Larminie explains that the old view was that political favor determined family success; the “gentry controversy” added the opinion that marriage and inheritance were crucial.²³ Larminie argues that understanding contemporaries’ personal lives actually requires attention to four primary themes: the inheritance of the eldest son, the inheritances of the younger sons and daughters in relation to the eldest son, the ultimate fortunes of the younger siblings in relation to the eldest son, and the arrangements of strong marriage alliances to ensure a family’s success. She claims that in order to fully understand a family’s power, one must look at the other siblings beyond the eldest son. Simply following the trail of wealth passed from father to eldest son will mislead historians and prevent them from an accurate assessment of the real transference of wealth and power.

In her detailed account of the lives of John Newdigate II, John Newdigate III, and their siblings, wives, and children, Larminie determines that the family’s influence did not come entirely from the father’s name, money and reputation alone. Wives, widows, and siblings had an enormous impact on their family’s social status. Larminie attributes much of the thriving success of the Newdigate family to Lady Newdigate’s shrewd marriage arrangements for her children and management of her jointure after her husband’s death. Larminie also argues that the Newdigate family was just as concerned with the marriages of their daughters as with sons. This fact also makes the sibling relationship between brothers and sisters important, as brothers and entire families could gain significant ties through their sister's/daughter’s in-laws. This example destabilizes

²³ Ibid., 21.

old arguments that a family's generational success rested solely on the eldest son's inheritance and marriage alliances. She uses this as a means of criticizing the conclusions of Stone and O'Hara that finances lay at the heart of every marriage. She claims that by the end of the seventeenth century, personal feelings played a larger role in the determination of marriage than they had in earlier eras.

The role of affection in marital relations also plays an important role in the 1999 book, *Sociability and Power in Late-Stuart England* by Susan Whyman.²⁴ In it, Whyman writes a micro-history about the Verney family's rise and fall in Restoration England. Whyman reconstructs the lives of the Verney family members by utilizing a private family archive, which she says no one had fully explored. She explains that these rare sources allow her to see perspectives and relationships that are often hidden from the historian's view. The well-preserved correspondence and family documents enable Whyman the opportunity to access interpersonal relationships and examine them against the larger social and political climate of the time. She is very concerned with making this micro-history relevant to a larger understanding and reconstruction of early modern England. She believes that the lives of the individuals about whom she is writing exemplify larger cultural norms, and her goal is to break down some of the "traditional" interpretations of patriarchy in marriage and the family.

Whyman believes that the lives of the Verneys centered around two primary dichotomies: country v. city, and power v. authority. These dichotomies provide the means to re-frame discussions of the family history. Whyman situates a specific family

²⁴ Susan Whyman, *Sociability and Power in Late Stuart England: The Cultural Worlds of the Verneys, 1660-1720* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999).

within specific contexts. She argues that it was crucial for the survival of rising early modern families to maintain strong networks in both London as well as in the country. This ensured authority in both regions and was necessary to keep the family rooted in English social politics. She argues for the need to make clear distinctions between local power and national power, and believes that past scholars have often times confused one with the other. Whyman argues that it is important to understand that while local authority could bring national recognition, it did not always do so. The Verney family had to acquire a broad network of connections in the country and in London in order to rise in status.

Whyman also believes that power and authority were not the same things; she faults past historians for confusing the two. Although Whyman does not draw specifically from gender theory, she argues that women did hold social power without political authority. This power made them significant players in their family. She argues that the lives of the Verney women demonstrate that while they may not have held political authority, they did have significant influence in their own lives and in their familial relationships. This point relates to the work done by Larminie, and here we see an important new phase in the historiography of the early modern family. These types of micro-histories allow scholars to conceive of different types of autonomy and control than cannot be seen when only looking at national policy. They transform our understanding of contemporary personal lives by arguing that a traditional patriarchal interpretation of family and marriage prevent us from understanding the complex nature of these relationships.

A third example of the micro-historical style is Molly McClain's *Beaufort: The Duke and his Duchess*.²⁵ Whereas Larminie and Whyman look at larger family networks among multiple generations, husbands, wives, siblings, and children, McClain takes a biographical look at Henry Somerset, first duke of Beauford, and his second wife Mary, widow of Lord Beauchamp. McClain looks closely at their individual lives, as well as their marital relationship and the home that they created at Badminton House. She writes her study in a narrative format, which adds to the biographical nature of the work and shifts the focus away from Restoration England to the Somerset's personal lives. Rather than broadly discussing how families coped with the reforms of post-Civil War England and the Restoration, McClain recounts the experience of the duke and duchess in order to provide detail and context to their own experiences. This approach illustrates that while the duke was concerned with regaining his family fortunes lost in the Civil War, the duchess played her own role in maintaining the family reputation and endorsing their socio-political ambitions.

The Somersets dealt with religious contention, national crisis, and international wars with scientific logic rather than medieval superstition. McClain uses their specific experiences to argue that by the end of the seventeenth century English families thought of themselves in a different way than they had at the onset of the century. While the family was still the fundamental unit of English life, McClain argues that this was a period of significant transformation in the daily practices and intellectual conception of aristocratic families. Whereas Houlbrooke and Cressy saw major shifts in the practices

²⁵ Molly McClain, *Beaufort: The Duke and his Dutchess, 1657-1715* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001).

of the early modern family, McClain sees that by the end of the seventeenth century, aristocrats completely altered their sense of self.

While micro-histories and narrative accounts like those written by Larminie, Whyman, and McClain provide deep insight into the personal lives of early modern contemporaries, larger overviews like those of Cressy, Houlbrooke, O'Hara, and Stone create a historical framework to conceive of peoples' experiences.²⁶ Scholars who write about birth, marriage, death and the family in early modern England raise a number of points that shape the way we think of the period. They force us to find deeper understandings of the household. These historians use anthropology and social history as the methodological approaches in order to connect the family to the larger cultural life of early modern England.

While it is essential to explore diverse relationships between family and society, the family also provides unique access to specific demographics of early modern society: namely women. The family unit provides the most visible intersection of men and women in the early modern period. Each of the scholars mentioned above address in some way the heavy-handed patriarchal structure of the early modern family, yet none of these works seriously address the role that gender relations played in the formation and perpetuation of patriarchy and its impact on the family. The mid to late twentieth century saw the rise of family history as a unique field of study; it also saw the rise of women's history and gender history as fields. Studies of family, gender, and women merge,

²⁶ For other examples of micro-historical accounts of families, see also: Molly McClain, "False and Unjust Slanders': The Duchess of Beaufort and her Daughter Quarrel Over the Seymour Estate," *The Wiltshire Archeological and Natural History Magazine* 96 (2003): 98-110; and Alison Wall, "Elizabethan Precept and Feminine Practice: The Thynne Family of Longleat," *History* 75, no. 243 (January 1990): 23-38.

intersect, and frequently collide because of the overlapping nature of their subjects. Scholars of early modern English history have made women their subjects for many decades; the field of the history of the family has certainly had a huge role in creating a place for women in historical discussions. Women as subjects of historical study have, however, held a precarious place in the historiography of early modern England.

In 1985, David Underdown presented an explanation for the unstable place of women, both historically and historiographically. He sees that there was a gender crisis in the midst of all the other upheavals of the early modern period. Fear for the stability of the family consumed early modern authors and threatened their sense of familial order. While he cites other historians who discuss the revolutionary elements of the Reformation, the slow growth of capitalism, and the witch craze, Underdown presents another possible explanation for this social anxiety by arguing that, "Neither these nor historians of the family, however, have systematically considered the possibility of a crisis in gender relations in the years around 1600."²⁷ Underdown reads the increased production of literature, which addresses the instability of the family and the commonality of scolds as signs of this anxiety over gendered behavioral norms.

Underdown sees these tensions affecting the role of women as wives, not just the public perception of women. He argues that, "married women were rebelling against patriarchal authority, or were thought to have been doing so."²⁸ Women's behavior threatened the stability of the family (the most basic cultural unit) causing early modern

²⁷ David Underdown, "The Taming of the Scold: The Enforcement of Patriarchal Authority in Early Modern England," in *Order and Disorder in Early Modern England*, eds. Anthony Fletcher and John Stevenson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 117.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 135.

contemporaries to fear that the entire patriarchal system was at risk. This meant that people had to stop viewing the family (and the sexes for that matter) as static. Rather than adapting to social changes, the gendered panic made people want to tighten the reins of patriarchal authority in the name of preserving social order. Underdown introduces gender to the historiography of early modern England as a revolutionary catalyst rather than a category for analysis.²⁹

Susann Dwyer Amussen presents an article in the same publication, addressing gender, family, and social order. In it, she addresses the popular early modern analogy that the hierarchy and power distribution in the family was a metaphor for the state. Amussen argues that this analogy has serious problems for the field of family history because, "It means that the distinction between 'family' and 'society' was absent from early modern thought."³⁰ Amussen takes issue with Underdown's thesis. She acknowledges that, "Many people in the early seventeenth century thought that society was falling apart;...In spite of this, the gender order was never challenged explicitly, and the inferiority of women never denied."³¹ Instead, Amussen believes that economic and social issues were at the heart of the social crisis.

She addresses the relationship between gender and social arrangement in her book, *An Ordered Society: Gender and Class in Early Modern England*. Whereas Stone looks at the inner workings of the household and family structure, Amussen focuses more

²⁹ See Introduction and Joan W. Scott, "Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis," *American Historical Review* 91, no. 5 (December 1986): 1053-1075.

³⁰ Susan Dwyer Amussen, "Gender, Family and the Social Order, 1560-1725," in *Order and Disorder in Early Modern England*, 196.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 216.

on the perceptions of how a household *should* function. She writes that her intention is “less on what people in families and villages thought of each other, but on what they expected of each other and why those expectations might be disappointed.”³² Amussen argues that the intensely regimented hierarchy of English society and public roles made it virtually impossible for individual people to live up to the larger social expectations. Amussen studies gender and class roles in relation to what she explains to be the two most significant themes of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries in England: economic growth and the Reformation. Because of the dramatic impacts these two issues had on individual households, Amussen believes that, “the family was a social, public institution, not a private one that could be left to its own devices.”³³

This observation situates Amussen's work in the middle of a larger historiographical debate in gender history and political history. For Amussen, the early modern household did not belong to a “private sphere,” the inaccessible world of women, children, and daily life. It was not until the eighteenth century that changing political ideologies forced the household to shift from a public space toward a private sphere.³⁴ Marriages in all classes start to become less contractual and more emotionally consensual as politics moved out of the home.

³² Susan Dwyer Amussen, *An Ordered Society: Gender and Class in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1988), 6.

³³ *Ibid.*, 36.

³⁴ For more about "private sphere" ideologies in the eighteenth century, see: Amanda Vickery, "Golden Age to Separate Spheres? A Review of the Categories and Chronology of English Women's History," *Historical Journal* 36 (1993): 383-414; and Amanda Vickery, *The Gentleman's Daughter: Women's Lives in Georgian England* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998).

Demonstrating changes in people's social expectations of each other can be a tricky task and requires the interpretation and fine reading of historical sources. Amussen uses court records from defamation cases to better understand the social values of English society and to see at what point people began questioning the behavior of others. She explains that, "The order that heads of household were to maintain in their homes was based on a rigid moral code. Much of this code is revealed by the way in which family and sexual behavior shaped reputation. Reputation derived its significance from the nature of the village community."³⁵ Thus, we see that people in their homes regulated their own behavior because they feared public retribution. Amussen also believes that emerging capitalist systems affected gender and class roles once social expectations began changing. She writes that, "The patterns of choice of executor changed over time, reflecting the increasing importance of market production and capitalist agriculture in the villages."³⁶ The economy directly affects the household because as the market changed, and the available goods changed, so too did people's tastes and material desires. Contemporaries of the seventeenth century found themselves, their families, and their households in a transitional era that would gradually start to accept this reconfiguration in the next century.

At the same time that Amussen and Underdown were studying the roles that issues of gender played in society at large, other historians were beginning to look exclusively at the experiences of early modern women. While early modern English

³⁵ Amussen, *An Ordered Society*, 98.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 84.

scholars were quite comfortable with discussing women in relation to the family (or the church), many social and political historians had serious doubts about scholarly works which looked at early modern women in isolation from these social institutions. In 1985, before reviewing Antonia Fraser's *The Weaker Vessel* and Mary Prior's *Women in English Society, 1500-1800*, Lawrence Stone wrote the following:

Before beginning a discussion of the books under review, I must first set out the ten commandments which should, in my opinion, govern the writing of women's history at any time and in any place:

1. Thou shalt not write about women except in relation to men and children. Women are not a distinct caste, and their history is a story of complex interactions;
2. Thou shalt strive not to distort the evidence and the conclusions to support modern feminist ideology: social change is by no means always the product of an activist minority, and all change is relative not absolute;
3. Thou shalt not forget that in the past nearly all women paid at least lip service to the idea that they were in all respects inferior to men, as ordained by God. The only area in which they were thought to be clearly stronger was in their sexual voracity, their capacity to have multiple orgasms, but this was more a source of shame and temptation than of pride;
4. Thou shalt not confuse prescriptive norms with social reality;
5. Thou shalt exercise subtlety in recognizing diversity, ambivalence, and ambiguity concerning the relative strength of love, sex, money, birth, parental authority, and brute force in determining the choice of a spouse;
6. Thou shalt not assume the ubiquity in the past of modern emotional patterns—neither premarital love, nor conjugal affection, nor maternal devotion to infants. Circumstances and culture are often stronger than natural instincts;
7. Thou shalt not exaggerate the importance in the past of gender over that of power, status, and wealth, even if all women experienced the same biological destiny;
8. Thou shalt not use the biographies of a handful of exceptional (usually upper-class) ladies to describe the experience of the majority of (necessarily lower-class) women;

9. Thou shalt be clear about what constitutes real change in the experience and treatment of women;

10. Thou shalt not omit to analyze with care the structural constraints on women created by values, religion, customs, laws, and the nature of the economy.³⁷

Stone believed in a difference between studies of family history and studies of women and gender history. The difference lied in their methodological approaches. Historians, like Stone, have studied women, gender, and patriarchy by drawing from issues of social history. Other scholars have infused feminist and gender theories into the field of family history in order to reframe the role of women within a familial unit. These theories help historians move away from more static interpretations of various women's experiences.

In response to these *10 Commandments*, Patricia Crawford states that, "Stone's position caricatures the objectives and practices of women's history, and denies the essential claim of feminist history that women have had a separate historical experience." She argues that, "Just as men have a history as fathers, distinct from the history of parents, so maternity has a history separate from the history of the family."³⁸ In the late 1980's and early 1990's, a number of historians started to look for new ways to organize scholarship about women. In 1990, Valerie Fildes opened the introduction to a book about early modern motherhood with the observation: "Although an increasing amount of work is being published on the lives of English women in the pre-industrial period,

³⁷ Lawrence Stone, "Only Women," *The New York Review of Books* 32, no. 6 (April 11, 1985). Both Joan Wallach Scott and Mary Prior had response letters published in the May 30, 1985 volume of the journal. The May volume also contained a response letter from Stone. Antonia Fraser, *The Weaker Vessel: Women's Lot in Seventeenth-Century England* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1984); Mary Prior, ed., *Women in English Society 1500-1800* (London: Methuen, 1985).

³⁸ Patricia Crawford, "The Construction and Experiences of Maternity in Seventeenth-Century England," in *Women as Mothers in Pre-Industrial England: Essays in Memory of Dorothy McLaren*, ed. Fildes, Valerie (London: Routledge, 1990), 5.

research on their role as mothers remains at an early stage. Yet,...the preparation for, and the experience and result of motherhood were central to the existence of women in all classes of society."³⁹ Patricia Crawford, Linda Pollock, Andrian Wilson, Robert Schnucker, Fiona Newall, Valerie Fildes, and Mary Prior all contributed essays to the volume in an effort to demonstrate to Stone, and those who agreed with him, that motherhood shaped the experience of early modern women in unique ways from their male counterparts. It therefore deserves acute scholarly attention.⁴⁰

By the 1990's, women's historians had generated enough scholarship to begin to take stock in their field. They had created the first round of historiography. This allowed scholars the opportunity to start engaging and evaluating existing debates.⁴¹ This also meant that people started to conduct studies that discussed the lives of women in more complete ways. Anne Laurence's 1994 work, *Women in England 1500-1760: A Social History*, is one of the first studies that presents an overview of the many aspects of the female experience. She looks at gender, class, race, marriage, family, motherhood, widowhood, work, education, religion, law, and culture. The objective of her comprehensive study "is to give some idea of the kinds of life which women from a variety of different circumstances might have had and the ways in which their

³⁹ Valerie Fildes, "Introduction," in *Seventeenth-Century England*, in *Women as Mothers in Pre-Industrial England: Essays in Memory of Dorothy McLaren*, 1.

⁴⁰ As a precursor to this work, see: Linda Pollock, *A Lasting Relationship: Parents and Children Over Three Centuries* (London: Fourth Estate, 1987).

⁴¹ For an outstanding discussion of the historiographical debates in women's history see: Jacqueline Eales, *Women in Early Modern England, 1500-1700* (London: UCL Press, 1998).

expectations might have changed between 1500 and 1760."⁴² Laurence looks for moments of continuity and discontinuity in women's lives to help contextualize against the Reformation, Civil War, and early industrialization. She calls her study a social history because she is disinterested in issues surrounding patriarchy. Laurence explains that, "The purpose of this book has been to explore what women were able to do, not what they were prevented from doing."⁴³ This objective flies in the face of Stone's *10 Commandments* because it carves out a space for women to function as individuals, not solely as wives and mothers.

Scholars also applied feminist and gender theories studies of the familial unit, not just to women exclusively. Anthony Fletcher's 1995 work, *Gender, Sex and Subordination in England 1500-1800*, looks closely at the connection between gender, the family, and the need for patriarchy in the early modern period. Fletcher explains that the period between 1500 and 1800 was a time of crisis for patriarchy in England because:

Men were struggling with enforcing patriarchy on the basis of outward gender significations. This meant two things. Male control had to be seen to rest upon a firm and decisive identification of sexual identity, even where that identification was not actually decisive. Only this could give maleness a sense of privilege and a sense of visible differentiation. Secondly heterosexual mating must remain normative.⁴⁴

These two requirements for social stability placed enormous weight on the family, as it was the locale where all of these things came to fruition. Fletcher also explores gendered

⁴² Anne Laurence, *Women in England 1500-1760: A Social History* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1994), xi.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 273.

⁴⁴ Anthony Fletcher, *Gender, Sex and Subordination in England 1500-1800*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), 83.

differences in child rearing and the behavioral expectations parents held for the children. He highlights what he sees as a dramatic shift in the way that women viewed their own responsibilities to their families. Fletcher explains that, "women were wholly caught up in an ideological formulation which, embracing both what we may call occupations and general social roles, allowed commentators to elevate basic household tasks by giving them certain vocational dignity."⁴⁵ His work places patriarchy at the center of discussions of the early modern family.

Fletcher is primarily interested in how families taught social norms to their children. He concludes that education closely followed a gendered script. Parents, particularly mothers, taught their children what was sinful and what was honorable; both of these behaviors were highly gendered.⁴⁶ This also means that this gendered education of normative behavior took place within the home. He concludes that the distribution of popular reading materials, sermons, songs, and conduct books all helped children learn how to be men or women. Fletcher does see, however, a significant divide between the prescribed behavior for men and women found in these educational tools and the reality of their lives.

While Fletcher carefully plots the distinctions between expected behavior and real behavior, he also reduced women's role to three very general categories: spinsters, wives, and widows.⁴⁷ Barbara Harris also makes a similar observation in her study of aristocratic women between 1450 and 1550. Harris equates the responsibilities women

⁴⁵ Ibid., 223.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 101.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 225.

had to their families with the occupations held by men, and argues that we should think of women's roles in the family as *careers*.⁴⁸ Fletcher and Harris's gendered analysis of the family offers a serious critique of Stone's Restricted Patriarchal Nuclear Family model by suggesting that women continued to be influential in the successes of their families. From a gendered perspective, civic advancement started at home and the prominent role women played in helping their family advance placed the patriarchal norm under heavy strain. Harris tries to reconstruct and recontextualize the lives of upper class women to call into question these rigidly divided public and private spheres. She also believes that women played crucial roles in political life despite the shadow cast by patriarchal norms. She writes that her “book contributes to our understanding of two theoretical issues central to the writing of women’s history: historicizing patriarchy and exploring the way in which women’s gender and class positions interact to construct their social identity and roles.”⁴⁹ Harris draws distinct boundaries, not between genders, but between classes, and argues that in early modern England people class was a, if not the, primary social distinction.

Harris organizes her book along the life-phases for women: daughters, wives, and widows. She uses hundreds of examples pulled from diaries, letters, and contemporary publications to argue that aristocratic women were key political figures for men and women and that all of the major decisions made by and on behalf of women were closely associated with the state’s political order and the economic advancement of the family.

⁴⁸ Barbara Harris, *English Aristocratic Women 1450-1550: Marriage and Family, Property and Careers*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 5.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 10.

The social training a young girl received was similar to an apprenticeship, all with the goal to prepare her for her biggest career move: marriage. Harris argues that marriage was not necessarily the slavery institution that historians of eighteenth and nineteenth centuries describe. For early modern aristocratic women, the marriage contract began their careers. Wives were expected to be feminine yet stern (Harris calls this a “subordinate agency,”⁵⁰) to manage their large estates with savvy and intelligence. Women were concern with finances and property holdings. They spend a great deal of their time thinking and worrying about maintaining or improving their social status.

Harris explains that, “inheritance rather than gender was the critical divide in aristocratic families, as we saw in the case of their provision for their daughters and younger sons.”⁵¹ While there is no question that early modern society favored eldest sons, younger sons and daughters occupied similar positions in the eyes of their parents. However, once parents arranged the marriage contracts for their daughters, nothing could be done to ensure the longevity of the union because of the high mortality rates of the early modern period. Widowhood was a familiar state for many women, and Harris spends a great deal of time discussing the various experiences of widows, as well as the precarious social and political space they occupied. For many women, their marriage may have ended in the death of their husbands, but they remained forever connected to his family because of the property and financial disputes that would frequently come out of the death of a spouse.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 28.

⁵¹ Ibid., 57.

While Harris focused solely on aristocratic women, the 1998 publication by Patricia Crawford and Sara Mendelson, *Women in Early Modern England*, attempts to explore the gender-unique experience for women of all socio-economic classes. They argue that it is not possible to fully understand early modern society without first understanding the lives of women. This undertaking moves women away from their historical margins and helps to establish the idea that women had their own historical experience that differed from that of men or the family. They outline their goal by stating that their work “is the record of a struggle to understand the whole early modern English history in a new way, initially from ordinary women’s viewpoint, but in the end from everyone’s viewpoint.”⁵² They also believe that scholars cannot understand the history if only half of the population is studied. Crawford and Mendelson believe that the interpretation of feminist history is a necessary tool to understand the history of all people; they infuse early modern social, political, economic, and religious history with feminist theory.

This can be a challenging endeavor, as women’s lives are not as well documented as the lives of aristocratic men. But, by reading both the actions and silences of diaries, correspondence, household records, church records, court proceedings, and wills, Mendelson and Crawford argue that, “women could be active political agents who subverted the boundaries between the public and the private.”⁵³ Women’s experiences add insight to our understanding of even the male dominated arena of public politics. In

⁵² Sara Mendelson and Patricia Crawford, *Women in Early Modern England, 1550-1720* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), 5.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 13.

order to do this, the authors delve into virtually all aspects of the female and domestic sphere. They are not only concerned with the experience of adult women from various classes, but also emphasize that age shaped the expectation and experience of women (as well as men.) While sons were trained from an early age to be economic providers through politics or a trade, female children remained close to home and in their mother's care. This meant that much of a young girl spent much of her life away from public scrutiny. Their research leads them to the conclusion that, "Socialized as they were according to social level and gender, nevertheless many young women had considerable scope for personal agency in the life-stages from infancy to adulthood."⁵⁴ Generally, patriarchal control dominated society, however closer look at the daily life of early modern women reveals that they held a significant amount of autonomy.

Mendelson and Crawford also shift the perspective of the way that patriarchy functioned to explain that women often used their social positions to their advantage, and frequently sought to uphold patriarchal boundaries. They write that, "Women had many practical reasons for demarcating separate spaces in a society in which work and life-stages were both strongly differentiated by sex, and the gender order was enforced by the threat of violence."⁵⁵ Whereas early feminist scholars argued that historic women needed to be moved away from the margins of society, these scholars argue that in many instances women historically worked to remain out of the public center.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 123.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 212.

Since the 1980's, feminist historians have argued that early modern women not only have a shared history with their male contemporaries, but they have their own history as well. Stone contested this idea in 1985. Feminist historians shunned his complaints and continued to work arduously and with professional care. Six years after Stone published his *10 Commandments*, G.R. Elton addressed the field of women's history with the remark: "Any historian is fully entitled to hold views about women and men, about patriarchy and gender relationships and all the other preoccupations of her own day, but she is most certainly not entitled to measure people in the past by standards worked out in the present." He is correct; it is wrong to impose modern systems and beliefs on people of the past, regardless of their sex. But Elton seriously misjudges the professional quality of feminist history when he continued: "To treat the women of the past as miserable deviants from the truths of the sisterhood-truths they had never heard of-is very wrong, and the more so because the chief purpose of such history is to shore up the uneasy feeling that what now passes for truth may also be no more than an accident of time."⁵⁶ Scholars have hailed women's historians as far back as Alice Clark for, "respecting their subjects, treating them neither as passive victims of historical injustice nor as constant heroines struggling to change society."⁵⁷ Elton's suggestion that feminist ideologies "may also be no more than an accident of time" reveals a misogynistic shadow

⁵⁶ G.R. Elton, *Return to Essentials: Some Reflections on the Present State of Historical Study* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 68.

⁵⁷ Natalie Zemon Davis, "Women's History' in Transition: The European Case," in *Feminism and History*, ed. Joan Wallach Scott (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 83. See also: Alice Clark, *Working Life of Women in the Seventeenth Century* (London: Routledge, 1919).

that prevents a seamless union between women's history, gender history, and social history of early modern England.

Despite this resistance, scholars like Helen Berry, Amy Froide, Laura Gowing, and Barbara Harris continue to find new ways to discuss the experiences of early modern women using gender and feminist theories.⁵⁸ The historiography recounted above demonstrates the diverse approaches scholars have used in conceptualizing the family, gender, and women. Historians have found ways to both access the experiences of women within their families and still argue that women had their own historical experiences as well. They have studied how the family both affected and reflected political and social movements of the early modern era. The familial unit adapted and changed when faced with social crisis caused by the Reformation, the Civil War, and the gradual shifts toward capitalism and industrialization.

Histories of specific families can provide an ideal setting to explore the various ways that personal interactions play out. These family histories frequently span several generations and provide scholars with detailed accounts of peoples' personal and political lives. These studies offer a distinction between the history of *the* family and the history of *a* family; they respond to the necessity to avoid over-generalizations and understand how real families functioned. They can serve as micro-historical accounts of how specific people experienced the early modern period, or allow scholars the chance to

⁵⁸ Helen Berry, *Gender, Society and Print Culture in Late-Stuart England: The Cultural World of Athenian Mercury* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003); Amy Froide, *Never Married: Singlewomen in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005); Laura Gowing, *Common Bodies: Women, Touch and Power in Seventeenth-Century England* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003); and Barbara Harris, "The Fabric of Piety: Aristocratic Women and Care of the Dead, 1450-1550," *Journal of British Studies* 48, no. 2 (April, 2009): 308-335.

comment more broadly on the role of women and the family. Scholars like Whyman, Larminie, and McClain drew from social history to discuss the relationships between the men and women of the Verney, Newdigate, and Somerset families. It is now time to write family histories which incorporate an analysis of gender, and women's history. The Stanley women provide the perfect subjects for just such a study. Their relationships and personal experiences speak to women's history, gender history, and family history. Once again, these three fields intertwine to support a study of this remarkable family of women.

Chapter 1

The Marriages of the Stanley Women: Building Kinship Networks

Since the development of language, one of the defining characteristics of human beings has been that they are generally happy to talk about their family, detailing the merits, and demerits, of parents and grandparents, of siblings and children, to say nothing of uncles, aunts, and cousins. This most basic of conversations would likely have been particularly long if initiated with an early modern aristocrat. It would try the patience of even the most sympathetic listeners once expanded into the collateral lines of the family. The mother and three daughters at the center of this dissertation were all aristocrats, either by marriage or by birth. Consequently, a conversation with them about their family would likely have been lengthy. Modern readers might well get lost in the thickets of various family trees. Nevertheless, with regular reference to attached charts, this complicated discussion of great-grandparents and grandparents will reveal much of the intellectual and social world of the Stanley women.

The Stanley women were wives, daughters, mothers, mothers-in-law, grandmothers, widows, and friends. These categories used by historians to frame studies of the history of family and gender provide necessary structure to any work, yet they also limit our ability to understand individual experiences. The large quantity of sources left by and about the Stanley women provides the opportunity to write a micro-history of their family. Even more importantly, they also reveal how the Stanley women experienced both their demographical categories (wife, widow, mother, daughter, etc) as well as the rituals associated with those categories (birth, churching, marriage, death,

etc.) The Stanley women allow us to access the fluidity of the early modern female experience, but in order to do this we must also rethink the categories themselves. *Wife, widow, mother, daughter, aristocrat* are too simple. This makes fluidity difficult to see, because the focus becomes how the Stanley women *fit* these categories, rather than how they *experienced* or even *created* them. The intersection between these roles is the aspect of the Stanley women's familial experience that provides a more well-rounded view of them as individuals.

Focusing on the fluidity of the Stanley women's experiences brings to light another crucial theme to the early modern family: kinship networks. Kinship was of paramount importance to the survival and prosperity of the aristocratic early modern family. Sixteenth and seventeenth century contemporaries used marriage and childbirth to build beneficial bonds between immediate family members and kinsmen. Megan Doolittle argues for the importance of considering kinship in relationship to the family structure because "the methodology of family-tree building is a gendered one, because it relies so heavily on names to make kinship links."¹ Her point is well taken, but kinship required much more than the assumption of a married name for women. Kinship networks were the primary means to accessing the political networks at court. Political power began at home for the aristocracy. For the Stanley women, like other aristocratic women of their time, marriages and motherhood served as the essential building block to the construction of their kinship networks. In order to understand the life experiences of

¹ Megan Doolittle, "Close Relations? Bringing Together Gender and Family in English History," in *Gender & History* 11, no 3 (November 1999): 548.

the Stanley women, we must explore how and with whom, they built these kinship networks.

The Spencers

Enclosure acts and the resulting rise of gentry families is particularly important to the early life of Alice Spencer, because the Spencers of Northamptonshire, Alice's birth family, were among these rising families who profited by enclosing common lands and made their wealth through lucrative sheep farms. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the Spencers encountered a great deal of social scorn because tenants found themselves in diaspora as they were driven off the Spencer's manorial lands. The Spencers did this in order to make more room for sheep to graze. The metaphor of "man-eating sheep" spread around England as people began to starve while sheep got fat.²

Tensions grew between the *old* aristocracy and England's *new money*, and by the mid- sixteenth century, the Spencers became the poster-family for the new rising gentry. These tensions came to a head in Parliament on 8 May 1621 between Sir Robert Spencer and the earl of Arundel. Arundel publicly ridiculed Sir Robert for having money only because of sheep farming. Sir Robert famously retorted, "When my ancestors were keeping sheep, your Lordship's ancestors were plotting treason."³ Sir Robert was referring to Arundel's father, Philip Howard who was imprisoned for staunch Catholic loyalties. Sir Robert was also alluding to Arundel's grandfather, Thomas Howard, Duke

² See Prologue for further discussion of the significance of enclosure acts.

³ See Lawrence Stone, *The Crisis of the Aristocracy 1558-1641* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1965), 58; and Mary Finch, *The Wealth of Five Northamptonshire Families, 1540-1640* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1956). Finch's work is considered to be the leading biographical work on the early Spencer family, and the details regarding the Spencers and their history come from her work.

of Norfolk, who plotted to marry Mary Stuart in an effort to overthrow Elizabeth's throne. This feud helps to exemplify the disdain the Spencers faced as they grew in wealth.

Although by 1621, Sir Robert Spencer could be seen as one of the wealthiest men in England, he did not attain this wealth overnight. His family's early prominence was established several generations before his own. William Spencer of Radbourn founded the family's estates of Althorp and Wormleighton in Northampton. His son, Sir John Spencer I, moved the family into the ranks of the rising gentry by investing the family's resources in the profitable business of sheep farming. He died on 14 April 1522. The Spencer sheep business passed on to his son Sir William Spencer, who married Susan Knightley, daughter of Sir Richard Knightley. William and Susan had one son, Sir John Spencer II, and five daughters. Sir John II inherited the family lands. By this time, the Spencers had established themselves as one of the nation's leading providers of wool, mutton, and sheep. In 1545, Sir John II married Katherine Kitson, the daughter of Sir Thomas Kitson of Hengave, Suffolk. The couple made Althorp their primary estate and raised eleven children there: five sons and six daughters. Their eldest son, Sir John III, went on to inherit the family estates when Sir John II died in 1589. It was his son, Robert, who engaged in the famous feud with the earl of Arundel. The descendents of Sir John III maintained the family estates and over several centuries advanced the Spencer family into higher levels of the English aristocracy. In recent years, Althorp has become somewhat of a tourist destination since it is home to the grave of Diana, Princess of Wales.

While the descendents of Sir John III maintained the family business, the daughters of Sir John II and Katherine Kitson provided this rising family with several opportunities to improve the family's standing through advantageous marriages. The details of the early ancestry of the Spencer family are sparse, but in 1570 Sir John II began making his move into the English aristocracy by marrying off his daughters. Sir John and Katherine started off small with the 1570 marriage of their eldest daughter, Margaret, who married Giles Allington, the son and heir of Sir Giles Allington of Horseheath. It was after this marriage that the Spencers began putting their family on the map by "purchasing" husbands from higher social classes for their remaining daughters. Unfortunately none of the marriage settlements survive for any of the marriages of their daughters. But, the families that the youngest Spencer daughters married into tell us much about their family's growing aspirations. After 1570, the Spencer family was no longer satisfied with a family tree comprised of local country sheep-farmers. From 1570 to 1580, the Spencer's profits for selling wool were at least £2,632 a year.⁴ They began to use this mounting wealth to buy their younger daughters entrance into the aristocracy.

Their first leap was with the marriage of their second daughter, Elizabeth, to Sir George Carey, Lord Hunsdon. In 1569, Carey played a part in exposing the plot between the Duke of Norfolk and Mary Queen of Scots. After that, Queen Elizabeth appointed him Marshal of the Household. Carey served as the Lord Lieutenant of Hertfordshire beginning in 1580. Three years later, Queen Elizabeth appointed him Captain of the Isle

⁴ Finch, 45.

of Wright.⁵ When Carey died in 1603, Elizabeth then married Lord Eure. In 1606, King James I appointed Lord Eure as the President of the Marches of Wales. Eure held the post until his death in 1617.⁶

The Spencer's third daughter, Anne, first married William Stanley, Lord Monteagle. They were married in 1575. Monteagle's father was Thomas Stanley, younger brother to Henry Stanley, fourth earl of Derby. The Stanleys were landed magnates in Lancashire and Cheshire and essentially controlled the local government.⁷ Monteagle, however, did not enjoy the same landed wealth as his cousins. But, like his cousins, his religious affiliations were dubious. Lancashire was a hotbed of recusant activities throughout the sixteenth century and the Stanley family played fluctuating roles in both suppressing and supporting the county's Catholic population.⁸ The Spencers must have been more interested in his heritage than his religion. The marriage between Anne and William helped pave the way for another Spencer-Stanley match to come. Monteagle died in 1581.⁹ In 1589, Anne took as her second husband Henry, Lord Compton. Compton's maternal grandfather was the earl of Shrewsbury. In 1587, Compton served as a juror at the trial of Mary Queen of Scots. His marriage to Anne was

⁵ Wallace T. MacCaffrey, "Carey, Henry, first Baron Hunsdon (1526–1596)," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, Sept 2004; online edn, Jan 2009 [http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/4649, accessed 6 July 2009].

⁶ *CP*, vol V, 181-182.

⁷ See: Christopher Haigh, *Reformation and Resistance in Tudor Lancashire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975), 87-252.

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ *CP*, vol IX, 116.

short-lived, as he also died in 1589.¹⁰ She married for a third time in 1592. Anne's third husband was Robert Sackville. Sackville inherited the title earl of Dorset in 1608. He had been an MP for Sussex, and the Joint Lord Lieutenant of the county as well. Dorset died in 1609, and Anne never remarried after his death.¹¹ Anne Spencer was born to a rising gentry family, but her three noble marriages moved her into higher circles.

Little is known about the fourth and fifth Spencer daughters, but arguably Alice, the youngest, made the most advantageous marriage. She was born at Althorp on 4 May 1559, and virtually nothing is known of her childhood and early life. In 1580, Sir John II arranged the most distinguished marriages of all of his daughters. Alice married Ferdinando Stanley, Lord Strange and eventually the fifth earl of Derby. Ferdinando was Lord Monteagle's first cousin. This marriage connected Alice to some of the most powerful families in English aristocracy since Lord Strange came from the family of landed magnates who controlled Cheshire, Lancashire, and the Isle of Man.¹² He was also a direct descendant of Henry VII.

The Stanleys

The Stanley family dates back to some of the most recognized figures in English history. And like so many English families, the family tree depicts an intricate and

¹⁰ *CP*, vol III, 390-391.

¹¹ *CP*, vol IV, 422-423.

¹² For details about the Stanley family see: J.J. Bagley, *The Earls of Derby 1485-1985* (London: Sidgwick & Jackson, 1985); Barry Coward, *The Stanleys, Lords Stanley, and Earls of Derby, 1385-1672: The Origins, Wealth, and Power of a Landowning Family* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1983); and J.R. Dickinson, *The Lordship of Man Under the Stanleys: Government and Economy in the Isle of Man, 1580-1704*, (Manchester: Published for the Chetham Society by Carnegie Publishing, 1996). See also Louis Knafla, "Spencer, Alice countess of Derby (1559-1637)," in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, ed. H.C.G. Matthew and Brian Harrison (Oxford: OUP, 2004); online ed., ed. Lawrence Goldman, May 2006 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/47391>, accessed November 6, 2006].

complicated web of intermarriage and intersections. Ferdinando's notable line began when Margaret Beaufort, countess of Richmond and Derby married her first husband, Edmund Tudor, the half brother of Henry VI. Edmund Tudor's was the son of Owen Tudor and Katherine of Valois, dowager queen of England, and widow of Henry V.¹³ The marriage between Edmund Tudor and Margaret Beauford resulted in the countess's only child, Henry Tudor, who became Henry VII when he established the Tudor monarchy at the Battle of Bosworth in 1485. Henry VII and his queen, Elizabeth of York, had four children: Arthur, Henry VIII, Margaret, and Mary. Mary's second marriage was to Charles Brandon, Duke of Suffolk, and this marriage resulted in four children, of whom three survived into adulthood. The couple's second daughter, Eleanor married Henry Clifford, and their daughter, Margaret, married Henry Stanley, forth earl of Derby. Margaret and Henry had two sons who survived into adulthood: Ferdinando and William.

The Tudor branch is not the only one that connects Ferdinando to Margaret Beaufort; she is also connected to the Stanley family by her third marriage to Thomas Stanley, first earl of Derby. Margaret's son, Henry VII, granted Thomas Stanley this title in 1485, after Thomas provided him with pivotal support at the Battle of Bosworth, without which Henry VII might have lost the battle.¹⁴ Thomas Stanley's first wife was Eleanor, daughter of Richard Neville, earl of Salisbury, and that couple had two sons: James and George. George inherited the title Lord Strange when he married Joan

¹³ See: Ralph Griffiths and Roger Thomas, *The Making of the Tudor Dynasty* (Gloucester: Alan Sutton Publishing, 1985), 25-35.

¹⁴ See: *CP*, vol IV, 205-214.

Strange, although both James and George pre-deceased their father. When Thomas Stanley died in 1504, the title of earl of Derby passed to his grandson, Thomas Stanley, only son of Lord Strange and Joan. The second earl of Derby married Anne Hastings, and the Derby and Strange titles passed to their only son, Edward. Edward's first wife was Dorothy, daughter of Thomas Howard, duke of Norfolk, (discussed above) and his second wife Agnes. The couple had three sons and four daughters. Their eldest son and heir was Henry. Henry married Margaret Clifford, daughter of Eleanor Brandon and Henry Clifford, earl of Cumberland, on 7 February 1555. Their Tudor bloodlines connected them to the Cliffords, the Greys, and the Dudleys. Their Stanley lines connected them with the Howards and the Hastings. With her marriage to Ferdinando, Alice Spencer left a rising gentry family and situated herself among the sixteenth century's most prominent aristocracy. This marriage also provided her accesses to an enormously powerful kinship network. The Stanley family controlled the county of Lancashire. Thomas Cromwell had granted the third earl of Derby control over the county in the 1530's in exchange for his support in suppressing the Pilgrimage of Grace and other recusant activities.¹⁵ The Stanleys were also the "Lords of the Isle of Man." The crown had given the Stanleys the Isle in 1406 and they maintained autonomous control of the island until 1736. In 1522, the Privy Council ruled that the Isle was "not of the Realm of England," which gave the Stanley family complete control over the government of the Isle.¹⁶

¹⁵ Haigh, 104-106.

¹⁶ Dickinson, 1-18.

Alice and Ferdinando were happily married for nearly fifteen years. They were both twenty years old when they married. They also spent considerable time at Knowsley Hall and Lathom Hall in Lancaster, the country seat of the Stanley family. They were widely known for their patronage of poetry, literature, and theatre; the couple even controlled a troupe of actors in London called Strange's Men.¹⁷ The countess briefly maintained control of the players after her husband's death, after which the group merged with Lord Chamberlain's Men. Ferdinando and Alice had three daughters: Anne, Frances, and Elizabeth. In 1593, the earl of Derby died, and Ferdinando inherited the title. As a result, Ferdinando, Alice and their young daughters spent more time in Lancaster, where Ferdinando became Lord Lieutenant of the county in 1594.¹⁸

There was no doubting the excellence of Ferdinando's pedigree. His religious affiliation, however, was somewhat problematic. The earlier marriage between Anne and Lord Monteagle suggest that religion mattered far less to the Spencers than lineage. But this does not mean that religion was not an important fact to a marriage. Ferdinando's religious affiliations are ambiguous at best. In post-Reformation England, Lancashire held the largest population of openly-Catholic residents in the nation.¹⁹ Ferdinando's

¹⁷ See: Bagley, 53-77; Coward; French Fogle, "Such a Rural Queen': The Countess Dowager of Derby as Patron," in *Patronage in Late Renaissance England: Papers Read at a Clark Library Seminar 14 May 1977*, ed. French Fogle and Louis Knafla (Los Angeles: University of California, The Williams Andrews Clark Memorial Library, 1983), 3-29. See also Chapters 4 and 5 for more information about their patronage habits.

¹⁸ See: CP, vol IV, 212-213; Bagley; Coward; and David Kathman, "Stanley, Ferdinando, fifth earl of Derby (1559?-1594)," in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, ed. H.C.G. Matthew and Brian Harrison (Oxford: OUP, 2004); online ed., ed. Lawrence Goldman, May 2006, [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/26269>, accessed November 6, 2006].

¹⁹ See: Haigh, 1-87.

personal religious beliefs are debatable. What is widely known, however, is that he was at least friendly and hospitable with devout Catholics in his county.²⁰

To the Spencers, Ferdinando's titles and lands mattered far more than his religious affiliation. The marriages for their daughters moved the family out of the tiny and obsolete circles of Northamptonshire, and put their family on the national map. Very little is known about Alice Spencer until her 1580 marriage to Ferdinando Stanley, Lord Strange. This marriage can be seen as essentially a building block for the Spencer family, especially in light of the marriages made for Anne and Elizabeth Spencer. To marry their daughters to such ancient and noble families exemplified the exact type of social maneuvering that allowed rising gentry families to do just that: quickly rise. The details of Sir John II's extended family are practically non-existent. And yet, his daughters married into some of the most well-established aristocratic families of the day. Save for marrying a monarch, these marriages were as good as it got to an early modern woman. Alice would perfect this skill in her own lifetime and pass it on to her daughters. The couple wasted no time in starting their family: Anne, their eldest daughter was born on 16 July 1581. Two years later, during Whitson Week 1583, a younger sister, Francis, joined the clan. Their youngest daughter, Elizabeth, was born four years later.

The Egertons

Alice spent much of her adult life concerned with the well-being of her three daughters, just as all honorable aristocratic wives and mothers did. When Ferdinando died in 1594, Alice entered into a brutal lawsuit with her brother-in-law, William, sixth

²⁰ See Chapter 3 for a full discussion of Ferdinando and Catholicism.

earl of Derby.²¹ Six years after Ferdinando's death, it remained clear that Alice and William were not near an amiable accord. She, like so many of her female contemporaries, had to decide whether or not to remain a widow or remarry. After all, she had three young daughters to look after. Widowhood carried with it enormous and conflicting meanings. The dowager countess solely controlled her own property and dictated the affairs of her daughters, and yet she held no political authority. She depended on the men within her kinship network to advance her legal pursuits, and therefore it was imperative that she not threaten the social equilibrium of gendered authority. Alice was 34 years old at the time of Ferdinando's death. She remained unmarried throughout the 1590's, as did her growing daughters. Anne was fourteen, Frances was twelve, and Elizabeth was seven when their father died. Throughout the 1590's, Alice battled her brother-in-law in defense of Ferdinando's will. As her lawsuit with William raged on, the dowager countess needed to find a new way to gain the upper hand. She took the most obvious route available by remarrying. Her first marriage allowed her to build a strong and powerful kinship network. Perhaps her second marriage would ensure that she could keep her place within that network.

On 20 October 1600, Alice once again used marriage to forge powerful ties. She married Thomas Egerton, Queen Elizabeth's Lord Keeper. Her father at bought her entry into the aristocracy with her first marriage; Alice attempted to protect her place in the aristocracy with her second marriage. Egerton had been an old friend and legal advisor to the Stanley family. In 1594, Egerton lived far below the dowager countess's stature, but

²¹ See Chapters 2 and 3 for discussion of Ferdinando's death. See Chapter 6 for a full discussion of the lawsuit between Alice and William.

Queen Elizabeth was generous to him in the final decade of her reign. By the end of the decade, Egerton had much to offer the dowager countess. She did not miss the chance to secure a husband who offered not only wealth and security, but could serve as a strong advocate against William. Surely for Egerton, the dowager countess possessed some appealing assets as well.

Egerton, born in 1540, was the illegitimate child of Sir Richard Egerton and Alice Sparke, a woman who worked in Sir Richard's house. From a young age, Egerton showed an aptitude for the law. Thomas Ravencroft, a local Chester lawyer, raised him in his household.²² In 1576, Egerton married Ravencroft's daughter, Elizabeth. The couple had three children: Thomas, John, and Mary. Egerton was raised a Catholic, but upon entering public life, he quickly abandoned the religion and wrote extensively in his adult life about his conversion to support the Church of England. During the 1560's and 1570's, Egerton established himself as a well-respected lawyer, and worked for the Stanley family. It is highly probable that he first met Alice during these years. Egerton served as MP for Cheshire from 1584 to 1587. In 1581, he got his big break when Queen Elizabeth appointed him to the post of Solicitor General. He held the position from 1581 to 1592. In 1588 Elizabeth Egerton died. Egerton waited almost a decade before marrying again.

The 1590's brought professional prosperity and personal despair to the rising solicitor. Queen Elizabeth appointed him as her Attorney General in 1592, and he served as the Chamberlain of the Palatine of Chester. In 1594, Queen Elizabeth knighted

²² Louis Knafla, *Law and Politics in Jacobean England: The Tracts of Lord Chancellor Ellesmere* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), 4-6.

Egerton and he became the queen's Master of the Rolls. Finally, on 6 May 1596 he assumed the role of Lord Keeper. James I created him Lord Ellesmere and appointed him as the Lord Chancellor in 1603. And in 1616, King James gave him the title Viscount Brackley.²³

In 1597 he married Elizabeth More, daughter of Sir William More and his wife Margaret. This brief marriage was plagued with bereavement. In 1599, Thomas, the Lord Keeper's eldest son, died while serving in the military in Ireland with the earl of Essex. Only five months later, Egerton's second wife suddenly died. He did not remain a widower long. Egerton's first two marriages had been to women from the lower gentry. In 1600, he had the chance to marry the dowager countess of Derby. Her daughters were bloodline descendants of the Tudors. If she was successful in her suits against her brother-in-law, her spoils would entice any man. In 1580, the Spencers bought their daughter's way into the aristocracy; now Egerton was doing the same. His marriage in 1600 to the dowager countess elevated his status and social stock but there was a price to pay for this. Fights and unpleasantires plagued their marriage.²⁴ It seems that perhaps her reputation preceded her in their union. In a letter dated 21 October 1600, John Chamberlain wrote to Dudley Carleton, "We have a constant report that the Lord Keeper

²³ *CP*, vol II, 271.

²⁴ Memos from Lord Chancellor Ellesmere, EL 213 and EL 214, HEH. See Chapters 6 and 8 for further discussion on the nature of their marriage.

shall marry or (as some say) hath married the countess dowager of Derby on St. Lukes day last, (God send him good lucke)."²⁵

On the surface, it appears that Alice moved fluidly from widowhood to marriage, but this transition merits closer examination. In her first marriage, Alice was the dutiful aristocratic wife who left her family for the rising status offered by her husband and his family. Her second marriage did not follow the same pattern. Alice's marriage to Egerton was filled with fights and unpleasantries from the start.²⁶ Wifehood was not a fixed state for the countess, and, as we shall see, she exercised a far greater voice in her second marriage than she did in her first. Her first marriage left her enormous land holdings, particularly in the Midlands.²⁷ She had three maturing daughters whose births connected them to ancient and noble families. In 1600, Alice came in a far more distinguished package than she had twenty years prior. This moment in her life offers us the chance to conceive of an important distinction between a *wife* and a *remarried wife*. Wife and widow, as simple categories are just that, too simple. The application of overly-simplified categories limits our ability to fully access the unique nuances of the lives of early modern women. By expanding these categories, we expand our ability to more accurately see detailed experiences. This allows us to conceive of social categories in new and more interesting ways. For Alice, being a wife to Ferdinando Stanley was not the same as being a wife to Thomas Egerton.

²⁵ John Chamberlain to Dudley Carleton, 21 October 1600, *The Letters of John Chamberlain*, vol 1, ed. N.E. McClure (Philadelphia: The American Philosophical Society, 1938), 111.

²⁶ Memos from Lord Chancellor Ellesmere, EL 213 and EL 214, HEH.

²⁷ Louis Knafla, *Law and Politics in Jacobean England*, 32-33; and Susan Reynolds, ed, *A History of the County of Middlesex* (Victoria History of the Counties of England, 1962).

The Egertons (Bridgewater)

For Frances, becoming a step-sister also meant becoming a wife. The dowager countess and Lord Egerton consolidated their immense assets even further by quickly marrying Egerton's surviving son, John, to Alice's middle daughter, Frances. With the Egerton/Stanley marriage in 1600, the couple "became one of the major landowners in the Midlands," as well as owning lands in Hertfordshire, Buckinghamshire, and Northamptonshire.²⁸ John and Frances married sometime around 1601. This relationship was certainly complicated. Some precedents for marrying step-siblings did exist, although it was not terribly common. In her study of aristocratic women and families between 1450 and 1550, Barbara Harris found thirty cases where remarried widows and widowers arranged for their step-children to marry. Harris explains that "those who remarried were sometimes able to secure advantageous marriages for them with their stepsiblings."²⁹ Harris, however, also points out that "in addition to arranging their children's marriages and preferments, the crucial task facing widowed or remarried mothers was defending their son's and daughters' inheritances and their daughters' dowries and jointures."³⁰ The arrangement between the Stanley women and the Egerton men seemed to have met both needs. Not uncommon to step-families, tensions would eventually flare between the

²⁸ Knafla, *Law and Politics*, 33.

²⁹ Barbara Harris, *English Aristocratic Women 1450-1550: Marriage and Family, Property and Careers* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 112.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 113.

dowager countess and her son-in-law/step-son when Egerton died in 1617, but their intermingled interests did keep things from getting too ugly.³¹

By seventeenth century standards, the marriage between John and Frances proved to be successful. Egerton was a major figure in the Caroline administration and following in his father's footsteps in the field of law. He served as MP for Callington from 1597 to 1598. He was also the Baron of the Exchequer in Chester from 1599-1605. James I created him earl of Bridgewater just weeks after Ellesmere's death in 1617. In 1626, Bridgewater served on the Privy Council. And in 1631, Charles I appointed him as President of the Marches of Wales.³² Together, like their parents, John and Frances also gained a reputation for patronizing poetry and theatre. John Milton's epic *Comus* was presented in their honor at Ludlow Castle on Michaelmas in 1634 to commemorate Egerton's appointment as Lord President of the Marches of Wales. Their daughter, Alice, and sons, John and Thomas, played the main parts, while their music instructor, the famed Henry Lawes, composed the score as well as played the title role. Frances was a well read woman who built her own library.³³ Inventories still surviving from her library show books on history, contemporary literature, and a large collection of scripture,

³¹ For more about step-families see: Stephen Collins, "British Stepfamily Relationships, 1500-1800," in *Family History* 16, no 4 (1991): 331-344, and Stephen Collins, "'Reason, Nature and Order': The Stepfamily in English Renaissance Thought," in *Renaissance Studies* 13, no 3 (September 1999): 312-324. For more about the conflict between JE and AE, see Chapter 6.

³² *CP*, vol II, 311.

³³ Heidi Brayman Hackel, "The Countess of Bridgewater's London Library," in *Books and Readers in Early Modern England: Material Studies*, ed. Jennifer Anderson and Elizabeth Sauer (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002), 138-159. See Chapter 3 for discussion about FE's library.

theology, and psalms. Contemporaries viewed Frances as highly pious and well versed in religious scripture, as reflected in the manuscripts she collected.³⁴

The Bridgewaters maintained a very close yet often strained relationship with the Lord Chancellor and the countess of Derby. John Egerton and the countess of Derby rarely saw eye to eye, and it often seemed that their equal admiration for Frances was the only thing that held them together. Despite these tensions, John continued to act as an agent on her behalf after the death of his father. This relationship grew to be even more complicated after Lord Ellesmere's death, when John inherited the bulk of his estate, valued at £12,000 per year. When combined with the previous wealth settled on Frances, the couple became one of the wealthiest in England.³⁵ Upon his father's death, John also inherited his title as Viscount Brackley, and several months later he became earl of Bridgewater, a title that Lord Ellesmere had discussed taking himself. From 1631 to 1642, Bridgewater served as the Lord Lieutenant of Shropshire, Worcestershire, Herefordshire, Manmounthshire, as well as maintaining his post as Lord President of the Marches of Wales. He spent a great deal of time at Ludlow Castle, although his family split their time between Bridgewater House in London and the great estate of Ashridge in Buckinghamshire. The countess of Bridgewater seemed to have preferred Ashridge over Ludlow, as it kept her closer to her mother and London. It was at Ashridge where she built her noted library. Her children regularly migrated between Harefield and Ashridge.

³⁴ Funeral Sermon for the FE, EL 6883; Meditations on FE after her death, EL 6888; An Elegy to FE, EL 6843; An Elegy to FE, EL 6844-6845; An Elegy to FE by Robert Codrington, EL 6850, HEH.

³⁵ Bernard Falk, *The Bridgewater Millions: A Candid Family History* (London: Hutchinson & Co, 1942), 55.

While John became increasingly preoccupied with his growing political responsibilities, childbirth occupied the majority of Frances's life since the couple had fifteen children. They had ten daughters and only one son survive into adulthood. While in many instances such a gender imbalance might send an early modern aristocratic family to the poorhouse, their windfall of wealth allowed the Egertons to arrange for eight marriages for their daughters and a profitable match for their only surviving son. The marriages the Bridgewaters arranged for their daughters were "horizontal moves" (or sometimes even a step down) along the social ladder of seventeenth century peerage.³⁶ Frances (b. 18 March 1603) married Sir John Hobart. Arabella (b. 12 September 1605) married Oliver St John in 1623.³⁷ Elizabeth (b. 1 November 1606) married David Cecil, son and heir apparent of Richard Cecil, earl of Exeter. Cecilia (b. 18 December 1607; d. 21 December 1626) never married. Mary (b. 28 May 1609) married Richard Herbert, second Lord Herbert on 19 November 1627. Richard Herbert was an MP for Montgomery from 1640-1642 and sided with the Royalist during the Civil War.³⁸ Penelope (b. 17 August 1610) married Sir Robert Napier, nephew of the famous astrologer, Richard Napier.³⁹ Katherine (b. 12 November 1611) married William Courten, heir of Sir William Courten the merchant and ship-owner. In the late 1630's, William Courten established Courten's Association, a small-scale shipping venture,

³⁶ The majority of their husbands do not have entries in the *DNB*, or the *CP*.

³⁷ *CP*, vol XI, 336.

³⁸ *CP*, vol VI, 442.

³⁹ See Chapter 3 for more discussion of this marriage.

which proved to be an enormous failure.⁴⁰ Alice was their first child to die (b. 17 October 1613; d. 14 December 1614.) Magdalene (b. 7 August 1615) married Sir Gervase Cutler. Anne only lived until the age of eight (b. 1617; d. 27 December 1625.) Their second daughter called Alice (b. 1619) married Richard Vaughan, earl of Carbery in July 1652. Carbery was an MP in the 1620's for Carmathen and was also a Royalist during the Civil War.⁴¹ Their first son, James, only lived four years (b.1616; d. 1620.) Their second son, Charles, again died as a toddler (b. 5 May 1621; d.18 April 1623.) The only really lucrative marriage came when the Bridgewaters married their son, John (b. June 1623) to Elizabeth Cavendish, daughter of William Cavendish, duke of Newcastle, on 22 July 1641. The duke of Newcastle was a wealthy courtier and Royalist military leader during the Civil War, however, Elizabeth is most well-known for her writings.⁴² Dates and details of their last child, Thomas, are unknown.⁴³ Frances gave birth roughly once a year for fifteen years. The tremendous demands of pregnancy undoubtedly shaped

⁴⁰ John C. Appleby, "Courten, Sir William (c. 1568-1636)," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, September 2004; online edn, January 2008 [http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/6445, accessed 26 June 2009].

⁴¹ *CP*, vol III, 7.

⁴² Elizabeth Egerton's *Meditations* are well known to early modern scholars. There are several manuscript versions of the *Meditations*. Egerton MS 607, BL is the most complete and well-known version. The Huntington Library also holds a draft copy of the *Meditations* (EL 6888, HEH) on which the John Egerton, second earl of Bridgewater made corrections to his wife's draft. Also at the Huntington Library is RB 297343. This is a bound but incomplete version of the *Meditations*. The catalog at the Huntington Library incorrectly names Frances Stanley Egerton as the author of the *Meditations*.

⁴³ Birth dates for the Egerton children are taken from: Lists of births and marriages, EL 6847 and EL 1001, HEH.

much of her experience as a wife and mother. This differs significantly from her mother and sisters.⁴⁴

The tight knit connections made in the Stanley-Egerton marriages meant that Ellesmere controlled significant properties in Hertfordshire, Buckinghamshire, and Northamptonshire, and included the estates Ashridge, Brackley, Gaddesden, and Harefield. These lands were part of the settlement Alice won from her lawsuit with her brother-in-law. Ellesmere purchased Ashridge and Harefield shortly after he and the dowager countess married. Should he die before Alice, she would regain control of the estates, and John and Frances would then inherit them upon her death.⁴⁵ These transactions also meant that Ellesmere and his son now took an interest in the results of the Stanley women's lawsuit against the earl of Derby. How convenient for the Stanley women that the Lord Keeper and his son should become personally entangled in the affair! Once again, the dowager countess shrewdly manipulated social kinship norms to serve her interests and those of her daughters.

The Hastings

With one coheiress married, the dowager countess needed to make similar arrangements for her two single daughters. To no surprise, Alice turned to one of England's oldest families to find a husband for her youngest daughter, Elizabeth. Her goal was to marry Elizabeth to Henry Hastings; Elizabeth provided the money (£4000 to

⁴⁴ See Chapter 2 for discussion of childbirth and kinship.

⁴⁵ Knafla, 33.

be exact) and Henry provided an equally impressive pedigree.⁴⁶ Her groom came from an old and noble family suffering from substantial debts. George Hastings, the first earl of Huntingdon, was married to Anne, daughter of the Edward Stafford, duke of Buckingham (who was executed in 1521.) In his youth, Buckingham had been a ward of Margaret Beaufort, making him a very lucrative asset. The marriage between George and Anne meant that George Hastings's brother in law was Thomas Howard, duke of Norfolk, as he was married to Anne's sister, Elizabeth. From here, the Hastings family lineage forks off between two noble families: the Hastings and the Howards. Anne and George's son, Francis, inherited the title, and upon his death in 1560, the Huntingdon title passed to his son Henry. On 25 May 1553, Henry married Katherine Dudley, daughter of John Dudley, duke of Northumberland, and sister to Robert Dudley, earl of Leicester. Northumberland had been a trusted counselor to Henry VIII and Edward VI. Things went south for the duke, however, after he arranged for his son Guilford Dudley and Guilford's wife, Lady Jane Grey, to assume the crown, excluding Mary Tudor from it. As a result, Northumberland, Guilford and Jane Grey were executed in 1553.⁴⁷ Henry Hastings and Katherine Dudley had no children so when Henry died on 14 December 1595, the title passed to his brother, George. George and Henry's sister, Frances, was married to Henry, Lord Compton, who later married to Anne Spencer, elder sister of Alice, the dowager countess of Derby. Since George, the fourth earl of Huntingdon, outlived his son, Francis, the title passed to his grandson, Henry. Henry had one brother,

⁴⁶ Marriage Settlement of HH and ESH, 20 June 1603, HA PP 14/3, HEH.

⁴⁷ *CP*, vol IX, 723-726.

George. In 1605, his sister, Catherine married Philip Stanhope, who became the earl of Chesterfield in 1628.⁴⁸

Alice wrote the fourth earl of Huntingdon, Henry's grandfather, on 30 December 1600 to make the final arrangements. She gleefully expressed her happiness over the match by telling the earl that the union, "which being done, that will not only be the meanes to make firmer our loves, but also be an occasion to bring new Joyes to your aged yeres, and to myne no small content."⁴⁹ Her ambitions came to fruition with a wedding held 15 January 1601. Never missing the chance to make a good impression on her ever-growing kinship network, she again wrote to the earl of Huntingdon on 4 February 1601 to celebrate that, "the solemnization of our desired marriage which now I understand is fullie consummated: doth yealde as greate Satisfaction to me, as I am assured it affordeth contentment to yourselfe, and your Ladye."⁵⁰

On paper, the Hastings family had all of the noble connections to solidify their place among the highest ranks of the aristocracy. Decades of overwhelming debts, however, crippled the Hastings family.⁵¹ The Hastings hoped that a union with a wealthy Stanley coheiress would alleviate some of these problems. Despite these financial obstacles, Henry Hastings had a typical upbringing for a man of his station. He became Lord Hastings at the age of nine, upon his father's death in 1595, and he was admitted to

⁴⁸ *CP*, vol III, 180.

⁴⁹ AE to George Hastings, 30 December 1600, HA Corr. 2505, HEH.

⁵⁰ AE to George Hastings, 4 February 1601, HA Corr. 2507, HEH.

⁵¹ See: Thomas Cogswell, *Home Divisions: Aristocracy, the State and Provincial Conflict* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1998); and Claire Cross, *The Puritan Earl: The Life of Henry Hastings Third Earl of Huntingdon 1536-1595* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1966).

Grey's Inn and Queen's College three years later. Three years after his marriage to Elizabeth Stanley, his grandfather died, and the title of earl of Huntingdon passed to him. Huntingdon also served as the Keeper of the Royal Forest of Leicester. He and Elizabeth made Ashby-de-la-Zouch their primary estate, just outside of Leicester and he served as Lord Lieutenant of Leicestershire from 1607 until his death in 1642.⁵²

Unlike the Stanley women and his brothers-in-law, the earl did not care for courtly life. His wife became closely involved in his political affairs as she was the one to travel to London on family business. She frequently went to London to speak on his behalf in order to win favor with the Privy Council and the king.⁵³ Besides being an eloquent and charming speaker, she spent much of her time reading scripture and living piously. She left behind several manuscripts of sermons and reflections that not only demonstrates her deeply religious meditations, but also reveals her moderate Calvinism.⁵⁴ Elizabeth, like her sisters and mother, closely associated with literary circles including both local poets of Leicester as well as some of England's most recognized literary men, all of whom dedicated works to her. When her mother visited Ashby in August 1607, John Marston wrote the entertainment. The countess of Huntingdon expertly blended her literary and political patronage in constant efforts to re-establish the Hastings family to

⁵² *CP*, vol VI, 658.

⁵³ See for example: ESH to HH, 13 June 1632, HA Corr. 4849, HEH.

⁵⁴ See Chapter 3 for a detailed discussion of the religious lives of the Stanley women.

the economic position they had lost. In doing so, she won the respect and esteem of powerful players in both Leicester and London.⁵⁵

Politics and poetry were not the countess of Huntington's only business. As was to be expected, the countess also played the important role of mother. The countess of Huntington gave birth to four children aptly named: Alice (b. 1606), Ferdinando (b. 18 January 1609), Henry (b. 28 September 1610), and Elizabeth (b. 1612.) Her first child, Alice, shared a special relationship with her grandmother, namesake, and godmother, the dowager countess of Derby.⁵⁶ The young Alice spent much of her childhood and early adulthood with the dowager countess in Harefield. Sometime after 1637, she married Sir Gervase Clifton. The two younger Hastings children, Henry and Elizabeth, also maintained close relationships with their parents and Stanley grandmother. Like their elder sister, both spent a considerable amount of time at Harefield House. Henry, who became Lord Loughborough for his valor in the Civil War, never married and died childless in 1667. Elizabeth married Hugh Caveley. The earl and countess's eldest son and heir, Ferdinando was styled Lord Hastings at his baptism on 3 July 1609 and he became the sixth earl of Huntington when his father died in November 1643. Like his father, he was an important figure in Leicester and at court. He served as MP for the county throughout the 1620's.⁵⁷ Ferdinando married Lucy, daughter of Sir John Davies and Eleanor Touchet Davies, on 7 August 1623.

⁵⁵ See Chapters 4 and 5 for a discussion of the political and literary patronage of the Stanley women.

⁵⁶ See: Robert Codrington, *An Elegie sacred to...Alice Countess Dowager of Derby*, [1637], C6715MI/E38, William Andrews Clark Library, Los Angeles, CA.

⁵⁷ *CP*, vol VI, 658-659.

The Brydges

By the time of James I's succession, the two youngest Stanley daughters were established in assisting their family's ever-growing kinship networks. But the dowager countess still had room for one more trophy husband on her mantle. The same year that Elizabeth married Lord Hastings, discussions were held in Queen Elizabeth's court about the prospects of marrying Anne Stanley to the prince of Muscovy. In the autumn of that year, Queen Elizabeth sent a letter to the Emperor of Muscovy which explained that:

Hereof we did command our ambassador to speak, we being persuaded that there might have been a convenient marriage between the prince your son and one of the daughters and heirs of our cousin the earl of Derby, being of our blood royal and of greater possessions than any subject within our realm; but having now to our great grief understood upon enquiry that your son is not above 13 years of age, which is almost 5 years under that lady's age.⁵⁸

The failure of this royal match meant that Alice had to secure another suitable husband for her eldest and wealthiest coheirress.

Anne finally married Grey Brydges, Lord Chandos sometime before 1607.⁵⁹ His father was William, fourth Lord Chandos, and his mother was Mary, daughter of Sir Owen Hopton. Grey was the only son of four children. The Brydges originally promised their son to his cousin, Elizabeth, with the hopes that the union would end a longstanding family feud. The feud had erupted with the death of Giles Brydges, third Lord Chandos, when the title passed to his brother William, Grey's father. A newsletter sent on 15 October 1602 from John Chamberlain to Dudley Carleton in Paris announced the betrothal by explaining that, "a match is brewing between Miss Brydges of the court and

⁵⁸ HMC, Salisbury MSS, Vol XI, 387-388. This is also fairly ironic, given that Anne is thirteen years the senior in her second marriage to the earl of Castlehaven.

⁵⁹ The precise date of their marriage is debated. See Chapter 6 for a full discussion.

her cousin Grey Brydges, which would end all suits and quarrels."⁶⁰ One month later, Grey's father died and Grey inherited the title. He apparently saw no need to continue the feud, and therefore saw no need to go through with the marriage. In December Brydges called the nuptials off.⁶¹ The Brydges pedigree was not remarkable when compared to the Stanley family. Although, the family's standing and kinship ties improved over the course of the seventeenth century. Thomas Cecil, earl of Exeter was the second husband of Grey's sister, Frances. The Brydges family held Sudley Castle, an impressive estate in the Cotswolds. Grey served as an MP for Cricklade from 1597 to 1598, and as the Lord Lieutenant of Gloucester beginning in 1613.⁶² His hospitality to local tenants, literary patronage of communal poets, and love of writing himself earned him the nickname the "King of Cotswold." Although some literary sources survive from their household, little is known about the daily life and religious practices of the Chandos family. Anne and Grey split their time between the countryside and the Jacobean court. The couple had six children, of whom five survived into adulthood: Elizabeth (b. 1615), George, (b. 9 August 1620), William (b. 1621), and daughters Frances and Anne. Shortly after Anne gave birth to their second son, Grey sudden fell ill and unexpectedly died while abroad 10 August 1621.

⁶⁰ To Dudley Carleton from John Chamberlain, 21 October 1600. *The Letters of John Chamberlain*, 111.

⁶¹ Andrew Warmington, "Brydges, Grey, fifth Baron Chandos (1578/9-1621)," in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, ed. H.C.G. Matthew and Brian Harrison (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), [http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/38-4, accessed November 6, 2006].

⁶² *CP*, vol III, 127.

The Touchets

Three years later, Anne married an Irish peer, Mervin Touchet, second earl of Castlehaven.⁶³ Mervin's father was George Touchet, Lord Audley (an English title) and first earl of Castlehaven (an Irish title.) Touchet was English but he spent the majority of his military and political career in Ireland. He was the Governor of Kells, in Ireland and fought to suppress several Irish rebellions. He also served in the Irish House of Lords in 1613.⁶⁴ Castlehaven's mother was Lucy Mervyn, daughter of Sir James Mervyn of Fonthill Gifford in Wiltshire. Mervin was one of eight children, although only three survived into adulthood. Mervin's sister, Eleanor Touchet Davies Douglas, whom King Charles eventually banned from court for making disturbing and outlandish prophecies.⁶⁵ The 1624 marriage between the earl of Castlehaven and Anne Stanley raised many eyebrows because of his Irish ties, Catholic tendencies, scandalous sister, and also because Anne was thirteen years his senior. Although the young earl could provide the new countess and her young family with financial stability, her noble heritage and the dignity of her first husband caused the countess of Derby some concern over this seemingly bizarre union.⁶⁶ The situation became even more complicated when Anne

⁶³ Chapter 7 provides a detailed discussion of this marriage. For biographic information about Mervin Touchet, see: Cynthia B. Herrup, "Touchet, Mervin, second earl of Castlehaven (1593-1631)," in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, ed. H.C.G. Matthew and Brian Harrison (Oxford: OUP, 2004); online ed., ed. Lawrence Goldman, May 2006, [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/66794>, accessed November 6, 2006], and Cynthia Herrup, *A House in Gross Disorder: Sex, Law, and the 2nd Earl of Castlehaven*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999).

⁶⁴ *CP*, vol III, 86.

⁶⁵ Esther Cope, *Handmaid of the Holy Spirit: Dame Eleanor Davis, Never Soe Mad a Ladie* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1992).

⁶⁶ AE to FE, 14 June 1630, EL 6481, HEH.

married her eldest daughter, Elizabeth, to the earl's eldest son, James. Anne was the only one of Alice's daughters to be widowed, and it is interesting that when faced with widowhood, Anne chose to both remarry herself and marry her daughter to her step-son. Although this union ended with catastrophic results, when initially faced with the uncertain future of widowhood, Anne closely followed in her mother's footsteps.

The countess of Derby's fears came to fruition when the Castlehaven marriage ended in disaster in 1631. One year earlier, Anne's stepson and son-in-law, James, formally charged his father with squandering his inheritance by giving money to his favorites in exchange for sexual favors. During the investigations Anne told investigators that her husband had assisted his footman in raping her, and that her husband frequently engaged in sodomy with his male favorites. The earl was tried for rape and sodomy, as were two servants, and found guilty. Castlehaven was executed in May 1631. The countess spent the remainder of her days removed from public life.⁶⁷

Anne and her children moved to Harefield House, where the countess of Derby played an integral role in their lives. Although the countess of Derby accepted her daughter and granddaughter into her home, she expected that they live quiet, removed, and humble lives. Despite the humiliation of the Castlehaven trial, the countess of Derby saw to it that her other Brydges grandchildren lived reputable and normal lives. In 1635 Frances married Edward Fortescue, and it is believed that at some point the youngest Brydges daughter, Anne, married a man named Torteson. The countess of Derby's grandsons, George and William, each went on to inherit their father's title and marry well.

⁶⁷ Cynthia Herrup's book is currently the seminal work. See Chapter 7 for a complete discussion of the Castlehaven affair.

On 4 December 1637, George married Susan, daughter of Henry Montagu, first earl of Manchester. Alice requested in her will that this marriage take place.⁶⁸ George's second wife was Jane, daughter of John Savage, earl of Rivers. George served as a Royalist in the Civil War, and it was rumored that "he had three horses killed under him at the battle of Newbury, when the King offered to create him earl of Newbury, which he declined till happier times."⁶⁹ William inherited the barony when his brother died of smallpox in February 1655.

This chapter offers only a snapshot in the lineages of some of the most notable families in early modern England. Beginning in the 1570's, the Spencer family paid for three of their daughters to enter the aristocracy. Alice then went on to play her role as wife and mother, a job she did with great success. In 1600, her second husband used her to help buy his way into the aristocracy. For the most part, the Stanley women each played their part in continuing their pedigree. In some instances, as with the marriages of Bridgewater, things went very well. Alice Spencer's grandson married the daughter of a duke. In two generations the Spencers went from wealthy sheep farmers to the highest levels of early modern society. In some instances, however, things went very badly. The ramifications from the Castlehaven marriages were disastrous. They continue to be seen as a devastating blemish on an otherwise flawless pedigree.

⁶⁸ Interestingly, the earl of Manchester served as a juror in the Castlehaven trial. The earl of Manchester and the countess of Derby were close allies throughout the dowager countess's lifetime and he was made an executor of her will. The Last Will and Testament of Alice Egerton, Prob/11/174, TNA.

⁶⁹ Sir Egerton Brydges, *Speeches Delivered to Queen Elizabeth, on her Visit to Giles Brydges, Lord Chandos, at Sudeley Castle, in Gloucestershire* (Printed at the Private Press of Lee Priory; by Johnson and Warwick. 1815), 48.

Overall, however, the marriages of the Spencers and Stanley women demonstrate some important aspects of the role of marriage in early modern England. There was nothing more impactful on a woman's life than her first marriage. She had only one chance to make it. If her family could afford to make it a profitable marriage, the marriage would allow a woman (as it did Anne, Elizabeth, and Alice Spencer) to catapult themselves and their kinsmen into a higher social status. They then took on the responsibility of perpetuating the pedigree with lucrative marriage for their own children. Alice was remarkably successful at this, with the obvious exception of the earl of Castlehaven. (That was undoubtedly a match Anne made on her own.) The Stanley women, like their contemporaries, used marriage to build kinship networks. They spent the remainder of their lives maintaining and developing these ties.

Chapter 2

"Resting assurance to find your friendship firm toward me": The Stanley Women and Maintaining Kinship Networks

Marriage and motherhood were essential to establishing kinship ties in early modern England. The Stanley women's kinship networks became increasingly complicated as the web of in-laws and cousins grew. Alice Spencer was born into one network and married into the far more powerful Stanley network. This marriage resulted in three daughters who then married into even more networks. The Stanley daughters continued to build the infrastructure of their family's kinship networks by having more children and by arranging successful marriages for them. The *real life* experiences of the Stanley women demonstrate that they not only built new kinship networks through marriage and childbirth, but that these networks needed to be maintained. Chapter 1 looked at how the Stanley women built kinship networks through their marriages and births. This chapter explores the various ways in which they maintained these kinship ties.

The experiences of the Stanley women highlight the tools which they used to preserve personal connections. The Stanley women relied on the active construction and destruction of their family ties to provide essential stability. They engaged in gender and class specific activities to increase their social reputations and display their family's honorability. The Stanley women and their families relied on entertainments, hospitality, theatrical patronage, and pregnancy rituals to maintain kinship bonds. They trusted that these bonds would help them endure times of personal and family crisis. They also tried

to negotiate their way through difficult periods in ways that allowed them to stay connected to their pre-existing kinship ties. The Stanley women also demonstrate, however, that they worked to destroy certain relationships that threatened more valuable kinship ties. For example, the Stanley women worked ardently to maintain a close connection to the Cecils, but they worked with equal fervor to sever ties to Lady Eleanor Davies Douglas. The Stanley women expertly and actively constructed, maintained, and destroyed kinship ties throughout their lives. Their skillful manipulation of early modern kinship was a vital component to the success and status their families experienced in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

When Alice Spencer married Ferdinando Stanley in 1580, she assumed a new place within the Stanley family and households. Marriage provided access to this new circle. But Alice also actively built close ties with her in-laws and their associates during the extensive time she spent in Lancashire. She and Lord Strange breeze in and out of the Stanley family Household Books on a regular basis and are joined by others, such as Lord and Lady Monteaagle. Lady Monteaagle was Alice's older sister, Anne. Lord Monteaagle was Ferdinando's recusant cousin, William.¹ The entry for the week of 28 September 1588 indicates that "my Lady Strange and the little children of her came [to Knowsley.]" The following month, during the week of 26 October, Lord Strange returned from London. Then the week of 2 November, Lady Alice and Lord Dudley went to London. (It is not clear precisely which Lord Dudley the entry refers to, although it was not the earl of Leicester, who had died earlier that fall.) The week of 23 November, Alice and

¹ Neither Lord nor Lady Monteaagle have entries in the *DNB*.

her brother-in-law, William, went to Halsoll, and returned two days later with Mr. Traifforth, Mr. Halsoll, and "many more." The group left again the next day.²

The Household Book, which also included entries for New Park and Lanthom Halls, offers a detailed account of the myriad of people who circulated through the Stanley home. Lord and Lady Strange, as well as their daughters, were no strangers to the Stanley estates, and the above detail is merely a small sampling of the people who traveled to and from Lancashire with them. The mobility of this family was not unique but the almost nomadic lifestyle that aristocratic society required allowed its members to constantly network with contemporaries by traveling together and residing together. Lawrence Stone described this period (1580-1640) as the rise of the *Restricted Patriarchal Nuclear Family*, which "saw the decline of loyalties to lineage, kin, patron and local community as they were increasingly replaced by more universalistic loyalties to the nation state and its head, and to a particular sect or Church."³ While this may be the case on a macro-level, it grossly underestimates the significance of the time that people spent together on a daily basis and overlooks the importance of the relationships fostered during routine travels and dinners.

In 1587, Alice did her lying in at Knowsley Hall as she awaited the birth of her third child. Lady Strange and her daughters arrived at Knowsley on 27 October 1587 and remained there through the autumn and early winter. A midwife arrived at the estate on 12 November 1587, and the youngest Stanley daughter, Elizabeth, was born on 23

² F.R. Raines, ed. *The Derby Household Books*, Stanley Papers, Part II, vol 31, (1853). (Hereafter listed as *The Derby Household Books*.)

³ Lawrence Stone, *The Family, Sex, and Marriage in England 1500-1800* (New York: Harper & Row, 1977), 7.

December 1587. On 9 January 1588, Elizabeth was christened with Mr. Talbot, the local sheriff, Mr. Bolde, Mr. Lathom and "many gentle women" also in attendance. On 27 January 1588, Alice underwent a churching ceremony. Lady Compton, Sir John Savage and his wife, the Bishop of Chester and his wife, Mr. Baron of Walton and his wife, Mr. Gerrard and his wife, Mrs. Middleton of Leighton, Mr. Dudley, Mr. Parker, Mr. Henry Stanley (the elder and younger), along with a number of others were present for the service.⁴

Alice's decision to be churched is an interesting one. Post-Reformation English Protestants viewed churching as a fairly controversial practice. The medieval church thought of childbirth as an impure process so they saw churching as a means of purifying the mother. The Anglican Church clung to the practice but the Puritan influence reframed the rite as a thanksgiving that the mother survived the birthing process. By the end of the sixteenth century, some women were dubious of partaking in the ancient ritual, while others did so willingly out of respect for the social norm or because it was a tradition of motherhood.⁵ Discussions of churching play an important role in shaping scholarly work on early modern religion and motherhood. In the case of Alice Stanley, however, it also plays an important role in understanding the importance of kinship to her life. Alice's churching ceremony, just eighteen days after her daughter's christening,

⁴ *The Derby Household Books.*

⁵ For more about the debate of churching in sixteenth and seventeenth century see: David Cressy, *Birth, Marriage, and Death: Ritual, Religion, and the Life-Cycle in Tudor and Stuart England*; Valerie Fildes, ed, *Women as Mothers in Pre-Industrial England: Essays in Memory of Dorothy McLaren* (London: Routledge, 1990); Ralph Houlbrooke, *English Family Life, 1576-1716: An Anthology from Diaries* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1988); and Keith Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic: Studies in Popular Beliefs in Sixteenth and Seventeenth Century England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971).

offered the Stanley family another opportunity to host a number of close family friends, kinsmen, and members of the local community. It brought people who were important to the Stanleys, like Lady Compton, the Savages, the Gerrards, and Henry Stanley, together. It also placed Alice and her newborn daughter at the center of their gathering. This is not to underestimate the religious and social role that churching played in Alice's life,⁶ but rather to emphasize that the Stanleys actively took part in customary traditions that brought people together.

They also encouraged visitors by inviting various acting troupes to perform at Knowsley in the late 1580's. Since 1579, Lord Strange had sponsored his own troupe of actors and tumblers that was based primarily in London.⁷ During the weekend of 12-13 September 1589, the Queen's Players and the Lord of Essex Players came to Knowsley Hall. The troupes "played all night" on Saturday. Sunday, following a sermon of Mr. Leigh, the Queen's Players performed in the afternoon and the Lord of Essex Players provided the night's entertainments. Mr. Sherington and his brother, Lord and Lady Dudley, Lord Dudley's brother, Sir Edward Stanley, and William Stanley comprised the audience. Thomas Egerton, future second husband to Alice, also attended the weekend's festivities. Lord and Lady Strange resided at Lanthom in February 1590, and were treated to theatrical entertainments on the last day of the month. In June 1590, after

⁶ See Chapter 3 for further discussion of the Stanley women's religious practices.

⁷ See Chapter 5 for more discussion about Lord Strange's theatrical and literary patronage. See also J.J. Bagley, *The Earls of Derby, 1485-1985* (London: Sidgwick & Jackson, 1985).

relocating the entire household from Lanthom to Knowsley, the Queen's Players were once again on hand to entertain the Stanleys.⁸

Literary and theatrical patronage played an enormous role in the lives of the Stanley women as well as in their marriages, but the entertainments at Lanthom and Knowsley Hall demonstrate more than just a fondness for the arts. These regular performances once again brought local peers together and ensured that London guests enjoyed their time in the country. They provided a reason for people to celebrate, and served as a major axis around which early modern kinship networks revolved. The early years of her first marriage made a large impact on Lady Strange. She continued to host many theatrical entertainments throughout the duration of her life. She also taught the art of entertaining on to her daughters, and their homes also served as a stage for many theatrical gatherings. The time that Alice spent in the homes of her in-laws in Lancashire taught the young up-and-coming noblewoman how to use her estates to bring people together.

The 1590's saw a dramatic shift in the routine lives of the Stanley family. The nation was riding waves of turbulent concern over who was to be Queen Elizabeth's successor, and unfortunately for Alice and her young daughters, this wave crashed on their doorstep in Lancashire. On 25 September 1593, the earl of Derby died and the title passed to Ferdinando. The new title and authority that Ferdinando inherited caused many eyes to cast a scrutinizing gaze upon Lancashire, and particularly caught Lord Burghley's attention. The new earl's pedigree, as the great-great grandson of Henry VII combined

⁸ *The Derby Household Books.*

with his family's long history of popish tendencies⁹ sparked notable concern at court, as the Queen's council grappled with the mounting succession crisis. The earl and countess of Derby had to tread carefully to ensure the stability of his earldom and their daughters' futures. Unfortunately for the Derbys, trouble literally came knocking at their door in the autumn of 1593.

Jesuits on the continent were eager to gain hold of Elizabeth's throne and they considered the new earl of Derby to be a potential ally. They elected to send Richard Hesketh, a Catholic originally from Lancashire who had been traveling on the continent for several years, to speak to the earl. They gave Hesketh "Instructions for treating with the earl of Derby," which directed him to, "Signify unto [the earl of Derby] in general you have a message of importance to import to his lordship, from special friends of his." After Hesketh exchanged friendly words with Ferdinando, the two men were to make a "mutual promise of fidelity and secrecy, declare unto him in general that you message concerneth the common good of all Chrisendom," and then gage "whether he will encourage you to speak out or not." If Hesketh felt that the earl of Derby was unfriendly toward him, he was instructed to politely end their meeting. If Ferdinando seemed open to continued discussion, Hesketh was to, "declare unto his lordship...if he will be capable of the good they wish him before all other in the world, and that therefor you are sent unto him to offer him all their endeavour, services and help that they can employ or procure to advance him, and by him the Catholic faith and religion, and to know if he will accept thereof and agree thereto." The stipulation to all of this was that Ferdinando "be a

⁹ See Chapter 3 for further discussion of Stanley family religious affiliations.

Catholic and that he would bind himself to restore, advance and perpetually maintain the Catholic religion in our country."¹⁰ The list continued to outline the Jesuit's expectations of how the earl of Derby would act as King if he should accept this offer made to him by *friends*. Hesketh approached the earl sometime in October 1593. The earl took no time in deciding that his loyalties lay with the Queen. On 24 November, John Puckering, the Lord Keeper, wrote to Robert Cecil that "her Majesty is pleased that it be opened in the evidence giving against Hesketh, That my Lord of Derby being by him moved etc did presently apprehend the party, and made it known to her Majesty...you say the earl himself made you acquainted of his dealing therein."¹¹ Richard Hesketh, his brother Bartholomew, and their accomplices, provided formal confessions on 4 and 5 November.¹²

The earl of Derby was not the only one who promptly turned to his allies at court. The countess of Derby wrote frequently on her husband's behalf. In November 1593, she wrote to Robert Cecil: "It is no little comfort my good Cousin to me that my Lord finds you so good a friend and the more it glads me that it is the more for me which I perceive by him, nor will deceive your requital in any honorable kindness that my poor fortune can afford you." The countess of Derby was concerned about how the incident would be viewed by others at court. She expressed her utmost confidence in her husband's character and asked Cecil to remain a true friend to them. She wrote: "I doubt not but he

¹⁰ *HMC: Salisbury MSS*. Part IV 9, 461.

¹¹ John Puckering to Robert Cecil, 24 November 1593, Hatfield House MS 170/16.

¹² For more about the Hesketh Plot, see Edwards, Francis, *Plots and Plotters in the Reign of Elizabeth I* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2002).

shall be crossed in court and crossed in his country but I imagine his uprightness and honorable carriage will by the means of so good friends as your father and yourself upon whose love and kindness he chiefly and only doth rely be able to support him against any malice."¹³ Her hope was that the Stanley's kinship with the Cecils would be strong enough to help her family endure any scandal or gossip that followed the visit by Jesuit plotters. Expertly executing her role as the concerned and dutiful wife, the countess of Derby drew from the kinship connections that she had fostered to do all she could to ensure that her husband's career would endure. The earl of Derby most likely exchanged similar words of his own with the Cecils, but the countess never overlooked an opportunity to potentially strengthen any bonds that a conspiracy on this level may have weakened. These precautionary measures proved to be extremely wise, as the trouble was not yet over for the Stanleys.

On 11 April 1594, with a frantic and distraught tone, the countess of Derby once again wrote to Robert Cecil, "bear with me...for my senses are overcome with sorrow. It hath pleased God so to visit my Lord with sickness, that there is little hope of recovery except in his mercy, and therefore must entreat your favor and assistance both of yourself, and to my Lord your father in the behalf of me and my poor Children."¹⁴ By 16 April, the earl of Derby was dead.¹⁵ News of the earl's sudden and violent illness spread quickly, and it did not take long for people to make connections between his role in turning over Jesuit plotters and his death. Rumors circulated that a vagrant stranger had

¹³ AE to Robert Cecil, November 1593, 170/16, Hatfield House MS.

¹⁴ AE to Robert Cecil, 11 April, 1594, Hatfield House MS 170/136.

¹⁵ See Chapter 3 for further discussion about Ferdinando Stanley's death.

poisoned the earl. Sir George Carey, husband to Elizabeth Spencer, Alice's sister, wrote to Sir Thomas Heneage and Robert Cecil to inform them that, "I find by Sir Thomas Leigh, lately arrived out of Lancashire, greater presumptions that the late earl of Derby was 'bewitched' than poisoned."¹⁶ No one was ever charged for the suspected crime, and the true nature of the earl's untimely death continues to fuel dark and lascivious murmurings about the dangers the early modern aristocracy faced.

Ferdinando's death created a whirlwind of despair and turmoil for the new dowager countess of Derby. Ferdinando issued a will on his deathbed that augmented his wife's dower lands. He gave his wife: "all and siguler such my Mannors Lordshippes landes tenements and hereditments withall there and everye of their Appurtements whereof I ame nowe sealed in possession or [reversion] of an estate in fee simple and not in taile."¹⁷ Ferdinando did not mention his younger brother, William, once in his will. The request quickly sparked a fierce legal battle between the dowager countess and William Stanley, who inherited the title of the sixth earl of Derby.¹⁸ Not only did tensions with her brother-in-law require that the young widow voraciously defend her interests as well as those of her daughters, but she faced all of this while also expecting her fourth child. The details of this pregnancy are hazy at best. A single line in Ferdinando's deathbed will refers to the unborn child: "the remainder thereof if my said

¹⁶ *HMC: Salisbury MSS*. Part IV 9, 517.

¹⁷ Last Will and Testament of Ferdinando Stanley, 5th earl of Derby, Prob/11/84, TNA.

¹⁸ See Chapter 6 for a complete discussion of the lawsuit that followed the fifth earl of Derby's death.

wife be not [inferite] with a son..."¹⁹ No other documentary evidence pertaining to this pregnancy survives. We do not know if the countess miscarried, faked the pregnancy, or perhaps was not pregnant to begin with.²⁰ But whatever the reality, Ferdinando's death left the countess's future uncertain.

Alice needed to find a way to secure the status her marriage provided her as well as protect the interests of her young daughters. She once again turned to her influential kinsmen: the Cecils. She had to tread carefully, however, as the Stanleys and Cecils were in the midst of arranging a marriage between William Stanley and Elizabeth de Vere. Elizabeth's parents were Edward de Vere, the earl of Oxford, and Anne Cecil, daughter to Lord Burghley and sister to Robert. With all the discretion of a bull in a china shop, the dowager countess wrote to Robert Cecil less than a month after her husband's death, "I hear of a motion of marriage between the earl my brother and my lady Vere your niece, but how true the news is I know not, only I wish her a better husband: I so end resting assurance to find your friendship firm toward me..."²¹ Her veiled concern for the Cecils and de Veres was notably transparent, and her wish went unanswered when Elizabeth and William married on 26 January 1595. Over the next decade, despite the marriage, or perhaps in spite of the marriage, Alice continued to turn to the Cecils for help with her ongoing lawsuit with the earl of Derby.

¹⁹ Last Will and Testament of Ferdinando Stanley, 5th earl of Derby, Prob/11/84, NA.

²⁰ See: Leo Daugherty, "Stanley, William, earl of Derby (1561-1642)," in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, ed. H.C.G. Matthew and Brian Harrison (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004.); online ed. Lawrence Goldman, May 2006 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/72296>, accessed 6 June 2008]; Edwards, 191; and Helen Payne, "The Cecil Women at Court," in *Patronage, Culture and Power The Early Cecils*, ed. Pauline Croft (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002), 270.

²¹ AE to Robert Cecil, 9 May 1593, Hatfield House MS 170/142.

The de Vere/Stanley match only complicated things for Alice and her daughters. She continued to reach out to other powerful kinsmen to form alliances. On 27 June 1594, Alice sent a letter from Lathom Hall, to the earl of Shrewsbury in which she thanked him for attending Ferdinando's funeral and expressed her regret for not being a more gracious hostess. She explained that, "grief of mind, and my troubles were the cause." In an effort to secure the earl's friendship, she wrote that she "crave[d] of you that as you have begun so you will continue an honorable freind to me and my children." She then made the bold request: "let me impart what is reported to make me doubt you wilbe my brothers freind (though I have no believe in the report nor doubt in your Lordship) and that is, his matchinge with my Lady Arbella, or at least wyse beringe hir in hand to get him selfe the more freinds and me the less."²² The perils facing the new widow with three daughters (aged twelve, ten, and six) about to embark on a drawn out legal fight drove the countess to take stock of her friends, allies, and kinsmen. She made no attempt to hide her intentions, although she did soften her remarks by always reminding her correspondent that she was a grief-stricken widow and mother.

Alice also fostered good relationship with her birth family. Her Stanley marriage provided her access to the older aristocracy, but her Spencer bloodlines provided access to wealth that usurped the monopoly on splendor the old aristocracy used to hold. The dowager countess frequently corresponded with her nephew, Robert Spencer, who by 1600 controlled the Spencer family wealth.²³ Upon hearing of a trip the young lord was

²² AE to Gilbert Talbot, 27 June 1594, Talbot MSS, Shrewsbury Letters, MS 3203 Item 14, Lambeth Palace Library.

²³ Mary Finch, *Five Northamptonshire Families: 1540-1640* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1956), 38.

embarking upon in 1603, the countess wrote to her nephew, "But hearing the beginning of your journey is so good, I hope the success thereof unto the end shalbee answerable to the increase of your owne honor, and the grate contentment of such as Love you; my self to be of which number I will alwayes be verie readye to give you the Best assurance I can, when occasion is offered."²⁴ She signed the letter, "Your assured Loving Aunt, A. Derby." Alice rightfully took considerable pride in the increasing success of the Spencers; remaining close to the family patriarch kept her in the inner circle of things. Displays of fondness and affection for her nephew meant that Alice and her daughters could count the wealthiest man in England not only as family, but as friend and ally as well.²⁵

These actions, however, demonstrate not only that she turned to her kinship network for support during times of crisis. They also show that she took regular strides to ensure that she remained a central player within those kinship networks. Widowhood could be an unstable condition for an early modern woman.²⁶ Alice had no connections with the Talbots or the Cecils by her own birth; her marriage provided the bridge to them and the births of her daughters provided a lasting relationship. With the death of her husband, Alice actively sought to maintain the affinity that marriage offered her by

²⁴ AE to Robert Spencer, [1603], Add MS 25079/59, BL.

²⁵ Lawrence Stone, *The Crisis of the Aristocracy 1558-1641* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1965), 58.

²⁶ For further discussions on the complicated nature of widowhood, see: Sandra Cavallo and Lyndan Warner, eds, *Widowhood in Medieval and Early Modern Europe* (Essex: Longman, 1999); Valerie Fildes, ed, *Women as Mothers in Pre-Industrial England: Essays in Memory of Dorothy McLaren* (London: Routledge, 1990); Anne Laurence, *Women in England 1500-1760: A Social History* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1994); Sara Mendelson and Patricia Crawford, *Women in Early Modern England: 1550-1720*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998); Mary Prior, ed, *Women in English Society 1500-1800* (London: Methuen, 1985); and Doris Mary Stenton, *The English Woman in History* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1957).

voicing a staunch opinion over whom her estranged brother-in-law should marry, or not marry in this case. She needed to remain relevant to powerful families like the Cecils and the Talbots; the relationship that she continued to share with them for the remainder of her life indicates that her tactics worked.

Throughout her life, Alice and her family would have numerous chances to reciprocate the favors the Cecils showed her. The English aristocracy was a tight knit community that frequently turned to one another to help maintain the status quo. In 1601, Alice rented Russell House to Robert Cecil. She refused to accept any rent for the lease.²⁷ In 1603 Robert Cecil prepared to entertain King James and his entourage. In desperation Cecil wrote to Thomas Egerton, Alice's then husband, "My very good Lord, because of myself I am not able to furnish my house at Theobalds, of all such necessarys as are convenient for his Majesty's reception, without the help of my friends: I am bold to pray your Lordship to suffer me to borrow some of your silver dishes and such other gilt plate."²⁸ In times of desperation, whether as a result of a major crisis like the Hesketh plot or the crisis of putting together the perfect dinner party for the King, the Stanley/Egertons and the Cecils turned to each other. Alice hoped that these small kindnesses would be remembered when things got tough again. These small gestures also helped in maintaining close kinship ties.

Sharing property and dishes was not enough to bring real stability to ever-changing family alliances. The countess of Derby and her daughters also used their

²⁷ HMC: Salisbury MSS Vol XI, 402.

²⁸ Robert Cecil to Elles, 27 April 1603, EL 131, HEH.

estates to secure and maintain kinship ties. Kinship networks were not just about people; they were about places.²⁹ The nomadic lifestyles of the early modern aristocracy meant that families regularly cultivated the symbiotic relationship between guests and hosts/hostesses. For as Felicity Heal has said, the aristocracy of early modern England cultivated "a culture that was deeply committed to the practice of open hospitality."³⁰ Ferdinando and Alice migrated regularly between Knowsley Hall, Lathom Hall, and New Park in Lancashire and London. Alice and Ellesmere purchased Harefield House, in Middlesex, from the Newdigate family in 1601. They turned Harefield into their great estate and hosted Queen Elizabeth and her entourage during one of her final tours in July 1602.³¹ When in London, the couple resided at York House. During her first marriage, Anne and her family lived at Sudley Castle, in Gloucestershire. Both peers and local commoners hailed Lord Chandos's generous hospitality by bestowing the nickname, "King of Cotswalds" upon him. It is rumored that he enjoyed opening up Sudley Castle for impromptu dinners and entertainments.³² Her second marriage relocated Lady Chandos and her children to Fonthill Gifford in Wiltshire. (This estate and marriage

²⁹ There is a small but growing literature about early modern conceptions of space (buildings/houses/squares/etc.) The majority of this literature comes from English Literature in reference to the stage, or from Art History in regards to depictions of home in paintings. See: Nicholas Cooper, *Houses of the Gentry, 1480-1680* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999); Alice Friedman, "The Way You Do the Things You Do: Writing the History of Houses and Housing," *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 58 (1999): 406-413.

³⁰ Felicity Heal, *Hospitality in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), 389.

³¹ See Nikolaus Pevsner, *The Buildings of England: Middlesex* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1951), 92-93.

³² Horatio Walpole, *A Catalogue of the Royal and Noble Authors*, Vol II (London: Printed for John Scott, 1806), 194.

would prove to be a blemish to the family's eminence, rather than a gem.³³) John and Francis assumed control of Ashridge from their parents and split their time between Hertfordshire and London, where they resided in the Barbican or stayed with Alice and Egerton at York House.³⁴ In the 1630's, the family moved to Ludlow Castle when Bridgewater became the President of the Marches of Wales. The Hastings resided at Ashby-de-la-Zouche and Donnington Park in Leicestershire.³⁵ The earl of Huntingdon successfully went years without ever leaving the county, much to the chagrin of his wife and mother-in-law. Elizabeth seemed all too willing to make the long journey to London for him. By the mid-seventeenth century, the estates of the Stanley women were as impressive as their sparkling marriages, always reflecting their eminence.

Impressive estates were the norm among the early modern aristocracy, but what really mattered was how you used them. Several of the Stanley women's homes became sites of significant birthing rituals. Alice did her lying-in at Knowsley Hall for Elizabeth's birth.³⁶ Francis frequently traveled to be with her mother during her many pregnancies. No expense was spared to prepare adequate birthing chambers and nurseries. The Egertons doled out nearly £420 for a "bed, canopy and other furniture suitable all of crimson velvet [and] other necessary furniture for the Lady Francis's

³³ See Chapter 7 for a complete discussion of the Castlehaven affair.

³⁴ The estate and gardens of Ashridge have inspired many artists and poets over the centuries. See: Add MS 32349 f95-f129, BL.

³⁵ See Nikolaus Pevsner, *The Buildings of England: Leicestershire and Rutland* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1960), 77-85.

³⁶ There are no known sources detailing Alice's pregnancies.

chamber and her nursery"³⁷ during Francis's first pregnancy. She gave birth to a daughter, also called Francis, on 18 March 1604 at York House. The arrangement surely worked, as at least eight of Francis's fifteen children were born at York House in London. Francis's desire to have her mother present at her births was most likely reciprocated with Alice equally desiring to be there. It was common for mothers and female relatives to come together for a woman's lying in, and even to assist the midwife during the birth itself.³⁸ Frances's daughters, Frances, Arabella, Elizabeth, Cecilia, Mary, Penelope, Katherine, and Alice, were all born and baptized at York House. Her son, James, was also born at York House. Her son, Charles, was born at Bridgewater House.³⁹ Only when scholars, like Patricia Crawford, started to look at birth and the family unit did we start to see the significance of birthing rituals in constructing and maintaining kinship. The lying in chamber served as an emotional and social axis for early modern women; it brought together multiple generations and a variety of female kin. The homes of the Stanley women served as the central locale for these important rituals.

Appointing godparents was also another important aspect of kinship associated with birth. Godparents connected people both inside and outside of immediate bloodlines under the auspice of mutual respect and association. The appointment of godparents allowed John and Francis Egerton to strengthen bonds with people important to their

³⁷ A breviat of disbursments for your lordships appoyntment for & Lady Frauncis crimson velvet bed furniture & for other necessaries for her Ladyship & about her Ladyship's chambre, 24 April 1604, EL 149, HEH.

³⁸ Patricia Crawford, "The Construction and Experience of Maternity in Seventeenth-Century England," in *Women as Mothers in Pre-Industrial England: Essays in Memory of Dorothy McLaren*, ed. Valerie Fildes (London: Routledge, 1990), 21.

³⁹ Notes on births, marriages, and deaths in the Egerton family, EL 1001, HEH.

kinship networks. Lord Ellesmere, the dowager countess of Derby, Lady Hunsdon, Alice's sister Elizabeth, Sir Robert Spencer, Alice's nephew, were godparents to Frances Egerton. Robert Cecil, earl of Salisbury, and Lady Arabella, countess of Montgomery, were godparents to Arabella Egerton. Francis Clifford, earl of Cumberland, Lucy Russell, countess of Bedford, and Lady Anne Clifford were godparents to Elizabeth Egerton. The earl of Sussex and Mary Sackville, countess of Dorset, were godparents to Cecilia Egerton. Mary Egerton's godparents were Thomas Spencer, the dowager countess of Derby's brother, and Francis Leigh, the earl of Bridgewater's brother-in-law. King James named godfather of James Egerton. Charles Egerton called King Charles godfather.⁴⁰ It was also common for people to turn to their immediate or blended families when appointing godparents. Mary Egerton Leigh, Alice's step-daughter, asked Alice to be the godmother to her two children, Francis and Alice. She was also the godmother to three of her own grandchildren, Francis and Alice Egerton, and Alice Hastings.⁴¹ Lady Hatten asked the dowager countess to be her daughter's godmother as well. Anne was also a godmother to her niece, Alice Egerton. Ugly feuds over money frequently plagued the relationships between step-parents and step-children, but serving as godparents to step-grandchildren was one way to try to establish a familial connection. Successful births were something to be celebrated, and celebrations offered an ideal time to reach out to important people and strengthen the bonds of kinship.

⁴⁰ Notes on births, marriages, and deaths in the Egerton family, EL 1001, HEH. See also: *To Immortalize the Noble Memorie of the Right Honourable Young Lords James and Charles Egerton* (1623).

⁴¹ Last Will and Testament of Alice Egerton, Prob/11/174, TNA.

For the Stanley/Egerton family and others like them, selecting godparents and fostering respectable kinship connections also placed considerable emphasis on family honor. A family's honor played a vital role in their ability to foster and maintain powerful kinship networks since honor could be a valuable commodity in early modern England. Many scholars recently have written about various aspects of honor and reputation, and their works highlight the roles that gender, religion, nationality, class, and sexuality all played in constructing a person's sense of honor.⁴² They also establish the concept that honor in the early modern period existed as both a public and a personal quality. People were concerned with the public perceptions of their honorability and strove to present themselves in respectable ways, and Cynthia Herrup emphasizes this point in making a clear distinction between conceptions of honor and reputation.

Linda Pollock argues that it is impossible to conceive of an aristocratic early modern family without considering what honor meant to them because the family was focused on "maintaining bonds, was less individualistic and more communal, and allowed women a greater role in defining and maintaining honor that scholars have thought."⁴³ Virtually all aspects of life were regulated in some way so as not to cast

⁴² See: Richard Cust, "Honour and Politics in Early Stuart England: The Case of Beaumont v. Hastings," *Past and Present*, no 149 (November 1995): 57-94; Elizabeth A. Foyster, *Manhood in Early Modern England: Honour, Sex and Marriage* (London: Longman, 1999); Laura Gowing, "Women, Status and the Popular Culture of Dishonour," *TRHS Sixth Series*, vol 6 (1996): 225-234; Felicity Heal, "Reputation and Honour in Court and Country: Lady Elizabeth Russell and Sir Thomas Hoby," *TRHS Sixth Series*, vol 6 (1996): 161-178; Cynthia Herrup, "To Pluck Bright Honour From the Pale-Faced Moon": Gender and honour in the Castlehaven story," *TRHS Sixth Series*, vol 6 (1996): 137-159; and Garthine Walker, "Expanding the Boundaries of Female Honour in Early Modern England," *TRHS Sixth Series*, vol 6 (1996): 235-245.

⁴³ Linda Pollock, "Honor, Gender, and Reconciliation in Elite Culture, 1570-1700," *Journal of British Studies* 46 (January 2007): 8-9.

shame on an individual, or worse, an entire family. Pollock also argues that "The more frequently strife broke out, or the more heatedly it escalated, the more the welfare of the elite family was endangered."⁴⁴ The Stanley women and their families needed to find a way to work through difficult situations without allowing the exterior of their family to crack, which could threaten their positions within the kinship networks they worked so hard to maintain. The Stanley women and their families provide us with the chance to consider what these private inner-family relationships looked like and what they meant to the construction and maintenance of kinship. The correspondence that survives between the Stanley women, their children, and their husbands not only demonstrates gendered roles, but unique familial roles as well. This allows us to explore the ways that formal notions of honor permeated intimate parent-child relations and how the Stanley women acted as mothers, wives, and daughters all at the same time. Family members wrote respectful and honorable letters to each other to also express affection, and doing this allowed them to maintain their kinship networks.

The correspondence between the Stanley women and their families reveal that children used written displays of obedience and duty to parents, requests for blessings, and prayers for parental health and longevity as ways in which to actively honor their parents. In August 1635, Alice Clifton wrote to her father, Henry Hastings, " I praye for continuance of your Lordships good health."⁴⁵ Her sister, Elizabeth Calveley, reflected this same prayer, when she wrote, to the earl of Huntingdon, " I am very well againe

⁴⁴ Ibid., 14.

⁴⁵ Alice Hastings Clifton to HH, 1 August 1635, HA Corr 1471, HEH.

praying to Almighty God to contineu your Lordship in good health & grant you longe life."⁴⁶ It was not just daughters who prayed for their father's longevity, but sons as well. In the closing of his final letter before his death in 1599, Sir Thomas Egerton wrote to his father, Thomas Egerton, " Sir I bid ever prayer for your health, which god longe continue."⁴⁷

Expressions of honor were not just limited to prayers on behalf of their parents. The Egerton and Hastings children also used expressions of modesty to pay tribute to their parents. Most children, regardless of their gender, closed their letters to their parents with lines that expressed humility, obedience, and duty. Daughters would frequently end their letters to their mothers and fathers with lines like, "humble dutyfull obedient Daughter till death"⁴⁸ or " Your Ladyships most dutyfull and obedios daughter to command tell deth."⁴⁹ It was not uncommon for sons to use similar expressions that would describe themselves as a "most dutyfull and obedient sonne."⁵⁰ The language of honoring one's parents required children to actively present themselves as the submissive in the parent-child relationship. For a child to show respect to their parents, they had to denounce personal autonomy and recognize the authority that their parents held over them. These examples show that this concept was not linked to age, as adult children with children of their own used this language when addressing their

⁴⁶ Elizabeth Hastings Calveley to HH, [1634<>1644], HA Corr 1188, HEH.

⁴⁷ Sir Thomas Egerton to Elles, [>Sept 1599], EL 77, HEH.

⁴⁸ Elizabeth Hastings to HH, [21 November 1633], HA Corr 1187, HEH.

⁴⁹ Elizabeth Cecil to FE, 5 December 1630, EL 6323, HEH.

⁵⁰ Ferdinando Hastings to HH, [March c 1629], HA Corr 4863, HEH.

own parents. Essentially, no one outgrew the need to honor one's mother and father. Correspondence between the Stanley women indicates that in normal parent-child relationships, respectable children remained at their parent's command throughout the duration of their lives. The early modern English aristocracy required established conjugated hierarchies of power in order to enforce social order, but this social order was also necessary to keep these complex kinship webs running smoothly. Early modern peers never outgrew being a son or daughter, regardless of the successes they had their own adult lives. Everyone played their part and followed the script (with the notable exception of the earl of Castlehaven.) Children's never-ending displays of honor toward parents reflected the overall goal of maintaining order and the desire to remain embedded in their familial kinship network.

Another typical component of children's letters to their parents was the request for a blessing. In the 1630's Elizabeth Calveley began a letter to her father, the earl of Huntingdon, " these are to present my Husband most humble duty & mine to your Lordship & to crave your blessing for us & little gorge."⁵¹ In 1630, Elizabeth Cecil wrote to her mother, " To craving your pardon for my rude Lines I humbly desier your blessing for my selfe and my Little ones."⁵² The ubiquity of these closing remarks certainly implies that on the surface they were merely a formality but they can also suggest something else when we examine their implications in light of the theme of honor. "Craving a blessing" was method children used to ask for reassurance from their

⁵¹ Elizabeth Hastings Calveley to HH, [1634<>1644], HA Corr 1188, HEH.

⁵² Elizabeth Cecil to FE, 12 December 1630, EL 6325, HEH.

parents that they were in good standing with them, and perhaps even proud of the life they were leading. Their humility masked the question "Things are good between us, right?" While these lines do not suggest that children were necessarily seeking love, it does seem that they were looking for some indication from their parents that there was a fondness or even pride shared between them, a figurative pat on the back.

Frequently the Stanley women and their husbands reciprocated this request for approval and affection. The earl of Huntington closed a 1634 letter to his youngest son, Henry, with the line, "findinge you my blessinge I rest."⁵³ In a letter dated March 20 1633, the earl of Bridgewater wrote to his daughter, Elizabeth Cecil, " so with my Loving remembrances of your Husband & your selfe, & my prayers to God for his blessings upon you both & all your little ones, I commande you to his Almighty protection."⁵⁴ In June 1630, the countess of Derby lovingly ended a letter to her daughter, the countess of Bridgewater, " So desiering you to Remember my deare love to my Lord praying god to Blesse you & all those of yours and mine with you."⁵⁵ The Stanley women's children honored their parents by writing that their affections meant something to them, and these mothers and fathers typically returned this fondness by ending correspondence with thoughtful and spiritual remarks. Children sought their parent's approval and prayed to God that their parents lived well. These mothers and fathers commanded children to submit to God's will, and returned thoughtful blessings. God, power, submission, and

⁵³ HH to Henry Hastings, 29 March 1634, HA Corr 5533, HEH.

⁵⁴ JE to Elizabeth Cecil, 20 March 1634, EL 6357, HEH.

⁵⁵ AE to FE, 14 June 1630, EL 6481, HEH.

blessings were central terms in the language of this correspondence, and provided an emotional, spiritual, and acceptable structure for familial compassion. In a sense, a reciprocated blessing offered by the Stanley women and their husbands told their children that they were suitably honoring their parents and remained in their kinship circles.

These letters also highlight an important role the Stanley women and their daughters played in their larger familial networks; they typically served as "go betweens" in family business. In a letter dated November 6, 1633, Elizabeth Cecil wrote to her mother, explaining that she needed, "to Let your Ladyship know that my housband has writ to my Lord father consrning some busines for my Brother Edward and he will come to my Lord with the Letter himselfe and my humble Lute to your Ladyship is that you will be plesed to speke to my Lord to derect him what he should doe in his busines."⁵⁶

The Stanley women were certainly involved in family business yet there was a passiveness in their actions. Elizabeth exercised her agency to take part in family business and was still slightly reserved in her tactics. She was acting as an intermediary between her husband and her father, but she also asked her mother to share that part as well. If Elizabeth's husband, David Cecil, was already sending a letter to the earl of Bridgewater, than it would stand to reason that the letter would express whatever desires Cecil had. But this correspondence between Elizabeth and the countess reveals that Cecil's letter was not enough; Elizabeth's role, and then her mother's role, was to help ensure that Cecil's will was clear. Elizabeth was acting as a dutiful wife and respectful daughter. The countess of Bridgewater was a compassionate and concerned mother and

⁵⁶ Elizabeth Cecil to FE, 6 November 1633, EL 6353, HEH.

mother-in-law. And, by speaking to her husband, she was also an assertive wife. The Stanley women's demographical roles bled fluidly into each other in order to attend to their family business.

A year later, Elizabeth Cecil wrote to her father to clear up a misunderstanding about a financial action David Cecil had made. In the letter, Elizabeth wrote, "if you please to give me Leave I will give you an account of the monyes which my husbands has had of your Lordship."⁵⁷ She then went on to provide detailed descriptions of conversations between her father and her husband. On the surface, Elizabeth's letters appear to be standard business correspondence, as are so many surviving pieces of early modern communication; however, insights into family honor and responsibility can be gleaned. Being an honorable woman, Elizabeth felt a sense of loyalty to her mother, father, and husband, and fulfilled her obligation to all of them by working to maintain peace between them. These letters exemplify the myriad of ways that Elizabeth negotiated her role as a daughter, wife, and woman, and still humbled herself in each of those roles by submitting to the superior position of her parents and husband.

The Stanley women's sons also had a gender-specific relationship with their fathers. Sometimes sons, too, would act as a family "go between" but the language of these letters took a different tone. Whereas letters from daughters were filled with self-deprecating language, letters from sons tended to be much more assertive and the content was more matter-of-fact. In a letter to his father, Ferdinando Hastings opened with the lines, "I am to acquainte your Lordship with a commande my Lady granmother Hastings

⁵⁷ Elizabeth Cecil to JE, 4 April 1634, HEH. EL 6359.

larde uppon mee it is to lette your Lordship know that to one Mr. John Stewarde the kinge hath given the mony which your Lordship payes yearely."⁵⁸ The rest of the letter recounts news from court. The interesting thing about this letter in comparison to the letters that the earl of Huntington received from his daughters is the fact that it is straight forward news and business. Ferdinando did not spend lines situating himself at his father's humble mercy, though of course he does close the letter with the line "most dutiful and obedient son." Ferdinando honored his father by asserting that he was a busy and successful man fulfilling his duty by keeping his father informed of important happenings. In the end of the letter, he submitted to his father's authority over him, but this letter also demonstrates that he best served his father by being at court and acting appropriately. The earl of Huntingdon's distain for going to court made this role even more important for Ferdinando. Huntingdon relied heavily on his sons, brothers-in-law, and the Stanley women to network on his behalf.

The children served not only as liaisons between their husbands, court, and their parents. In the summer of 1635, Alice Clifton also wrote two letters to her father, the earl of Huntington, on behalf of her grandmother, the countess of Derby. She wrote, "I doe acknowledge which my humblest shamefulnes the coutentes wherof I acquainted my lady Grandmother, her last well likeing that she Ladye Douglas had not other entertainment at your Lordships house then I doth appeare by your letter which shee conceaves was prevented by your owne case in soe speedily sending your Lordships comand I obeyed, in presenting your service which her Ladyship for which her Ladyship

⁵⁸ Ferdinando Hastings to HH, [March c 1629], HA Corr 4863, HEH.

gives you manye thankes."⁵⁹ By 1635 a long history of animosity between the countess of Derby and Lady Eleanor Davies Douglas had been established, and it is no wonder that the countess of Derby certainly did not want her son-in-law to play host to a woman she detested. Rather than risking a public scene, Alice Clifton pacified this situation by sending a letter to her father that left out any unfiltered frustration on the part of her grandmother and still humbly requested action on the part of her father.

Beyond familial respect and honor, Alice's letter also demonstrates another important part of early modern kinship for the Stanley women: the active destruction of kinship ties. Collectively they shared several connections with Lady Eleanor. Anne had married Lady Eleanor's brother, the earl of Castlehaven, which also meant that Anne's daughter married Lady Eleanor's nephew. Lady Eleanor's daughter, Lucy, was Ferdinando Hastings's wife, making her an in-law in several ways to the Stanley women. This relationship in itself had the potential to be a close and beneficial one. The Stanley women worked avidly to sever this particular kinship tie for a number of reasons. First, the controversial reputation Lady Eleanor earned in King Charles's court for her disturbing and outlandish prophecies caused the cautious Stanley women to seek some distance between themselves and the sinking ship of Lady Eleanor. Second, Lucy brought a considerable dowry to her marriage to Ferdinando Hastings and the cash was certainly welcomed by the impoverished Hastings family. Trouble broke out when Sir

⁵⁹ Alice Hastings Clifton to HH, 1 August 1635, HA Corr 1471, HEH.

Davis's estate proved to be far less than was initially promised.⁶⁰ As was typical to these situations, the countess of Derby and the earl and countess of Huntingdon went after the money the Davies had promised. The feud raged on until the Hastings finally received their full payment, which left a bitter feeling between the Hastings and Lady Eleanor. Third, the shocking scandal of the Castlehaven trial that ended the marriage between Anne and the earl pushed the relationship between the Stanley women and Lady Eleanor beyond the point of repair. Lady Eleanor vehemently blamed Anne for her brother's execution and flooded London with pamphlets calling her a "Lye Satan" and "Jezebel." The countess of Derby could not tolerate any more.

Early modern kinship connections required members to partake in extremely complicated and risky balancing acts. Favor had to be reciprocated and relationships needed to be nurtured and maintained. A close association with someone like Lady Eleanor could be detrimental to a family's reputation, and thus jeopardize the Stanley women's place on the early modern kinship super-highway. The countess of Derby astutely cut Lady Eleanor out of her kinship network like a cancerous growth. The Stanley women and their peers needed kinship networks to thrive in order to function properly, and this required ruthless action against anything that threatened overall effectiveness. In theory the in-law relationship could be remarkably lucrative, but the horrible relationship between the Stanley women and Lady Eleanor also reveals that these

⁶⁰ See Thomas Cogswell, *Home Divisions: Aristocracy, the State and Provincial Conflict* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1998), 204-205 and Esther Cope, *Handmaid of the Holy Spirit: Dame Eleanor Davis, Never Soe Mad a Ladie* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1992), 26-28.

mere associations were not enough. People connected through marriage, or any other type of kinship, had to cultivate their relationships if they were to be mutually beneficial.

The Stanley women used their kinship networks to successfully and expertly negotiate their way through the hazardous world of the early modern aristocracy. They took full advantage of the connections afforded to them by their births and marriages. They used their roles as wives, widows, mothers, and daughters in a number of ways to strengthen and maintain the bonds their families had forged for them. They also took decisive action during periods of crisis to protect their places within existing kinship networks. The Hesketh plot and Ferdinando Stanley's death presented daunting challenges for the Stanley women, but their skilled understanding of court and favor provided them the means to escape familial demise. Concepts of honor and kinship were essential to their family structure. It allowed them to maintain internal stability so that they could actively maintain external kinship bonds.

Chapter 3

Piety in Practice: The Religious Lives of the Stanley Women

The Stanley women lived during a major period in English history: the post-Reformation era. The literary habits of the Stanley women and several of their husbands also connect them to the English Renaissance. This blurs the line in the lives of the Stanley women between these two major themes of the early modern period. Scholars have commented briefly on the religious practices of the Stanley women and their families, but overall, very little attention has been paid to these matters. Generally, historians have viewed these women as "moderate Calvinists."¹ Lord Ellesmere was a Catholic in his youth but converted to Protestantism early in his career. He became a major advocate for Calvinism,² and he raised his son, John, in accordance with his new beliefs. Throughout his political career, the earl of Bridgewater sympathized with the

¹ Anne may be the only exception, although no sources directly demonstrating her religious affiliation have survived. See: Thomas Cogswell, *Home Divisions: Aristocracy, the State and Provincial Conflict* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1998), 210-211; A.J. Hegarty, 'Anyan, Thomas (1582?-1633?)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, September 2004; online edn, May 2006 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/65827>, accessed 20 April 2009].

² Louis Knafla, "The 'County' Chancellor: The Patronage of Sir Thomas Egerton, Baron Ellesmere," in *Patronage in Late Renaissance England: Papers Read at a Clark Library Seminar 14 May 1977* (Los Angeles: University of California, William Andrews Clark Memorial Library, 1983), 33.

Calvinist cause.³ His brother-in-law, the earl of Huntingdon, also shared these beliefs.⁴

Things are far murkier for Ferdinando Stanley and the earl of Castlehaven.⁵

The general classification of "moderate Calvinist" seems to fit the Stanley women and the majority of their husbands. In an age when the Church of England struggled to define and defend itself, however, the label of "moderate Calvinists" almost sounds like it means "middle of the road conformist." This is actually true in many ways. Ironically, for noble women who are survived by such a rich supply of historical documentation, very little remains that deals with their religious lives.⁶ It seems that the religious lives of the Stanley women were quite "middle of the road conformist," or even typical. But before we completely relegate them to the basic category of "moderate Calvinist," the religious lives of the Stanley women merit some discussion.

In the past two decades historians such as David Como, Patrick Collinson and Peter Lake have carved out new paths in studies of early modern English religion. Their works, along with many others', reveal the truly complex and diverse sects of Protestantism with which early modern contemporaries identified.⁷ Dedications and

³ Irvonwy Morgan, *Prince Charles' Puritan Chaplain* (London: Ruskin House George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1957), 184.

⁴ Cogswell, 211.

⁵ For a full discussion of the earl of Castlehaven and religion see: Cynthia Herrup, *A House in Gross Disorder: Sex, Law, and the 2nd Earl of Castlehaven* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999).

⁶ There are no known records pertaining to the religious life of Anne.

⁷ This is an enormous field and there is considerable literature on the subject, but the following represent some of the cornerstone works in the field: Patrick Collinson, *The Religion of Protestants: The Church in English Society, 1559-1625* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982); David Como, *Blown by the Spirit: Puritanism and the Emergence of an Antinomian Underground in Pre-Civil-War England* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004); Kenneth Fincham, *The Early Stuart Church: 1603-1642* (Stanford:

eulogies hail the Stanley women as pious, righteous, and devout. Historical records, however, complicate and enhance their religious practices beyond the basic title of "moderate Calvinists." Faith makes up only a portion of what we see in the Stanley women's relationship with religion. "Moderate Calvinist" is a useful category to quickly identify the religious and political loyalties of the Stanley women and most of their husbands, but even the limited sources available also provide remarkable insights into a more complicated role of religion in their lives. Historians have arguably paid less attention to the religious lives of the Stanley women due to this lack of sources. Just as this dissertation has argued that individual women experienced demographical categories in diverse ways, this chapter demonstrates that the religious lives of the Stanley women were far more interesting than the label "moderate Calvinist" would lead us to believe. The succession crisis of the 1590's, the increasing practice of female writing, and a blend of pre-Reformation astrology and Calvinism all shaped the role of religion in the lives of the Stanley women.

It is interesting that scholars have paid such little attention to the ways in which the Stanley women and their husbands blur the lines between the Reformation and the English Renaissance, since scholars have written for decades about connections between these two major movements. In recent decades, studies dedicated to the specific religious experiences of protestant women have appeared. Retha Warnicke is among the first to discuss the female experience in the Reformation and Renaissance periods. She argues

Stanford University Press, 1993); and Peter Lake, *The Boxmaker's Revenge: 'Orthodoxy', Heterodoxy', and the Politics of the Parish in Early Stuart London* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2001)

that these two major moments must be considered together in order to fully understand how early modern women practiced their religion. She argues that humanism resonated through four generations of early modern English women: pre-Reformation, Reformation, mid-Elizabethan, and Jacobean.⁸ Warnicke first points out that it is impossible to ignore the humanist influence in the English Reformation. She attributes this connection to Sir Thomas More, a devout Catholic. Despite the fact that Henry VIII ordered More's execution in 1535 for his refusal to accept the Act of Supremacy, Warnicke argues that Thomas More is singlehandedly responsible for infusing humanist ideology into English intellectual culture and religion.⁹ Warnicke sees that the first two generations laid the foundation of a humanist religious practice, but that the mid-Elizabethan generation saw "an outburst of female creativity."¹⁰ She critiques Pearl Hogrefe's argument that the Jacobean era should be viewed as the "golden age" of female literary efforts.¹¹ Warnicke argues: "if the literary efforts of these women are examined within the context of contemporary religious, social, and economic conditions, it is impossible to argue that any of them lived in a 'golden age.'" She contends that, "not only was an extremely small percentage of women ever offered and advanced classical or vernacular education but even by the end of Elizabeth's reign, less than five percent of

⁸ Retha Warnicke, *Women of the English Renaissance and Reformation* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1983), 3.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 4.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 206.

¹¹ Pearl Hogrefe, *Tudor Women: Commoners and Queens* (Ames: Iowa State University, 1975), 97.

them knew enough about writing to sign their names."¹² According to Warnicke's analysis, the Stanley women prove to be quite an exception to the Jacobean female norm.

Warnicke also claims that an important question remains: "whether, as [she has] asserted, the Protestant Reformation elevated the social esteem of women in England above that of members of their sex in Catholic countries."¹³ A decade after Warnicke's work, Patricia Crawford picks up on this thread. She provides a crucial reframing of the Reformation by drawing from Joan Kelly's famous question, "Did women have a Renaissance?"¹⁴ Crawford asks instead, "Did women have a Reformation?" She contends that women never practiced religion in the same way that men did, therefore making it impossible for women to experience the Reformation in the same way that men did. Crawford argues that an important part of understanding early modern women and religion is to understand, "how women could both accept beliefs about their inferiority and transcend them. They were neither passive nor oppressed victims, but rather human agents, making their history within a social structure which was not of their making."¹⁵ She empowers her subjects while at the same time keeping them firmly planted in the patriarchal systems of the early modern period. This also allows Crawford to isolate women's religious practices within a male dominated structure. She compares the role of women in the Catholic and Protestant churches and observes that, "Both churches

¹² Warnicke, 208.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 207.

¹⁴ Joan Kelly, "Did Women Have a Renaissance?" in *Women, History & Theory: The Essays of Joan Kelly* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), 19-50.

¹⁵ Patricia Crawford, *Women and Religion in England 1500-1720* (London: Routledge, 1993), 1.

believed that women should be subject to male authority, but both believed that she was an individual responsible for her own religious behavior."¹⁶ In this way, she argues women practiced religion differently than men; society left spiritual salvation up to the individual woman, but these women still had to maneuver in a world where men controlled their daily lives.

A number of scholars have emphasized and debated the practical changes that came with the Reformation.¹⁷ Crawford's work is unique because she is interested in how, specifically, women's relationship with religion changed as a result of the Reformation, and what impact these changes had on gender roles as a whole. Crawford writes that, "women had more spiritual influence in the Protestant household than they did in that of their Catholic counterparts...But, the benefits of Protestantism should not be exaggerated."¹⁸ She concludes that all classes of Protestant women had higher literacy rates and played larger roles in both the home and the community, particularly in issues of spiritual education. Although Protestant women had more control over their religion than did Catholic women, the union of church and state in England still kept women within the tightly regulated confines of patriarchal power. While patriarchy lay at the heart of political and cultural norms, English Protestant women also found ways to practice their religion in a more private manner. Warnicke calls her book, "the first

¹⁶ Ibid., 69.

¹⁷ See for example: David Cressy, *Birth, Marriage, and Death: Ritual, Religion, and the Life-Cycle in Tudor and Stuart England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997); and Ralph Houlbrooke, *Death, Religion, and the Family in England, 1480-1750* (Oxford: Clarendon Press: Oxford, 1998).

¹⁸ Crawford, 37.

historical account of the scholarly accomplishments of Tudor women."¹⁹ She may have been the first to focus on the specific practices of early modern women but she was hardly the last.²⁰

In the past decade, historians and literary scholars have continued to explore the inseparable bond between post-Reformation female piety and education. Kenneth Charlton argues, "that some women in the past were 'learned', 'cultivated', 'educated' in the achievement sense, is not difficult to demonstrate. Precisely how they came to achieve that learning, by what means, at whose hands, is rather more difficult."²¹ Charlton reframes early modern women as both teachers and students outside the traditional and exclusively male-world of public schools and universities. The established link between women's reading, writing, and religion has stirred a frenzy in scholars eager to explore the nuances of how these factors play out in individual lives. Scholars have written about the education and piety of Mildred Cecil, Lady Anne Southwell, Rachael Fane, Anne Askew, the Cooke Sisters, and the countess of Pembroke, just to name a few.²² The Stanley women can also contribute to our understanding of the

¹⁹ Warnicke, 205.

²⁰ See for example: Victoria Burke and Jonathan Gibson, eds., *Early Modern Women's Manuscript Writing: Selected Papers from the Trinity/Trent Colloquium* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004); Kimberly Coles, *Religion, Reform, and Women's Writing in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008); Margaret Paterson Hannay, ed., *Silent but for the Word: Tudor Women as Patrons, Translators, and Writers of Religious Works* (Kent: Kent State University Press, 1985); Melissa Franklin Harkrider, *Women, Reform and Community in Early Modern England: Katherine Willoughby, Duchess of Suffolk, and Linconshire's Godly Aristocracy, 1519-1580* (Suffolk: The Boydell Press, 2008).

²¹ Kenneth Charlton, *Women, Religion and Education in Early Modern England* (London: Routledge, 1999), 4.

²² See chapters in: Victoria Burke and Jonathan Gibson, eds., *Early Modern Women's Manuscript Writing: Selected Papers from the Trinity/Trent Colloquium*; and Margaret Paterson Hannay, ed., *Silent but for the*

ways in which early modern women used their educations to practice their religion. The countess of Bridgewater collected her own private library, separate from the larger and renowned Bridgewater Library. The countess of Huntingdon wrote several commonplace books containing biblical transcriptions and copies of sermons and popular religious literature. Frances and Elizabeth exercised their piety through active reading and writing. According to Warnicke, these behaviors make Frances and Elizabeth stand out from the majority of early modern women. But as Christine Peters tells us, "neither medieval catholicism nor Reformation protestantism offered a single mode of devotion which was followed by all, whether men or women, clerical or lay."²³ Frances and Elizabeth, while both clearly literate, practiced their piety in different ways. Yet, when we compare their experiences and the sources they left, these sisters present a fascinating and complex picture that offers insights into the collective religious beliefs and practices of the Stanley women.

The countess of Bridgewater's literary habits and book collecting reveal much about how she practiced religion. The countess of Bridgewater's private book collection holds an interesting space within the much larger Bridgewater House Library. Lord Ellesmere began the Bridgewater Library in the fifteenth century. The works dedicated to Lord Ellesmere and the dowager countess made up the early part of the library. The earl and countess of Bridgewater continued the family tradition of book collecting and

Word: Tudor Women as Patrons, Translators, and Writers of Religious Works. Melissa Franklin Harkrider's work on Katherine Willoughby, Duchess of Suffolk is one of the few full-length books dedicated to a personal practices of a specific women.

²³ Christine Peters, *Patterns of Piety: Women, Gender and Religion in Late Medieval and Reformation England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 5.

merged their library with Lord Ellesmere's upon his death in 1617. Generations of Bridgewater continued to inherit and alter the library until the early twentieth century. Today, scholars celebrate the Bridgewater Library as one of the largest and most significant single collections of medieval and Renaissance texts. The majority of the library is now housed at the Huntington Library.²⁴ Not only did the Egerton family collect books collectively, but Frances also maintained her own private library as well. Over the past four centuries, stewards of the Bridgewater library have integrated many of Frances's 241 personal books into the larger library collection. Today it is difficult to discern exactly which texts the countess originally housed in her own space. Fortunately the Bridgewaters were detailed record-keepers and a single inventory survives which lists the original contents of Frances's library. Someone compiled the original inventory in 1627 and then updated it in 1631 and again in 1632.²⁵ This single inventory provides remarkable insights into the way that the countess of Bridgewater practiced her religion.

Heidi Brayman Hackel has written about the literary habits and book collecting of the countess of Bridgewater. She examines the breadth of the collection and compares its size to other libraries compiled by early modern women both in England and on the continent.²⁶ She concludes that, "Lady Bridgewater emerges from her library catalog not

²⁴ Stephen Tabor, "The Bridgewater Library," in *Pre-Nineteenth-Century British Book Collectors and Bibliographers*, eds. William Baker and Kenneth Womack (Detroit: The Gale Group, 1999), 40-50. See also: Caroline Skeel, "The Countess of Bridgewater's Library, 1627," *The History Teacher's Miscellany* 3, no. 9 (September, 1925): 129-130.

²⁵ "A Catalogue of my Ladies Bookes at London, taken Oct. 27th 1627," EL 6495, HEH.

²⁶ Heidi Brayman Hackel, "The Countess of Bridgewater's London Library," in *Books and Readers in Early Modern England*, eds. Jennifer Andersen and Elizabeth Sauer (Philadelphia: Pennsylvania University Press, 2002). For examples of other early modern English women who collected their own libraries see: Caroline Bowden, "The Library of Mildred Cooke Cecil, Lady Burghley," *The Library* 7th series vol. 6, no.

as a paragon of learning but as a woman connected to familial networks and responsive to cultural expectations."²⁷ Like many other early modern women, Frances left no marginalia in her books.²⁸ She also collected only books in English or French, whereas books in Latin and Greek are noticeably absent from her inventory.²⁹ According to Norma McMullen's study of the education of sixteenth and seventeenth century noble women, Frances's reading habits reflect the general standards of the day, as women were rarely taught to read Greek and Latin.³⁰ By 1632, Frances's library also contained eleven bibles in English and two in French. There are more copies of the bible than any other book listed on the inventory.³¹ McMullen has also argued that, "the first step in acquiring virtue was to have access to the Bible."³² Clearly, Frances had plenty of access to the Bible.

Hackel and McMullen demonstrate that the countess of Bridgewater's library displayed many typical facets. Scholars like Kevin Sharpe and Carlo Ginzburg have argued that looking at the books a person read can reveal the origins of that person's

1 (2005): 3-29; and Rebecca Laroche, "Catherine Tollemache's Library," *Notes and Queries* 53, no. 2 (2006): 157-158.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 147.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 146.

²⁹ "A Catalogue of my Ladies Bookes at London, taken Oct. 27th 1627," EL 6495, HEH.

³⁰ Norma McMullen, "The Education of English Gentlewomen 1540-1640," *History of Education* 6, no. 2 (1977): 100.

³¹ "A Catalogue of my Ladies Bookes at London, taken Oct. 27th 1627," EL 6495, HEH.

³² McMullen, 87.

social, political, and religious views.³³ If we combine these ideas we may conclude that the countess of Bridgewater's reading habits were not unusual in any real way. Her library appears quite conventional, which reflects the social and gendered norms of her age. But, the task of reading a reader is a difficult and highly theoretical exercise. Kevin Sharpe writes that, "readers bring their experiences (not least of other texts) to any reading."³⁴ Sharpe hits upon the hermeneutical struggle of any historian attempting to understand a source within a historical context that is both created by and reflected in the source itself. This means that we must consider the type of person the countess of Bridgewater was in order to fully understand how she both impacted and was impacted by what she read. Hackel offers the insight that, "Lady Bridgewater emerges from her books and book list as both an attentive book owner and as a mother."³⁵

Hackel sees the countess of Bridgewater's motherhood reflected in her library because many of the books indicate that the countess loaned and received books with women in her family, like some of her daughters, her sister Elizabeth, and her mother.³⁶ Markings in several of the books show that she shared books with her daughters as well

³³ Carlo Ginzburg, *The Cheese and the Worms: The Cosmos of a Sixteenth-Century Miller*, trans. John and Anne Tedeschi (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992); and Kevin Sharpe, *Reading Revolutions: The Politics of Reading in Early Modern England* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000).

³⁴ Sharpe, 34. Here Sharpe is drawing up the works of several postmodern theorists. See for example: Roger Chartier, *The Order of Books: Readers, Authors and Libraries in Europe Between the Fourteenth and Eighteenth Centuries*, trans. Lydia Cochrane (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994); Dominick LaCapra, *Rethinking Intellectual History: Texts, Contexts, Language* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1983); and Hayden White, *The Content of the Form: Narrative Discourse and Historical Representation* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987).

³⁵ Hackel, 146.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 146-147.

as her mother and her sister Elizabeth. Her roles as mother and Renaissance woman came together to mean that she had the responsibility to ensure that her children received an education befitting of their rank and gender.³⁷ In the Bridgewater household, Frances did not perform the day-to-day education of her children. Their household accounts indicate that they employed a number of instructors. Mr. Aronell, a French man, taught the Bridgewater children French. Mr. Newport taught the lute, and Mrs. Heard taught dancing, singing, and music.³⁸ Later, they employed the noted seventeenth century musician, Henry Lawes, to instruct the youngest of the Bridgewater children. This education did more than prepare her children for life in the early modern aristocracy. As discussed by Warnicke, McMullen, and Charleton, education and godliness went hand-in-hand in early modern England. The Bridgewater children were literate (in at least two languages) and surrounded by one of England's largest libraries. The family culture of the Stanley women and the Egerton men also meant that the Bridgewater children were expected to put their education to proper use.

The countess of Bridgewater's high number of pregnancies also connects her religious practices and her role as a mother. Frances gave birth fifteen times between 1603 and 1623. Twice she gave birth three times in three years. For early modern women, pregnancy, faith and mortality were closely linked. Linda Pollock summarizes the situation nicely in her explanation that "the pleasure induced by the prospect of a

³⁷ Anthony Fletcher, *Gender, Sex and Subordination in England 1500-1800* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), 370-374; McMullen, 90; Keith Wrightson, *English Society, 1580-1680* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1982), 184-199.

³⁸ Notes for payments and receipts for lessons of the Bridgewater children, EL 259, EL 263-264, HEH.

child, especially from the woman's perspective, was not unalloyed: conceiving, carrying the child to term, and successfully giving birth to a healthy infant without impairing the well-being of the mother were viewed as stages on a hazardous journey, fraught with obstacles and dangers from beginning to end."³⁹ Many early modern women used their pregnancy to prepare their souls for the dangers that childbirth brought. David Cressy's work explores a number of early modern texts dedicated to helping a woman prepare herself and her child for the trauma of birth and the reality of death.⁴⁰ Interestingly, the inventory of the countess of Bridgewater's library does not list a single book written on the subjects of pregnancy or birth. As discussed above, however, it lists many spiritual books, bibles, prayers, and published sermons. Her regular pregnancies meant that the countess of Bridgewater faced death regularly for twenty years. She surrounded herself with books that would advise her on her spirit rather than her body.

While the majority of the books found in the countess of Bridgewater's library are literary or religious texts, her library inventory also suggests that she was at least acquainted with early works of the Scientific Revolution. An entry from the 1632 inventory lists *Ticho Brahe's conclusion (1632)*.⁴¹ The hindsight of history allows modern scholars to equate Brahe with the Scientific Revolution, but a seventeenth century context changes things slightly. Frances acquired the book sometime between

³⁹ Linda Pollock, "Embarking on a Rough Passage: The Experience of Pregnancy in Early-Modern Society," in *Women as Mothers in Pre-Industrial England: Essays in Memory of Dorothy McLaren*, ed. Valerie Fildes (London: Routledge, 1990), 41.

⁴⁰ David Cressy, *Birth, Marriage, and Death: Ritual, Religion, and the Life-Cycle in Tudor and Stuart England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 28-41.

⁴¹ "A Catalogue of my Ladies Bookes at London, taken Oct. 27th 1627," EL 6495, HEH.

1631 and 1632, just thirty years after Brahe's death. For modern scholars, Tycho Brahe's work in accurately charting the location of planets and stars composes his legacy, but in his lifetime, people often supported his work "financially and intellectually because [he was] thought to cast the best horoscopes."⁴²

The Bridgewaters, or at least someone in their household, continued to engage with the practice of astrology. Scholars have debated links between astrology and Calvinism in the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Christopher Hill has argued that Calvinist were the most vocal opponents to astrology and magical practices.⁴³ Bernard Capp has argued that "on the whole, astrology seems to have been repugnant to Calvinism, with its stress on the majesty of God and the impotence of mankind. Yet many of the fiercest clerical opponents of judicial astrology felt unable to condemn astrology altogether."⁴⁴ In the seventeenth century, the complex nature of religion and the gradual shifts between the pre and post-Reformation era provided space for a moderate Calvinist, for example, to practice basic astrology.

Within the Ellesmere manuscripts at the Huntington Library, there are two documents that list the names of the Bridgewater's children, and their birth dates, the years, the days of the week, and the time of day to the hour at each was born. The

⁴² Thomas Kuhn, *The Copernican Revolution: Planetary Astronomy in the Development of Western Thought* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1957), 93.

⁴³ Christopher Hill, "Science and Magic in Seventeenth-Century England," in *Culture, Ideology and Politics: Essays for Eric Hobsbawm*, eds. Raphael Samuel and Gareth Stedman Jones (London: Routledge, 1982), 182.

⁴⁴ Bernard Capp, *English Almanacs 1500-1800: Astrology and the Popular Press* (Ithica: Cornell University Press, 1979), 143.

documents are undated and the author is unknown. One of the documents lists all of the children with the last name of Egerton.⁴⁵ The second one, however, lists several of the Egerton's daughters by their married names. For the three Egerton children who had already died, the list names their age at the time of death in years and days. This list was therefore compiled sometime after 1623.⁴⁶ Although these documents are incredibly usefully in constructing a family tree for the Egerton family, someone more likely created them for a different purpose. Ralph Houlbrooke has written that sometimes a person attending a birth would record the hour. This practice "was considered particularly important by parents who, like John Dee, were keen students of astral influences."⁴⁷

The Ellesmere manuscripts also contain "A horoscope about an unnamed man and women done by Richard Piper."⁴⁸ A modern hand marked the document as having been created sometime in the late sixteenth century, but other indications suggest Piper wrote it in the mid-seventeenth century. A small note on the back of the horoscope reads "my Lady Alice Egerton tis rong cast." In the seventeenth century, there were three Alice Egertons: the dowager countess of Derby, her granddaughter (born 17 October 1613 and died 14 December 1614), and her second granddaughter named Alice (born 13 June 1619) who married the earl of Carbery in July 1652. The horoscope was likely not created for the Alice Egerton who died in infancy. There are very few historical records

⁴⁵ Nativie of the Bridgewater children, EL 6847, HEH.

⁴⁶ Nativie of the Bridgewater children, EL 6846, HEH.

⁴⁷ Ralph Houlbrooke, *English Family Life, 1576-1716: An Anthology from Diaries*. (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1988), 102.

⁴⁸ "A horoscope about and unnamed man and woman done by Richard Piper," EL 6451, HEH.

which refer to the dowager countess as "Lady Alice Egerton" (she seems to have preferred her Stanley title.) This leaves the youngest Alice Egerton as the most likely subject for the horoscope.

The horoscope opens with the lines: "Noble master, My humble service presented, I received your command by my Lady Jane your deare sister & my der most honored Lady: & any olligements are [exer] to performance in what I am able." Piper continues by explaining that the information he received in order cast the chart was incomplete: " but your instructions came to me very defrient for I should have had the place of birth as well as the year, day & houre: as plus: how farr distant north or south from London; & allso how far distant East or West from London..."⁴⁹ The location of birth and the distance from London is missing on both of the lists of the Egerton children. There is no indication that Bridgewater had a sister Jane, indicating that the horoscope may have been made at someone else's request.

Richard Piper used planetary locations and astrological houses to foresee the future. The woman he describes had to have been a young child when the chart was cast because Piper tells that: "I conjecture she might be in danger of death about her 9th yeare of age...About 40 I feare he blood wilbe distempered with melancholly & superfluous Pleagme & will hardly leave her till she leave the world: which if she doe at that time it wilbe happy for her for I finde no happy or comfortable direction of the horoscope after those years..."⁵⁰ There is no indication how old the man in the horoscope was, but he was

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

unmarried at the time that Piper cast his chart. This horoscope raises more questions than it answers. Without further information, all it can really do is create room for astrological charts in the countess of Bridgewater's religious practices. And even if she was unaware of it, the nativities of the Bridgewater children indicate that someone was casting charts for them.

It is also telling that Penelope Egerton, the Bridgewater's second eldest daughter, married Sir Robert Napier. Sir Robert was the eldest son of Sir Richard Napier, whose uncle was the famous seventeenth century astrologer and theologian, Richard Napier. Jonathan Andrews recounts that while Richard Napier, "was attacked publically by puritans, and was even abused by some as a conjuror or witch, he was able to chart a relatively safe course socially and professionally through a steady assertion of moderate, conforming Anglicanism."⁵¹ This does not seem too threatening to the Bridgewater's brand of "moderate Calvinism." Robert's brother, Sir Richard, inherited Napier's book and charts. The Bridgewaters were obviously not too concerned with establishing kinship with the Napier family, or they would never have permitted their daughter to marry into the family.

Penelope's marriage connected the Egerton's with astrologers, but they were also closely associated with a number of Catholics. Hackel acutely explored the contexts of the books listed on the inventory and has uncovered that the countess of Bridgewater's

⁵¹ Jonathan Andrews, "Napier, Robert (1559-1634)," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, September 2004, online edn. Jan 2008 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/19763>, accessed 7 May 2009].

library contained religious texts that represent a wide array of ideologies. But what stands out for Hackel is that fact that:

the Countess also owned several books with a Marian or recusant connections: *A Right Godly Rule* (a prayer book based on a Marian edition), a *Jesus Psalter* (a popular Catholic book of devotion), and several works by the recusant poet Robert Southwell. The shelving of *A Right Godly Rule* next to an edition of Southwell printed by the Catholic secret press confirms that the Countess was, in fact, aware of the Marrian and recusant influences of her library.⁵²

Perhaps the countess of Bridgewater's library inventory does not only show her as "an attentive book owner and as a mother," but also as the daughter of an alleged Catholic murdered by Jesuit plotters and descendant from a family that quite frequently wore the "Scarlet C" of Catholics in Elizabethan and early Stuart England. The Hesketh Plot of 1593 robbed Alice of the husband whom she loved, and Anne, Frances, and Elizabeth of their father. The plot cast a lingering shadow of doubt over the religious affiliations of Ferdinando Stanley.⁵³ The presence of recusant texts in the countess of Bridgewater's library may reflect the Stanley family's tangled relationship with Catholicism.

Sixteenth century contemporaries associated the Stanley family with Catholicism long before Ferdinando's encounter with Richard Hesketh, the Jesuit plotter, in the autumn of 1593. Since the time of the Henrician Reformation, the landed family's home county of Lancashire was inhabited by the largest Catholic population of any other county in England.⁵⁴ Barry Coward has argued for "the probability that there was no

⁵² Hackel, 143.

⁵³ See also Chapter 2 for discussion of the Hesketh Plot and the Stanley women.

⁵⁴ Christopher Haigh, *Reformation and Resistance in Tudor Lancashire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975); J.J. Bagley, *The Earls of Derby 1485-1985* (London: Sidgwick & Jackson, 1985), 65.

break between pre-and post-Reformation Catholicism and near certainty that recusancy grew in strength in sixteenth century Lancashire."⁵⁵ It is no wonder then that Jesuits from the continent flocked to Lancashire upon arriving in England; the county provided a comfortable "home base" for them.⁵⁶

This recusant climate also influenced the abundant theatrical and literary patronage that the Stanleys and their associates generated at Knowsley Hall. In 1985, E.A.J. Honigmann presented an explanation for Shakespeare's "lost years," arguing that the Bard spent the majority of this time in Lancashire.⁵⁷ His book sparked the production of a mounting body of scholarship attempting to pinpoint the secret religious motivations and hidden meanings in Shakespeare's work, as well as his own private religious identity.⁵⁸ The scholarship offers a "chicken or the egg" scenario over Shakespeare's time in Lancashire and his relation with Lord Strange's Men. Some argue Shakespeare went to Lancashire because he was a Catholic. Some argue he became a Catholic as a result of his time in Lancashire and his affiliation with the Stanleys. Of course, the possibility also exists that the Stanleys and Shakespeare were merely part of the county's

⁵⁵ Barry Coward, *The Stanleys, Lords Stanley, and Earls of Derby, 1385-1672: the Origins, Wealth, and Power of a Landowning Family* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1983), 183.

⁵⁶ Francis Edwards, *Plots and Plotters in the Reign of Elizabeth I* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2002), 169-192.

⁵⁷ E.A.J. Honigmann, *Shakespeare: The 'Lost Years'* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1985).

⁵⁸ See: Sarah Beckwith, "Shakespeare, Crypto-Catholicism, Crypto-criticism," *Medieval and Renaissance Drama in England* 19 (2006): 259-270; Patrick Collinson, "William Shakespeare's Religious Inheritance and Environment," in *Elizabethan Essays* (London: Hambledon, 1994), 219-252; Richard Dutton, Alison Findlay, and Richard Wilson, eds, *Theatre and Religion : Lancastrian Shakespeare* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003); Richard Wilson, *Secret Shakespeare: Studies in Theatre, Religion and Resistance* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004); and John Yamamoto-Wilson, "Shakespeare and Catholicism," *Reformation and Renaissance Review* 7, nos. 2-3 (2005): 347-361.

minority Protestant population. Some scholars have turned to the work Shakespeare produced in the early 1590's with the hope of uncovering a clear insight into the relations between the playwright, religion, and the political climate of the age.⁵⁹ The question is left to more insightful and literary minds to work out. What matters in regards to the Stanley women is that their early years were spent in this exceedingly Catholic county, and that their family's literary connections amplified these ties.

The Stanley family connection to Catholicism went far deeper than mere geography. Ferdinando certainly had his fair share of Catholic relatives who cast shadows over his religious devotion. In 1570, the third earl of Derby's two brothers were arrested for attempting to help Mary Queen of Scots escape from prison. In 1587, Sir William Stanley, the son of the third earl's cousin, was reputed to have encouraged Spanish Catholics to invade England.⁶⁰ Ferdinando also had two aunts whose recusant activities caused considerable trouble. Anne Stanley, wife of Lord Stourton and then Sir John Arundel was Catholic, as were most of her ten children. Several of her daughters actually became nuns. In 1594, Anne and a number of men in her household were arrested for harboring a priest. The men were executed but Queen Elizabeth released Anne. Officials arrested Lady Stourton for recusant activities again in 1601, but again the Queen Elizabeth again called for her release. Elizabeth Stanley and her son, along

⁵⁹ In a 2006 unpublished paper entitled "Going Roman: Titus Andronicus and the Crisis of the 1590's," Peter Lake argues that *Titus Andronicus* is really about the succession crisis of the 1590's. J.J. Bagley tells that Shakespeare dedicated the 1594 text of the play to the earl of Derby. (See J.J. Bagley, 73). This would mean that Shakespeare dedicated a play about the succession crisis to a man who could not only make a reasonable claim to the throne, but who that same year was also implicated in a Jesuit plot to seize the throne. This strand is even more complicated because most scholars, and sixteenth century peers, believe that Jesuits orchestrated Ferdinando's murder after he exposed their plot.

⁶⁰ Coward, 145.

with 21 others, were arrested on Palm Sunday 1574 for holding mass at their home near Aldgate. Four years earlier, her husband, Lord Morley, fled to the continent in exile. Elizabeth finally joined him in Maestricht in 1576.⁶¹

Catholics both literally and figuratively surrounded Ferdinando and his young family. Their family history of recusance was serious, but when combined with their Tudor bloodlines, some sixteenth century contemporaries considered the Stanley family to be an outright threat to Elizabeth's throne. Arguably Ferdinando's mother, Margaret, countess of Derby, was the greatest cause for this concern. Margaret's mother, Eleanor, was the daughter of Mary Tudor, Henry VIII's sister, and Charles Brandon, Duke of Suffolk. Margaret thus passed a direct lineage to the Tudor throne on to her children. There were other peers who shared a similar line of descent, and could easily chart their relation to the children of Henry VII. A bloodline alone was not enough to cause serious trouble. The problem for the Stanley family came in August 1579, when Margaret was arrested for "using witchcraft" in an attempt to discern if Queen Elizabeth would live long.⁶² Laws prohibited casting charts on the monarch but common sense dictated that it was an even riskier endeavor if the caster could make a serious claim to the throne. Margaret not only put herself in serious danger, but her actions undoubtedly cast suspicious shadows over her sons.

⁶¹ Kathy Lynn Emerson, *Wives and Daughters: The Women of Sixteenth Century England* (Troy, NY: The Whitston Publishing Co, 1984), 216.

⁶² Paul McLane, "Spenser's Chloris: The Countess of Derby," *The Huntington Library Quarterly* 24, no. 2 (February 1961): 147.

Despite these numerous and dangerous Catholic connections, some scholars contend that Ferdinando was not Catholic.⁶³ No historical sources confirm Ferdinando's true religious beliefs, but inferences can be made. Ironically the source that calls Ferdinando's religion into question more than any other is the set of instructions that Jesuit plotters gave Hesketh before he met with the earl of Derby. Officials found a list of seventeen points of instruction in Richard Hesketh's possession when they arrested him after Ferdinando turned him over. Several of the instructions imply that even the Jesuit plotters did not know Ferdinando to be a devout Catholic. Point seven stated that in order for Ferdinando to have Jesuit support, "that he be a Catholic, and that he will bind himself to restore, advance and perpetually maintain the Catholic religion in our country."⁶⁴ For many, the fact that Jesuits propositioned Ferdinando in the first place implies that he must have been Catholic, or that he was known to be friendly toward Catholics. However, the language of these instructions makes the reality of Ferdinando's religion appear more ambiguous. Their request that he declare himself to them as a Catholic implies that even these plotters had their doubts as to his true religious affiliation. If Jesuits knew him to be a devout Catholic, then there would be little need to clarify that he must rule England in accordance to Catholic doctrine.

The instructions also explained that Ferdinando was their "fourth competitor in road, but if he be Catholic the first."⁶⁵ If the Jesuit plotters knew Ferdinando to be a

⁶³ See: Bagley, 65.

⁶⁴ *HMC: Salisbury MSS* Vol IV, 462.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

Catholic then they probably would not have made an alternate list in which he was their fourth choice. This clause, however, also highlights the earl of Derby's friendly affiliation with Catholics. Even if he was not Catholic, he was still their fourth choice of rulers for England, implying that these plotters believed they could either persuade the earl to become a Catholic, or that he would at least be more tolerant of Catholicism than Queen Elizabeth. If he had professed his Catholic loyalties to Hesketh, then the earl of Derby was their first choice of rulers for England. This point is also interesting because it tells us that continental Jesuits must have at least believed that Ferdinando would be open-minded toward their cause. The instructions also told that: "To assure these here of his sincere meaning, it is requisite he send one of credit to declare his full mind and meaning."⁶⁶ In an effort to resolve all doubt, they required him to clearly profess his loyalties. His declaration would tell the Jesuits how to proceed. Ferdinando opted for a different path, as he fled to London and divulged the entire plot to the Queen and Lord Burghley.

In a dark and tragic turn of events, controversy over Catholicism turned into controversy over witchcraft for the earl of Derby. In April 1594, seven months after Richard Hesketh approached Ferdinando and six months after Hesketh was executed for the meeting, the earl of Derby became violently ill and died. Rumors immediately circulated that black magic caused his death. Sir Edward Filton began an investigation "On 1 April 1594, the Earl had refused the request of a woman, who desired him to assign her a welling-place near by, so that she might inform him from time to time of

⁶⁶ Ibid.

matters that were revealed to her by God." The visit seemed to have caused little need for concern until:

A few days later he began to be troubled with harrowing dreams, and on the fifth of the same month, being in his chamber of Knowsley, about six o'clock at night, there 'appeared suddenly a tall man with a ghastly and threatening countenance, who twice or thrice seemed to cross him as he was passing though the chamber,' and, when he came to the same part of the chamber where this shadow appeared, a strange illness seized him.⁶⁷

The situation quickly grew worse: "The following day the Earl went to Latham, where he suffered much from vomiting, notwithstanding the excellent glysters prescribed by the physicians." On 10 April: "Master Halsall, found the wax image curiously spotted, and soon afterwards spots appeared on the sides and belly of the distempered nobleman, notwithstanding that the finder had immediately thrown the puppet into the fire."⁶⁸ Six days later, the earl of Derby was dead.

The Hesketh Plot and the subsequent mysterious death of Ferdinando Stanley have the intrigue that captivates scholars and conspiracy theorists. Like so many historical moments, the narrative seems to raise more questions than can be conclusively answered. But, in the sweetly ironic fashion of history, the whole series of events seems to be foreshadowed in a 1588 "Prayer of the Right Honorable Ferdinando, Lord Strange" which reads: "Let peace and justice embrace each other, O Lord Let England be to thee a

⁶⁷ C. L'Estrange Ewen, *Witchcraft and Demonianism: A Concise Account Derived from Sworn Depositions and Confessions Obtained in the Courts of England and Wales* (London: Heath Cranton Ltd., 1933), 175. See also: HMS: Salisbury MSS Vol IV, 517, Letter from Sir George Cary to Sir Thomas Heneage and Sir Robert Cecil, 28 April 1594; French Fogle, "Such a Rural Queen': The Countess Dowager of Derby as Patron," in *Patronage in Late Renaissance England: Papers Read at a Clark Library Seminar 14 May 1977* (Los Angeles: University of California, William Andrews Clark Memorial Library, 1983), 18; and Keith Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic: Studies in Popular Beliefs in Sixteenth and Seventeenth Century England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971), 538.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

second Isreal, Consider the imortal threatenings of our enemies, and suffer them not to exercise their tyranny upon us: keep from our necks the yoke of antichristian bondage, and repress the juriousness of those which seek to spoil and make havock of the church." Ferdinando displayed his loyalty to Queen Elizabeth and prayed for her and for the stability of England: "so arm the bands of our gracious Queen, and the hearts of her subjects, as we may ever be willing in true faith to defend and maintain as well thy laws as our lives and liberties." His prayer concluded with a desire for strength and peace: "And that we inflamed through the zeal of the word, may for every valantly withsand thine enemies: grant these O Lord at our unworthy, yet humble requests, and perform thy promise which we being here gather in prayer together to hartily desire."⁶⁹ For the earl of Derby, like all people in early modern England, religion and state affairs collided. But for Ferdinando and the Stanley women, this collision had devastating effects. His untimely death, and the means by which he died, continues to fuel speculation as to his true religious devotion.

The Hesketh Plot and Ferdinando's subsequent death served as a justifiable reason for the Stanley women to publically reject Catholicism and embrace moderate Calvinism. But, the Hesketh plot also provides an explanation for the recusant texts housed in the countess of Bridgewater's library. Frances was eleven years old when her father died, and spent many of her younger years with the family at Knowsley Hall. She was certainly old enough to be aware of the complicated religious climate of Lancashire and the impact it had on the Stanley family. She and her sisters, as well as their mother, had

⁶⁹ A Prayer of the Right Honorable Ferdinando, Lord Strange, 1588, EL 9, HEH.

first hand experience with the devastating effects of recusancy and witchcraft. While there is no reason to believe that Frances herself practiced Catholicism, the religion played a dramatic role in her youth and shaping her future. (After all, her father's death caused the lawsuit between the Stanley women and Frances's uncle William.) As Sharpe and other theorists have argued, looking at the books that a person read should, in a way, reflect who that person was. It makes sense that the countess of Bridgewater would have Catholic texts in her library, given the momentous impact that Catholicism had on her formative years. As a woman living in late-sixteenth and seventeenth century England, she did not need to be Catholic to be impacted by Catholicism. Her library reflects her experiences as well as the person she was.

The countess of Bridgewater may have been open-minded to Catholic texts, but it is doubtful her sister, the countess of Huntingdon, was. Elizabeth compiled three different prayer books in to which she transcribed biblical verses, sermons, and prayers. None of these books contains personal meditations or original writings, like those written by her niece-in-law, Elizabeth Egerton, the second countess of Bridgewater.⁷⁰ The countess of Huntingdon was not alone among early modern women of the upper classes in her desire to transcribe sermons and prayers. The act of writing, reading, and

⁷⁰ Elizabeth Egerton's *Meditations* are well known to early modern scholars. There are several manuscript versions of the *Meditations*. Egerton MS 607, BL, is the most complete and well-known version. The Huntington Library also holds a draft copy of the *Meditations* (EL 6888, HEH) on which the John Egerton, second earl of Bridgewater made corrections to his wife's draft. Also at the Huntington Library is RB 297343. This is a bound but incomplete version of the *Meditations*. The catalog at the Huntington Library incorrectly names Frances Stanley Egerton as the author of the *Meditations*.

pondering religious texts occupied an important place in practices of female piety.⁷¹

Each of the books has a unique provenance. Overall, they reveal important insights into the countess of Huntingdon's religious life. They show a disdain for the Catholic Church. They also contain several prayers focused on her desire to be among the elect.

In one of her prayer books, she wrote lines simply titled "Of the Church." The prayer reads:

In the invisible Church is the company of those whome God hath chosen to eternall life at all tymes & in all places. The visible Church is the company of those that are called into the same, & is considered according to certaine tymes & certaine places. The Catholic Church comprehendeth under her all assemblies of all Christians in all Countries the which are called Churches, as wee call parte of the Sea, the Sea. The purer Churches are those in which the word is purely preached, & the sacraments duly administred The impure are those in which the word of God & his sacraments are not rightly administered.⁷²

This prayer not only demonstrates a desire to be among God's chosen, but it also comments on the improper procedures of the Catholic Church. This prayer may not tell us much about the precise nature of the countess of Huntingdon's religious beliefs, but it does allow us to broadly classify her as a "moderate Calvinist." It also demonstrates that through prayer, she actively distanced herself from her family's Catholic roots.

There are few references to the Catholic Church in her prayer books. References to being among God's elected were more prevalent in the texts. In one passage, the countess of Huntingdon prayed that Christ's blood would wash away her sin, "that I may

⁷¹ See for example: Victoria Burke and Jonathan Gibson, eds, *Early Modern Women's Manuscript Writing: Selected Papers from the Trinity/Trent Colloquium* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004); and Margaret Patterson Hannay, ed. *Silent but for the Word: Tudor Women as Patrons, Translators, and Writers of Religious Works* (Kent: Kent State University Press, 1985).

⁷² Prayer/Commonplace book of ESH, HA Literature 1(6), 60. There are several other copies of this collection housed at the Huntingdon Library. In each, the sermons and prayers are in a slightly different order, although the overall texts appear to be complete. See also: EL 6871 and HA Religious 2(8), HEH.

bee acknowledged for one of thyne elect when I shall appeare before thy judgment seat...that by thy power I may bee strengthened againe upon thy providence for all the meanes of this temporall life, that I may be justified and bee at peace with thee through our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen."⁷³ This prayer is just one of many with the same sentiments in her commonplace book. The book also contains prayers to be said in the morning, before receiving the sacrament, and to ponder death. The countess of Huntingdon also transcribed Dr. Hall's meditations and vows.

In another commonplace book, Elizabeth made several transcriptions of sermons given by Mr. Awtes, Mr. Kemp, and Mr. Miller. She always indicates that the sermons are taken "out of my Tablebooks" and are "not perfected."⁷⁴ She supplements these sermons with bible chapters and verses. In another smaller book titled, "Certaine Collections of the right honorable Elizabeth late Countesse of Huntingdon for her owne private use 1633," she also transcribed bible verses.⁷⁵ Elizabeth's practice of putting her spiritual life on paper is indicative of many other educated aristocratic early modern women. The countess of Huntingdon's methods for practicing her religion makes her quite typical. The fact that so many of her prayer books have survived is remarkable.

One of her books has a note on the inside cover which reads: "May it please your Honor I think it presumption to present your Ladyship with the Collections of that Gallant Lady whose name you beare you may like them the better for that they were

⁷³ Prayer/Commonplace book of ESH, HA Literature 1(6), 8-9, HEH.

⁷⁴ Prayer/Commonplace book of ESH, HA Religious Box 1(13), HEH.

⁷⁵ Prayer/Commonplace book of ESH, HM15369, HEH.

hers~however they are to be liked from her for that they dwelt the way to paradise which is hartily desired to our Ladyship."⁷⁶ The book was given to Elizabeth, the seventh countess of Huntingdon, wife of Theophilus Hastings. Theophilus was the son of Ferdinando Hastings and Lucy Davies Hastings. A second of Elizabeth Stanley Hastings's book passed to her daughter-in-law, Lucy.⁷⁷ The countess of Huntingdon may have created the books for "her owne private use," but they became tokens by which to remember her. The eulogy given at Elizabeth's funeral hails her piety and intelligence.⁷⁸ Perhaps this became part of her legacy because the countess of Huntingdon left tangible artifacts of her faith.

The religious life of the countess of Derby is far less tangible. In fact, hardly anything survives to tell about it at all. We do know that she had at least two private chaplains. She appointed one, Anthony Watson, as her private chaplain on 8 October 1614.⁷⁹ Her will also tells that at the time of her death, her personal chaplain was John Prichard. She requests that he give her funeral sermon.⁸⁰ Unfortunately, there is no known information about either of these men. The fact that these men do not even appear in the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* tells us that the dowager countess of Derby did not hire nationally renowned theologian as her private spiritual leaders.

⁷⁶ Prayer/Commonplace book of ESH, HA Literature 1 (6), 2, HEH.

⁷⁷ Prayer/Commonplace book of ESH, HA Religion 1 (10), HEH.

⁷⁸ See Chapter 8.

⁷⁹ Appointment of Anthony Watson by AE as her personal chaplain, HA Personal Papers 15 (11), HEH. This was not Anthony Watson, the bishop of Chichester.

⁸⁰ The Last Will and Testament of Alice Egerton, Prob/11/174, TNA.

Renowned private chaplains certainly seem appropriate, given the dowager countess's status and reputations. Her daughter, Elizabeth, and second husband, Lord Ellesmere, were known to associate with famous theologians, like John Donne for example.⁸¹ Yet, the dowager countess of Derby hired relatively unknown men as her personal chaplains. This suggests that the dowager countess's religious practices were perhaps less staunch than those of her daughter and second husband. Unfortunately, the lack of sources and information in this aspect of her life only permits us to speculate.

We are left to accept that the dowager countess of Derby was indeed a "moderate Calvinist." (This may be the only instance when she is ever described as a moderate anything.) In the case of the countess of Derby, however, we are left to speculate whether her "moderate Calvinism" was more about conformity than spiritual devotion. While we may be lacking in sources, we are not for want of people in the dowager countess's life. She had daughters, husbands, and kinsmen, but she also had a number of godchildren. Ralph Houlbrooke's research on the family in early modern England indicates that "strict puritans rejected godparenthood altogether and insisted on the paramount responsibility of parents for the Christian upbringing of their children."⁸² Moderate Calvinists, however, did not have a problem with appointing godparents to their children. As discussed in Chapter 2, this was an important way to build and maintain kinship networks among early modern families. The dowager countess of Derby had six goddaughters: Frances Leigh (daughter of her step-daughter, Mary

⁸¹ Cogswell, 73; and Knafla, 72.

⁸² Houlbrooke, 103.

Egerton Leigh), Alice Leigh (also Mary's daughter), Frances Egerton (her granddaughter), Alice Hastings (her granddaughter), and one of Lady Hatten's daughters, and Alice Egerton (her granddaughter who died a year after birth). Anne was also a godmother to Alice Egerton.⁸³

A lack of sources makes it difficult to delve too deeply into the religious lives of the Stanley women. The sources that do exist support the previous impression that they were indeed "moderate Calvinists." But their lives are also surrounded by recusancy, astrology, and witchcraft. It is possible to speculate that the Hesketh Plot drove the Stanley women to the "middle of the road," or at the least, to display conformist behaviors. Frances's library is remarkable, but in many ways it raises more questions than it answers. Did she collect Catholic texts because of her childhood spent in Lancashire? Or does her library merely reflect the larger and tumultuous climate of early modern England? Her family's moderate Calvinism does leave room for casting astrological charts for their children. Elizabeth's writings, while extensive, are not unusual for the period. The Stanley women were well-educated and they passed this trait on to their children. Their religious lives seem reflective of both the time in which they lived, as well as their own family culture. It is perhaps one of the only areas of their collective lives in which they did not stand out, but blended in perfectly.

⁸³ Notes on births, marriages, and deaths in the Egerton family, EL 1001, HEH.

Chapter 4

"To the Right Honourable...": Print, Literary, and Local Political Patronage of the Stanley Women

In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, husbands, children, and kinsmen helped to shape and define the identities of the Stanley women. Yet it is also impossible to ignore the overwhelming role of patronage in the Stanley women's lives. The literary patronage of their Stanley women remains the aspect of their lives, both individually and collectively, for which they are most well known to modern scholars. This chapter seeks to reconfigure the patron-client relationship from the perspective of the Stanley women, and discusses the role that literary and political patronage played in their lives. The Stanley women surrounded themselves with men who were also intimately associated with various forms of patronage; it was truly a family enterprise. Literary networks in particular were essential to the ways that the Stanley women promoted their families. These networks also had a symbiotic relationship with their political and legal endeavors.

Their patronage practices took several forms: literary, religious, and political. All of these patronage forms came together to create a complex web of influence and authority. Numerous writers dedicated printed works to the Stanley women, both individually and collectively, in efforts to secure their continued patronage. The Stanley women offered financial support to local writers in exchange for poems glorifying their status. The Stanley women and their husbands also appointed private chaplains and local educators, which allowed them to exert religious patronage that consolidated their local religious and political affiliations. These political affiliations were also significantly tied

to their habits of patronage at both the local and national level. For example, the countess of Huntingdon routinely received tokens and poems from people in the town of Leicester in efforts to secure her favor. At various stages in their lives, each woman spent time at Whitehall. Court was a dangerous and precarious place that thrived on complicated networks of favor and alliances. The Stanley women had to negotiate their way through this system in order to preserve and even increase their familial authority, and they used their powerful reputations as noble patronesses to assist them in these endeavors.

Early modern poets, translators, and writers frequently included the Stanley women and their families in dedications, poems, and epistles. Jon Quitslund has argued that, "In an age when life was, even without the glare of modern publicity, much more public than we can easily imagine, writers were actually conscious of their audiences, so the tastes and interests of patrons and patronesses, whether they were known to the writer directly, by reputation, or as members of their class, exercised a complex influence on the production of literature."¹ But the dedication of literary texts served a symbiotic purpose for both the writers and the noble to whom they dedicated their texts. David Bergeron argues that, "textual patronage expanded, not only through the emerging marketplace but also through aristocratic and noble patronage. Therefore, despite, indeed because of, increased publication of dramatic texts, playwrights continued in growing numbers to find it desirable, if not necessary, to dedicate their texts and to address readers."²

¹ Jon Quitslund, "Spenser and the Patronesses of the *Fowre Hymnes*: 'Ornaments of All True Love and Beautie,'" in *Silent but for the Word: Tudor Women as Patrons, Translators, and Writers of Religious Works*, ed. Margaret Patterson Hannay (Kent: Kent State University Press, 1985), 184.

² David Bergeron, *Textual Patronage in English Drama, 1570-1640* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006), 13.

Bergeron goes on to explain how "dramatists learn to use the prefatory space for multiple purposes, especially to search for and acknowledge patronage."³

The perspectives offered by Quitslund and Bergeron come together to offer a very interesting way in which to conceive of dedications made to the Stanley women and their husbands. The English Short Title Catalog (ESTC) lists ten books, by ten different authors, published between 1591 and 1634 with dedication to at least one of the Stanley women. This quantity of dedications demonstrates the desire of early modern writers to secure the Stanley women as patrons. Quitslund and Bergeron's work also allows us to consider that the themes of the published works along with the language of the dedications themselves can tell us a great deal about the Stanley women's personal qualities. The plethora of dedicated sources range from books and poems by well-known literary figures like Edmund Spenser, Robert Codrington, and Sir John Davies, to works by lesser known writers and theologians, like John Whaley and John Brinsley. The Stanley women, collectively and as individuals, offered poets and theologians the opportunity to be a part of a well established literary network.

One of the most noted works dedicated to Alice is *Tears of the Muses*, a poem found in Edmund Spenser's 1591 book, *Complaints Containing Sundre Small Powems of the Worlds Vanitie*.⁴ In the introductory letter to the poem, Spenser touched upon common themes of honor and nobility when he wrote to the then Lady Strange, "the things that make ye so much honored of the world as ye bee, ar such, as (without my

³ Ibid., 18.

⁴ Edmund Spenser, "Tears of the Muses" in *Complaints Containing Sundre Small Poems of the Worlds Vanitie* (London, 1591).

simple lines testimonie) are throughlie knowen to all men; namely, your excellent beautie, your vertuous behavior, & your noble match with that most honourable Lord the verie Paterne of right Nobilitie." Spenser then offers a different reason for his precise desire to write for her. He explains that he also feels "private band of affinitie, which hath pleased your Ladiship to acknowledge."⁵ Ultimately, Spenser confessed to the most obvious reason to attach Lady Strange to his work: "that by honouring you they might know me, and by knowing me they might honor you." This dedication epitomizes the interpretation of prefaces offered by both Quitslund and Bergerson, and it is clear that Spenser pulled out all the stops in his early attempts to win the favor of Lady Strange.

Four year later, in 1595, Spenser built upon his literary connection to Alice Stanley in his poem, *Colin Clouts Come Home Again*. Spenser dedicated the epic to Sir Walter Raleigh, but Alice, the recently deceased Ferdinando, and two of Alice's sisters all make appearances in the poem. First, Spenser addresses Ferdinando's sudden death and the new dowager countess of Derby's grief-stricken mourning. In the poem, Spenser personifies the flower *Amyntas* as Ferdinando, while Alice is *Amaryllis*:

There also is (ah no, he is not now)
 But since I said he is, he is quite gone,
Amyntas quite is gone, and lies full low,
 Having his *Amaryllis* left to mone.
 Helpe, O ye shepheards helpe ye all in this,
 Helpe *Amaryllis* this her losse to mourne:
 Her losse is yours, your losse *Amyntas* is,
Amyntas floure of Shepheards pride forlorne:
 He whilst he lived was the noblest swaine,
 That ever piped in an oaten quill:

⁵ Here Spenser claimed to be a blood-relative of the Spencer's of Althorp but no lineage has ever been truly established. See: Thomas Heywood, *The Earls of Derby and the Verse Writers and Poets of the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (Printed for the Chetham Society, 1853), (hereafter referred to as *The Stanley Papers*), 37.

Both did he other, which could pipe, maintaine,
And eke could pipe himselfe with passing skill.
[Lines 432-443]⁶

Spenser not only references the dowager countess's mourning, but also mentions Ferdinando's skill with a quill. It is widely believed that Ferdinando composed a number of literary pieces during his lifetime. This is not a far-fetched assumption, given his family's literary and theatrical associations. Historians and literary critics speculate as to the full relationship that Ferdinando had with literature. His name appears as one of the contributing authors in the table of contents for the 1610 publication, *Belvedere, or the Garden of the Muses*. It remains unclear, however, specifically what his contributions to the book were.⁷ Spenser's line in *Colin Clout* does seem to confirm on some level that the earl of Derby did write something and was somewhat proficient in the art of composition.

But, Spenser's allusion to the dowager countess of Derby in *Colin Clout* is not limited to Ferdinando's death. He also pays tribute to the dowager countess in relation to two of her sisters. He began by comparing Elizabeth Spencer Carey, Lady Hunsdon, Anne Spencer, Lady Compton, and Alice to three flowers in a lush garden:

Ne lesse paiseworthie are the sister three,
The honor of the noble familie:
Of which I meanest boast my selfe to be,
And most that unto them I am so nie.
Phyllis, Charyllis, and sweet Amaryllis:

⁶ Edmund Spenser, *Colin Clouts Come Home Again* (London, 1595). See also French Fogle, "Such a Rural Queen: The Countess Dowager of Derby as Patron," in *Patronage in Late Renaissance England: Papers Read at a Clark Library Seminar 14 May 1977*, eds. French Fogle and Louis Knafle (Los Angeles: University of California, William Andrews Clark Memorial Library, 1983), 15-18; Quitslund, 195; and *The Stanley Papers*, 32-35.

⁷ *The Stanley Papers*, 35. See also: Steven May, "Spencer's 'Amyntas': Three Poems by Ferdinando Stanley, Lord Strange, Fifth Earl of Derby," *Modern Philology* 70, no. 1 (August, 1972): 49-52.

Phyllis refers to Elizabeth. *Charyllis* is meant to be Anne. And, again, *Amaryllis* is the dowager countess of Derby.⁸ Just as Spenser had dedicated works to Alice prior to *Colin Clout*, this was not Spenser's first encounter with Lady Compton and Lady Hunsdon. He dedicated his *Mother Hubberts Tale* to Lady Compton. To Lady Hunsdon, he dedicated his *Muiopotmos*, as well as a sonnet in *The Faire Queen*.⁹ Spenser then takes a moment to articulate the unique qualities of each "flower."

Phyllis the faire, is eldest of the three:
The next to her, is bountifull *Charyllis*:
But th'youngest is the highest in degree.
Phyllis the floure of rare perfection,
Faire spreading forth her leaves with fresh delight,
That with their beauties amorous reflexion,
Bereave of sence each rash beholders sight.
But sweet *Charyllis* is the Paragone
Of peerlesse price, and ornament of praise,
Admyr'd of all, yet envied of none,
Through the myld temperance of her goodly raies

Here, Spenser paints Elizabeth and Anne as beautiful and sweet-natured, but the youngest sister is the "highest in degree." Spenser goes on to explain that Alice is the most noble because of her Stanley marriage:

But *Amaryllis*, whether fortunate,
Or else unfortunate may I aread.
That freed is from *Cupids* yoke by fate,
Since which she doth new bands adventure dread.
Shepherd what ever thou hast heard to be
In this or that praysd diversly apart,
In her thou maist them all assembled see,
And seald up in the treasure of her hart.
[Lines 537-552 and 564-571]¹⁰

⁸ See A.C. Hamilton, *The Spenser Encyclopedia* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997), 174; William Shepard Walsh, *Heroes and Heroines of Fiction* (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott Co., 1914), 93; and *The Stanley Papers*, 38.

⁹ Fogle, 16-17.

¹⁰ Edmund Spenser, *Colin Clouts Come Home Again*.

Sadly, Ferdinando's death "freed her from Cupids yoke by fate," and his earlier stanzas describe the grief she endured as a result. But, Spenser also seems to be saying that the Lady Alice was in no hurry to take a second husband in the line which tells, "Since which she doth new bands adventure dread." The six years that Alice spent as a widow reflect Spenser's observation.

While Spenser intended to pay homage to the Spencer family with these lines, this is not the only poem where he wrote directly to sisters. Jon Quitslund has explored Spenser's dedication and writing of *Fower Hymnes* in 1596 for Anne Russell Dudley, countess of Warwick, and Margaret Russell Clifford, countess of Cumberland. Quitslund finds that in Spenser's writing there is a "constancy to an ideal object is articulated and held up for admiration, while loss of everything but the immortal ideal is lamented; at the same time, losses are rationalized and accepted, in the light of an eventual happiness which poetry can only anticipate."¹¹ This point certainly resonates with the lines Spenser penned for the Spencer sisters as well, especially for the dowager countess of Derby. According to Spenser, enduring the tragedy of Ferdinando's death only increased Alice's dignity as she "sealed up [her loss] in the treasure of her heart." If authors intended their dedications and literary lines to reflect certain aspects of the patron's lives, then the fact that Spenser discussed Alice's lamentation over Ferdinando's death twice in *Colin Clout* is significant. Only a year after the earl's death, Spenser consoles his desired patroness with the thought that her loss does not lessen her status in his eyes. Her sisters still had the security that came with living husbands but Alice remained "the highest in degree."

¹¹ Quitslund, 202.

If writers with renown careers like Edmund Spenser found the countess of Derby to be an appealing patron and subject, it is easy to see the appeal she must have held for other authors. The majority of the publications dedicated to Alice are from the first two decades of the seventeenth century. Each dedication and epistle highlights one of Alice's particular attributes in endless efforts to enter her ever-expanding patronage network. In 1593, Barnabe Barnes wrote one of his six epistles to the Lady Strange in his most famous work, the book of poetry called *Parthenophil and Parthenophe*. Barnes also wrote to "The Learned Gentlemen Readers," Henry, earl of Northumberland, Robert, earl of Essex, Henry, earl of Southampton, Mary, countess of Pembroke, and Lady Bridget Manners. In his epistle to Lady Strange, Barnes constantly hails her "bewtie," and in the end acknowledges:

All Bryttish Ladyes, deigne my muses suites
Which unacquainted of your bewtie craves
Acquaintance, and proceedeth
T'aproche so bodily, and behaves
Her selfe so rudely daunted at your sight
As eyes in darkness, at a suddeine light.¹²

Barnes attempted to appeal to the Lady Strange's vanity in the hopes of securing her as a future patroness.

In 1612, William Jewell dedicated his translation of *The Golden Cabinet of True Treasure: Containing the summe of Moral Philisphie* to "the Right Honorable and most vertuous Lady, the worthy Patronesse of Learning, Alice, Countess of Derby." Jewell is cynical of his time and sees that Alice's "vertue was one esteemed the woorthiest shelter against the tempestuous storms of worldie violence. But now (such is the miserie of the

¹² Barnabe Barnes, *Parthenophil and Parthenophe* (1593).

times) though she deserve moste, yet is shee least desired." Jewell took a far different approach than his predecessors and tried to appeal to the dowager countess's mind and sense of intellect when he wrote "Your Noble minde loves the substance onelie, not the outward shew."¹³ Jewell attempted to appeal to a different type of vanity in his opening epistle. He described a world crumbling around them, in which Alice stood above others for her determination to value intelligence and morality. Her virtuous patronage could save the devastated intellectual climate of seventeenth century England. Barnes emphasized Alice's beauty, Davies articulated her greatness, and Jewell tried to attract her patronage by appealing to her love of knowledge and patronage itself.

Literary sources are not the only texts dedicated to the dowager countess. There are also two printed sermons dedicated to her. Thomas Anyan gave the first sermon at St. Mary's Church in Oxford on 12 July 1612. A London publisher printed the sermon later that year. Alice seems a likely patron to dedicate the sermon to, given that Anyan served as Lord Ellesmere's personal chaplain at the time. Three years later, he dedicated another printed sermon to the Lord Chancellor. At the time he delivered the sermon at St. Mary's, Anyan also served as the chancellor of Oxford University.¹⁴ Anyan proved to be a distinguished feather in the Stanley/Egerton hat; or perhaps it was the other way around. Either way, the relationship between the Egertons and Anyan demonstrates a learned and theological aspect of the countess's patronage network. Because Anyan and the countess

¹³ William Jewell, trans. *The Golden Cabinet of true Treasure: containing the summe of Morall Philosophie* (London, 1612).

¹⁴ A.J. Hegarty, "Anyan, Thomas (1582?-1633?)," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, September 2004; online edn, May 2006 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/65827>, accessed 20 April 2009].

obviously knew each other personally, he draws upon their connection in the lines of his dedication: "Those many encouragements which beyond the measure of my deserts it hath pleased your gracious favor, from the overture of your love, to shew towards mee, may justly claime at my hands some thankefull acknowledgement thereof." Anyan, like so many other writers in search of their next meal ticket, ask the countess to "Accept therefore, I beseech you, if the offer of these my slender and worthlesse endeavours, sheltred under the patronage of your worthy name; which if you will please to grace with the viewing and reading over, you shall adde life to these dead lines." He then traded patronage for prayers, remembering not just Alice and Ellesemere, but the Bridgewater as well:

and for you, the calves of my lips, and hourelly to send up the incense of my prayers to almighty God to send downe upon your deere Lord (my R. and H. Master) your selfe, and both your happily-joyned Issues, what prosperitie in this life can be desired, and what happinesse in the other can be conceived.¹⁵

The sermon itself indicates the Calvinist nature of the dowager countess's religious affiliation, as well as that of her family, but it also tells us a considerable amount about her role as a patroness.¹⁶ This is one of the few sources that publically mention the inter-marriage of the Stanley women and Egerton men. It is also telling that Lord Ellesmere's chaplain dedicated his first published sermon to Ellesmere's wife. Louis Knafla writes about Lord Ellesmere, "Although raised as a Catholic, he became a Protestant early in his career; his conversion inspired him to use his wealth and influence to develop the

¹⁵ Thomas Anyan, *A Sermon Preached at S. Maries Church in Oxford, the 12 of July 1612*. (London, 1612).

¹⁶ See Chapter 3 for a discussion of the Stanley women's religious affiliation.

foundations of a Calvinist Church of England."¹⁷ So much of our knowledge of the dowager countess's marriage to Ellesmere is plagued by the distain the two felt for each other, but this dedication adds some important humanity to their household patronage network and family religious practice. Anyan's dedication of the piece to Alice and his reference to "the shelter under the patronage of [her] worthy name" implies that while Anyan served Lord Ellesmere, he could not ignore the potential benefit to fostering a closer relationship with the dowager countess as well. In the Stanley/Egerton union, Anyan found a powerful set of patrons and religious supports.

Anyan was not the only religious man to dedication lines to Alice. John Whalley dedicated the sermon he gave at Paul's Cross on 18 June 1615 to the dowager countess. Whalley entitled his piece *Gods Plentie feeding True Piety To warne the Oppressor, whose trust is in the World: and to ease the Oppressed, who trusteth in the Lord*. Whalley prefaces his work by explaining that he had just returned from a lengthy trip abroad, which he likens to being asleep. His return home inspired him to give offer the sermon as an account of his experiences with the Church. He then gets straight to the point as to why he chose to dedicate the piece to Alice:

I thought it the first part of my dutie, to present my services to your honorable Graces, and to make an appeale to that favour which before my sleepe shined upon me...I present them to your Worthinesse, craving your favourable Hands and Heart for their commendable allowance...¹⁸

There is no indication whether the dowager countess ever funded any of John Whalley's future projects. In fact, no connection between them can be found beyond this

¹⁷ Louis Knafila, "The 'Country Chancellor: The Patronage of Sir Thomas Egerton, Baron Ellesmere," in *Patronage in Late Renaissance England: Papers Read at a Clark Library Seminar 14 May 1977*, 33.

¹⁸ John Whalley, *Gods Plenty Feeding True Pietie* (London, 1615).

dedication, and there is no other record of his work or life. This minor publication represents another type of dedication made to the countess, perhaps one of the most ubiquitous of the era: the outright plea for financing. Whalley made no mention of any personal aspect of the countess's life or being, nor did he attempt any real flattery; he merely asked for patronage.

In 1634 Robert Codrington dedicated his translation of *A Treatise of the Knowledge of God* to the countess of Derby. Two year later, Codrington would dedicate a eulogy to the countess of Bridgewater to her mother. In 1637, Codrington wrote a eulogy to the dowager countess of Derby, which he dedicated to her granddaughter Alice Hastings. *A Treatise of the Knowledge of God* seems to be Codrington's first encounter with Stanley women. He writes in his dedication that, "This is that which hath invited me to the Dedication of this Treatise to your Honour; for to whom more worthily could I present it then to you, whose life is a commentarie on it." Unlike Anyan and Whalley, however, Codrington discusses religion in a different way. He, "turns to retell the countess outright that he, making Religion not your affection, but your most severe imployment, and the excellence of your spirit, although it workes you to a nobler height than our duller faculties can attaine unto." And in the end, he resorts to the age-old attempt of flattery. He confesses: "yet the height of your Honour is still the humility of your Vertue...This I have received from the mouth of Fame, which I deliver not to your cares, but so the truth of your Story, which parallels your love to Learning with the noblenesse of your other Vertues, and preferres your love unto Religion above them..."¹⁹

¹⁹ Robert Codrington, *A Treatise of the Knowledge of God* (London, 1634).

By 1634, the countess of Derby had been the recipient of eight literary dedications and made two appearances in Spenser's *Colin Clouts*. She and her family had also commissioned three major masques.

Spenser wrote about Alice's noble birth and marriage. Barnes hailed her physical beauty. Jewell appealed to her intellect and love of learning. Anyan drew from family connection and religious affiliations. Whalley just asked for money and favor. Codrington melded religious virtue with a love of learning. All of these themes make sense, given what we know about the life of the dowager countess. Yet, we also know her as a devoted mother and fierce advocate for her daughters and kin. Sir John Davies and Thomas Gainsford astutely acknowledged her crucial role as a mother when they each dedicated their most notable works to all four of the Stanley women. The first of these dedications came in 1609, in Sir John Davies's *The Holy Roode or Christs Crosse*. Davies began his career as a lawyer, and he was called to the bar in July 1595.²⁰ This undoubtedly forged a professional connection between the young lawyer and Lord Keeper Egerton, and by 1609 Davies would be well acquainted with all the Stanley women. In 1623, their bonds grew even tighter when Davies's daughter, Lucy, married the countess of Huntingdon's son and heir, Ferdinando. In 1626, Davies's death sparked the unpleasant lawsuit between the families over his lack of inheritance. But, in 1609 all of this was yet to happen and Davies seized the opportunity to pay respect to the wife and step-daughters of his professional ally. He dedication states:

²⁰ Sean Kelsey, "Davies, Sir John (bap. 1569, d. 1626)," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, September 2004, online edn. Jan 2008 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/7245>, accessed 20 April 2009].

To the Right Honourable, well accomplished Lady, Alice, Countesse of Derby, my good Lady and Mistress: And, to her three right Noble Daughters by Birth, Nature, and Education, the Lady Elizabeth, Countess of Hunginton [sic], the Lady Francis Egerton, and the Lady Anne, Wife to the truly Noble Lord, Gray, Lord Chandois, that now is, be all Comfort when so ever.²¹

It is interesting that Lord Chandos would be the only husband Davies specifically named. This could imply that the couple was newly married, but the date of their marriage should pre-date the 1607 Act of Parliament that settled the lawsuit between the Stanley women and William Stanley.²² It could also suggest that Chandos and Davies were well acquainted with each other. What really stands out in the short dedication is the fact that Davies chose to highlight the women's "Birth, Nature, and Education." While a number of dedications made to Alice alone touches upon these themes, Davies takes it even further to express that all four of the Stanley women share these qualities. By stressing their birth, he is also acknowledging that for Anne, Frances, and Elizabeth, these traits come from their mother.

Thomas Gainsford takes this even further in the dedication of his 1616 work, *The Historie of Trebizon, In foure Bookes*. By the seventeenth century, Gainsford had gained a reputation as a successful soldier, translator, historian, and writer. Interestingly, the work is modeled on Sidney's *Arcadia*²³, which seems to preface the theme for Milton's pastoral for the dowager countess fifteen years later. Gainsford dedicated each of the four books to one of the Stanley women, and wrote a brief epistle to each woman: the

²¹ Sir John Davies, *The Holy Roode, or Christs Crosse* (London, 1609).

²² See Chapter 6 for further discussion of the date of the marriage of Anne and Chandos.

²³ S.A. Baron, "Gainsford, Thomas (bap. 1566, d. 1624)," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, September 2004, Online edn. January 2008 [http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/10284, accessed 20 April 2009].

first to Alice, the second to Elizabeth, the third to Frances, and the last to Anne. It is the one he composed for the countess of Huntingdon at the beginning of the second book that marks the significance of his choice to dedicate the collective work to them:

I thought it most befitting to looke out for some handsome props of supportation, and so have placed the Daughters in one circle with the Mother: Yea, such Daughters, and such a Mother, that mee thinkes you moove together like faire Planets in conspicuous Orbes and from whose influence can proceed nothing, but sweete presages:....²⁴

In this passage, Gainsford articulates the precise nature of the Stanley women's relationship. In discussing Marston's 1607 *Entertainment at Ashby*, Mary Erler writes, "Such glorification of family, of female lineage, and of the female familial head, is the subject of one of the first great-house shows of James's reign."²⁵ She could just as easily be referring to the theme of Gainsford's dedication. The strong and influential mother-daughter(s) bond demonstrated by the Stanley women is a dominant theme throughout their life. They undoubtedly encouraged it too. Its complex and dynamic nature has caught the attention of writers and scholars from the seventeenth century to today.

Gainsford's observation proves to be even more accurate because the Stanley daughters also appear in literary dedications independently of their mother. Alice's literary legacy tends to overshadow those of her daughters, as it does in so many other areas of their lives, but both the countesses of Bridgewater and Huntingdon also received dedications of their own. In 1613, Robert Hill dedicated one portion of his *The Pathway*

²⁴ Thomas Gainsford, *The Historie of Trebizond, In Foure Bookes* (London, 1616).

²⁵ Mary Erler, "Chaste Sports, Juste Prayses, & All Softe Delight': Harefield 1602 and Ashby 1607, Two Female Entertainments," in *The Elizabethan Theatre XIV*, edited by A.L. Magnusson and C.E. McGee (Toronto: P.D. Meany, 1996), 2-3. See Chapter 5 for a discussion of Marston's *Entertainment*.

to *Prayer and Pietie* to Lord Ellesmere, and one portion to the then Lady Frances.²⁶

Hill's career in the clergy brought him a political and religious alliance with Lord Ellesmere. In fact, the same year he dedicated his work to Lord Ellesmere and Lady Frances, Ellesmere also played a role in securing Hill the parish in St. Bartholomew.²⁷

Hill paid tribute to Ellesmere with the lines: "As it is the safetie of a shippe to have good piletes, the strength of a palce to have sure polars, the securitie of the body to have cleare eyes, and the safeguard of sheepe to have vigilant shephards." He paints Ellesmere as a capable leader and concludes that "So is it the safetie of a countrie, and safegard of a Kingdome, to have many wise and watchfull Counsellors."²⁸ Hill wrote the epistle while still serving in the parish of St Martin's, which indicates that the Lord Chancellor did not secure his new appointment until after the dedication was made.

At first it seems somewhat odd that Hill would connect Lord Ellesmere with Lady Frances in a literary dedication, as opposed to Sir John Egerton or the dowager countess. He paid tribute to her birth family and respectable marriage with the lines: "You have, I confess, great honour upon earth, being descended of a Royall familie, Allied to the greatest Peeres of the Land, Espoused to an honourable Knight, blessed with hopefull children, and graced (as I heare) with rare gifts of nature. But, Hill's epistle to her

²⁶ V.B. Heltzel identifies at least 98 sixteenth and seventeenth century pieces dedicated or addressed to Lord Chancellor Ellesmere. Please see V.B. Heltzel, "Sir Thomas Egerton as Patron," *Huntington Library Quarterly* 11, no. 2 (1947-8): 105-127. There is a hand written note on the last page of this article in the Huntington Library's reference copy of this journal. The note is by V.B. Heltzel dated 9 April 1948 and it lists 14 additional dedications (by STC number) made to Lord Ellesmere that he did not include in the publication of his original article. See also, Knafla, 46-80.

²⁷ J.F. Merritt, "Hill, Robert (d. 1623)," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, September 2004, Online edn. January 2008 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/13292>, accessed 20 April 2009]

²⁸ Robert Hill, *The Pathway to Prayer and Pietie*. (London, 1613).

explains that it is not her nobility that entices him; it is her piety: "but, that Christs Religion is so precious unto you, your greatest honour if reserved in Heaven...The God of heaven who hath planed you, as one of his faireest flowers, in his Garden, the Church Militant, so water you with the dew of Heaven, and heavenly Graces." But Hill does not only respect Frances's faith. He also admires that piety is a family virtue: "that after you have long flourished here, you hereafter may, with your Honourable two sisters Elizabeth the vertuous Countesse of Huntingdon, and Anne that worthie Ladie Chandoyes, bee transplanted into that Garden of Eden, the Church Triumphant, and for ever flourish in the Courts of your God."²⁹ Once again Lady Frances is seen as an extension of her mother and sisters, but Hill also praises her in her own right. This is a theme that will be reiterated in numerous poems and eulogies written upon her death.³⁰

Lady Frances, John Egerton, Lord Ellesemere, and the dowager countess of Derby are also among the 292 nobles featured in John Davies of Hereford's *The Scourge of Folly*, first published in 1610. Unlike many subjects of his epigrams in the book, Davies knew the countess of Derby and Lord Ellesemere personally as a result of his profession as a teacher and writer.³¹ Scholars have commented that as a work of literature, Davies's *Folly* is "relatively lame," but what makes them significant today is the number of

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ See Chapter 8 for discussion on the deaths of the Stanley women.

³¹ P.J. Finkelparl, "Davies, John (1564/5-1618)," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/7244>, accessed 20 April 2009].

important early modern figures to which he wrote.³² For example, in his epistle to the dowager countess, Davies waxed on about her general greatness:

It never shall surcease to limne you forth
As a rare Jewell multiplying the woorth
Of my Deere Lord, sole Master of mine all.
But sithe I cannot paint the *Principall*
According to the life, I'le onely tricke
The outward lines to make it somewhat like,
And yet I cannot, for the same are such
As are too dainty for my cunning's touch,
Then will I draw a line to point at it,
Look World, tis SHEE whose ALL is Exquisite!³³

Of all the dedications and epistles to Alice this is perhaps one of the least interesting, which seems to exemplify the lack of literary significance that Davies's *Folly* holds. But, it also demonstrates that the intermarriages of Alice, Ellesmere, Frances, and John created an attractive network of literary patrons, one which John Davies of Hereford sought entrance to.

Frances's mother and step-father/father-in-law increased her visibility and appeal to aspiring writers, but the most celebrated literary patron among the Stanley daughters is Elizabeth. Her husband's grandfather, the third earl of Huntingdon, created a tight literary circle in Leicester, centered at his home of Ashby de la Zouche. Elizabeth stepped into this crowd when she marriage Lord Hastings. In the fashion of her mother, she quickly became a muse for the group. In Gordon McMullan's study of John Fletcher and the Ashby literary circle, he writes that, "I have analyzed playwright-patron relations in the context of the Fletcher canon, demonstrating not only the predominant role of the countess [of Huntingdon], rather than the earl, in matters of patronage at Ashby, the

³² Ibid.

³³ John Davies, *The Scourge of Folly* (1610), 253. See also *The Stanley Papers*, 40-41.

Huntingdon's seat, but also the modulations of shared interest between writer and patron."³⁴ McMullan explores the countess of Huntingdon's extensive patronage of local writers, some of whom went on to secure major national and literary influence. He discerns the complex meanings of lines written to the countess by John Fletcher, John Donne and Thomas Pestell as well.³⁵ It is important to discuss the countess's patronage as part of her larger familial tradition of promoting and supporting literary composition, and playing the part of the muse.

Two poems John Donne wrote to Elizabeth serve as primary examples of the types of work she inspired. It is highly probable that Donne met Elizabeth before joining forces with the literary circle at Ashby. Donne knew John Egerton from his time at Lincoln's Inn. In 1595 Lord Ellesmere, then Lord Keeper, appointed Donne as his secretary. Donne most likely even took up residence at York House.³⁶ While these early professional ties provided occasion for Donne and Stanley women to know each other, the countess of Huntingdon's religious convictions combined with her patronage habits, defined their relationship. In one poem Donne wrote for Elizabeth, he penned:

In woman so perchance mild innocence
A seldom comet is, but active good
A miracle, which reason 'scapes, and sense;
For, art and nature this in them withstood.
As such a star, the Magi led to view
The manger-cradled infant, God below:

³⁴ Gordon McMullan, *The Politics of Unease in the Plays of John Fletcher* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1994), xi-xii.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 28.

³⁶ David Colclough, "Donne, John (1572-1631)," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/17819>, accessed 20 April 2009]. See also Knafla, 71-72.

By virtue's beams by fame derived from you,
May apt souls, and the worst may, virtue know.
[Lines 9-16]³⁷

Here he praised both her involvement in the civic matters of her family as well as her religious virtue. Her loyalties to both her family and to God helped, in Donne's eyes, to make the countess of Huntingdon an exemplary woman. In another demonstration of his admiration for her Donne wrote:

But, as from extreme heights who downward looks,
Sees men at children's shapes, rivers at brooks,
And loseth younger forms; so, to your eye
These (Madam) that without your distance lie,
Must either mist, or nothing seem to be,
Who are at home but wit's mere *atomi*.
[Lines 11-16]³⁸

Despite his close affiliation with Elizabeth's family, he remained aware of her status and humbly presented himself to her. A shared religious fervor and devotion to pious studies and actions charged their relationship, and provided a substantial connection between the writer and his patroness.

Thomas Pestell also dedicated three poems to the countess of Huntingdon.³⁹ In one poem he wrote:

Tyll shee bee there againe, from whence she Came
Can our poore accentes hope t'expresse her fame?
Or nam[e] her sev'rall vertues? let a man
Stile her brave, worthy, Noble (all he can)
And yme a balladmaker out of breath
Wth tremblinge, faire, & sweete Elizabeth

³⁷ John Donne, *John Donne: The Major Works*, ed. John Carey (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 198.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 67.

³⁹The relationship between Thomas Pestell and the Hastings was not always pleasant, although much of their animosity was between the earl and Pestell. For more on this see: Christopher Haigh, "The Troubles of Thomas Pestell: Parish Squabbles and Ecclesiastical Politics in Caroline England," *The Journal of British Studies* 44, no. 4 (2002): 403-428.

Stanley & Huntingdon; her twoe greate names

None shall describe her, well, & perfectly

Till hee bee perfect good: That am not I.

[Lines 79-85 and 127-128]⁴⁰

The mentioning of noble birth and marriage is a common theme in poems and dedications to the Stanley women. Pestell humbly writes about his inability to truly capture the countess of Huntingdon's grandeur, yet that does not stop him from writing 128 lines in an attempt to do just that.

Elizabeth not only inherited a place in the literary circle at Ashby, but she and her husband also remained patrons of the Ashby School, of which the third earl was the principal benefactor in his lifetime.⁴¹ In 1607, John Brinsley, the school's headmaster, dedicated an early published text to the countess of Huntingdon. In it, he expressed his first duty to God, and, "secondly, your Ladiships most favourable acceptance of it, being dedicated unto my Honorable Lord, perswading mee of your Honors unfained desire both to observe the fame, and walke in al the waies of the Lord, have imboldened mee to presume to offer this unto your Honorable Ladiship." Brinsley then, as others did before him, highlights the countess's renowned piety: "not to delight the curious with an hourers reading, (which I leave to others) but to helpe the honest heart that is desirous to learne of our Saviour how to pray, and continue therin in this life without fainting, to rejoyce and sing with the Angels for ever after; when all others shall weepe and mourne, and never

⁴⁰ Thomas Pestell, "Verses of the Countess of Huntingdon [sic]," in *The Poems of Thomas Pestell: Edited with an Account of His Life and Work by Hannah Buchan* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1940).

⁴¹ John Morgan, "Brinsley, John (fl. 1581-1624)," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/3440>, accessed 20 April 2009].

find any comfort or release."⁴² Once again, the writer appeals to the countess of Huntingdon's religious virtues. It is also telling that Brinsley should dedicated one of his first published text to the countess rather than the earl. This accentuates the point made by McMullan, that the countess was the primary patron of the early seventeenth century Hastings family. And, Brinsley's emphasis on Elizabeth's desire to meld education with religious righteousness remains consistent with the personal attributes which other writers also praised.

Eminent seventeenth century literary figures regularly called upon the countess of Huntingdon to serve as an honorable muse to their writings. Lesser-known local poets also recognized the significance of the countess's virtue and influence. Thomas Faye composed modest lines to the countess:

All my endeavours, all my hopes to come,
Should I out live the Last till the last done,
And then be savd by thanks. will nothinge showe
More then your noble Leale do to have it sie
When I was blased like a wythered tree.
Left bare and thin, for every storne to see.
And almost eaten throughe the very ringe.

He goes on to describe how the countess of Huntingdon's grace and spirit brought him to life, the way Spring restores life to withered trees:

With base assertions: you O blessed Springe
(May sumer still growe by ye) breath'd uppon
My allmost dead nipt roote; and just one
that bitter colde windes had betrayed to deathe,
And feeles the sun; soe I received your breathe.⁴³

⁴² John Brinsley, *The Second Part of the true watch, Containing the perfect rule and summe of Prayer* (London, 1607).

⁴³ Thomas Faye, "Excellent Lady, you are, so all good," *HA Literature* 1(19), HEH.

These lines do not have the learned sophistication of John Donne, but they certainly get their point across: the local poet appeals to local patroness by waxing about her natural grandeur. Faye's poem helps us to situate that countess of Huntingdon in the center of local literary circles.

Testaments to the seasonal magnificence of the countess of Huntingdon may have caught attention for some local poets, but others turned to her for more political purposes. The town of Leicester also acknowledged her influence and sent gifts on occasion to the countess of Huntingdon. The town also seemed to keep tabs on the comings and goings of Ashby, and made a point of sending gifts when the earl and countess hosted important visitors such as the dowager countess of Derby. In the summer of 1606, the dowager countess went to Leicester for an extended visit because the countess of Huntingdon was pregnant with her first child. In July 1606, the Chamberlain's Account Books show the town sent the countess of Huntingdon and her mother, who was visiting for the summer, several bottles of wine and some sugar. The next month, they sent the same gift. Later that month the town sent a cake. In September, the town of Leicester sent a book and some horses to the countess of Huntingdon to be there when her mother returned on a second visit. The following year, the town sent the countess of Huntingdon a new year's gift of cake and wine.⁴⁴ Wisely the town made a point of sending their tokens to the countess of Huntingdon at the times her famous mother came to visit. The town did not

⁴⁴Chamberlain Accounts 1608-1609 MF Series I/3 (98), ROL.

send a private gift to the countess until St. Stephens Day in 1626, at which time they sent her two gallons of sack and two gallons of claret and two pounds of sugar.⁴⁵

Barbara Harris writes about the exchange of gifts in fifteenth and sixteenth century England that, "the constant exchange of gifts, one of the most striking features of elite social life, also had political implications: in addition to sustaining kin and patronage networks in a general way, it gave donors and recipients a specific claim on each other's resources and assistance."⁴⁶ The same practices survived into the seventeenth century. The town's act of sending gifts, especially when the countess of Derby visited, shows just how far the people of Leicester hoped to extend their patronage circle. It would be a quite a feat for them to be able to call the countess of Huntingdon's very cosmopolitan mother a friend as well.

The Stanley women caught the attention of writers, theologians, and local politicians for a number of reasons. The most obvious one stresses the magnificence of their births in the highly ordered and stratified world of early modern England. The Stanley daughters were of royal descent. Their noble lineage positioned them on the highest social level. This alone would appeal to the most simple-minded poet trying to secure a patron. Moreover, the Stanley women's commitment and fostering of the arts made them even more tantalizing: they had all the makings of outstanding patronesses. Despite these fine qualities, we must not romanticize the role of literature in their lives.

⁴⁵ Chamberlain Accounts 1626-1627 MF Series I/4 (101), ROL. (The catalog and MF reel say these accounts are MF I/3 but that is a mistake and the logs are actually MF Series I/4.)

⁴⁶ Barbara Harris, "Women and Politics in Early Tudor England," *The Historical Journal* 33, no 2 (June 1990): 265. See also Natalie Zemon Davis, *The Gift in Sixteenth-Century France* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2000.)

The Stanley women expected their writers to return the favor of drawing inspiration and financial gain from their morality and patronage. They relied on their circle of writers at a national and local level to commemorate and advertise their piety, virtues, and nobility in order to increase their own social splendor and authority. Being celebrated at every level of England's artistic communities created spheres of influence for the Stanley women on all levels: local, national, religious, educational, artistic, and cultural. The individual dedications made to the Stanley women and poems written for them, testified to their beauty, virtue, intellect, piety, and nobility. When we read these works collectively, however, they reveal the truly massive extent of the Stanley women's literary patronage networks. Yet, as we will see in the next chapter, the Stanley women also drew upon another early modern literary and culture practice to accentuate their grandeur: the commissioning and performing of masques.

Chapter 5

The Theatrical Patronage and Masque Culture of the Stanley Women

Historians and literary scholars have long associated the dowager countess of Derby and her three daughters with their literary patronage of John Milton, John Marston, Edmund Spenser, and a host of lesser-known poets. In July 1602, Alice and Lord Ellesmere entertained Queen Elizabeth at their home in Harefield for several days. They choreographed the entire visit around theatrical entertainments. Some scholars believe that they again entertained the new Queen Consort, Anna of Denmark, at Althorp, in June 1603. This time they asked Ben Jonson to write the entertainment. In 1607, the countess of Huntingdon commissioned John Marston to write a masque to celebrate her mother's visit to Ashby-de-la-Zouch. In the early 1630's, John Milton wrote *Arcades* in honor of the countess of Derby, and her grandchildren performed it for her in Harefield. Milton also wrote the masque *Comus* for the earl and countess of Bridgewater to commemorate the earl's appointment as the President of the Marches of Wales. The Bridgewater children performed the masque for the family at Ludlow Castle on Michaelmas 1634. While literary scholars have remained focused on the texts of these masques, it is also important to consider their contexts. The Stanley women did not necessarily seek art for art's sake; rather, they turned to Milton, Marston, and others to enhance and reflect their own sense of honor, status, political power and authority.

The Stanley women also used the arts in more private ways. They used literary entertainments as a way of celebrating their family's achievements and victories. They intended published dedications and the patronage of theatrical groups to display their

grandeur to the public. They also relied on performance and literature to help commemorate and celebrate their own private accomplishments. The dowager countess of Derby and her daughters recreated the court culture of masques in their own homes for celebration but also as a spectacle of their grandness. (It is perhaps safe to say they had no idea we would still be dissecting the imagery and meaning behind these masques centuries later.) The Stanley women were so successful in the early entertainments they hosted for Tudor/Stuart monarchs that they brought the culture into their own homes. They commissioned the "trendy and up and coming" writers like Marston, Milton, and Jonson because the Stanley women were also performing. And, they performed the roles of Renaissance patronesses with perfection.

The previous chapter discussed how writers depicted the Stanley women in literary dedications and poetry. This chapter explores the important roles of patronage and performance for the Stanley women. They relied on authors to use popular models and characters to give their masques a contemporary flair. They wanted to *blend in* and *stand out* at the same time. They did not want to create a new model for performance, because that would remove them from the center of the English Renaissance culture. Rather, they selected poets who were both conventional yet skillful to highlight their greatness. Similarly, the Stanley women were remarkably conformist in their political pursuits. They closely followed the acceptable script for aristocratic women seeking political favor, and yet they stand out primarily because they were so effective. The way

the family handled and endured the devastation of the Castlehaven scandal demonstrates the political and cultural expertise the Stanley women had acquired by 1631.¹

The scope of early modern patronage is far larger than any one family (unless discussing a royal family.) Historians and literary scholars generally agree that English culture experienced a significant change when the monarchy passed from Elizabeth I to the Stuarts, although they have debated what actually happened and the effects that the transition had. Linda Levy Peck explains that cultural production in the Jacobean period has been somewhat elusive for scholars because they generally believed that "its politics and culture have been subsumed by extending the Elizabethan up to 1618, or absorbed by the Caroline, commencing in 1625."² This paradigm made it difficult to recognize and articulate trends of political and cultural patronage in the Jacobean age, and even more difficult for scholars to address the specific cultural changes that occurred in the transitions of the Elizabethan-Jacobean-Carolina eras. Scholars needed to conceive of a place for the Jacobean court and monarchy in order to account for the political and cultural patronage of the first quarter of the seventeenth century, and more importantly, to construct a way of plotting culture and patronage between the Tudor and Stuart ages.³ A

¹ See Chapter 7 for a full discussion of the Castlehaven affair.

² Linda Levy Peck, "The Mental World of the Jacobean Court: An Introduction," in *The Mental World of the Jacobean Court*, Peck, Linda Levy, ed (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 1.

³ This is a very broad field and there is extensive literature regarding patronage, court, and women as patrons in the Tudor/Stuart eras. For an overview see: David Bergeron, *Textual Patronage in English Drama, 1570-1640* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006); Victoria Burke and Jonathan Gibson, eds., *Early Modern Women's Manuscript Writing: Selected Papers from the Trinity/Trent Colloquium* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004); James Daybell, ed., *Women and Politics in Early Modern England, 1450-1700* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004); Lucy Grant, ed., *Albion's Classicism: The Visual Arts in Britain, 1550-1660* (New Haven, Yale University Press, 1995); Erin Griffey, ed., *Henrietta Maria: Piety, Politics and Patronage* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008); Margaret Patterson Hannay, ed., *Silent but for the Word: Tudor Women as Patrons*,

brief discussion of the varying relationship between culture, court, and patronage is important to understanding the patronage of the Stanley women because we will find that they emulated court culture in their own spaces. It also helps to facilitate a gendered understanding of women as patrons of masques.

Roy Strong is the first scholar to really carve out an explanation for the muddled setting of Jacobean culture in the context of early modern court and culture. Strong sees Prince Henry as the hero of the English Renaissance. He calls the young prince "the final figure in a series of still-born [English] renaissances."⁴ According to Strong, Prince Henry imported Italian, German, and particularly French political and artistic culture to his own court at St. James through a network of international friends, allies, and relatives.⁵ Strong claims that Prince Henry's court developed an English culture of art, patronage, and political practice for seventeenth century England, and that he did this completely independently of his mother and father. In the end, Strong concludes that what is most "striking is how the crown stands quite apart, under both Elizabeth and James, from the major thrusts forward in the arts...It explains at once the diffuse and disjointed nature of the English Renaissance culture, its lack of focus and often

Translators, and Writers of Religious Works (Kent: Kent State University Press, 1985); Barbara Harris, "Women and Politics in Early Tudor England," *The Historical Journal* 33, no 2 (June 1990): 259; Guy Fitch Lytle and Stephen Orgel, eds., *Patronage in the Renaissance* (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1981); Malcolm Smuts, ed., *The Stuart Court and Europe: Essays in Politics and Political Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996); Retha Warnicke, *Women of the English Renaissance and Reformation* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1983); Linda Woodbridge, *Women and the English Renaissance: Literature and the Nature of Womankind, 1540-1620* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1984).

⁴ Roy Strong, *Henry, Prince of Wales and England's Lost Renaissance*, London: Thames and Hudson, 1986), 224.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 73-78.

intangibility. That would have been reversed if Henry had lived to succeed."⁶ According to Strong, the premature death of Prince Henry led to the premature death of England's Renaissance.

Not surprisingly, other scholars have taken issue with the emphasis Strong places on Prince Henry's role in the Jacobean world. The most notable opposition to Strong's thesis is presented by Leeds Barroll, who instead argues that Anna of Denmark was actually the most influential force for early seventeenth century culture. Barroll refutes Strong's analysis when he argues that in the Stuart era, "the queen and her court not only came to constitute a centre of patronage, but they also established an important connection with the heir apparent, Prince Henry."⁷ A decade later, Barroll revisited the subject in his full-length examination the influential patronage of Queen Anna. His study argues that it was not the king's nor Prince Henry's influence at court that shaped Stuart cultural practices. Barroll concludes that during the first decade of James's reign, "these innovations were fundamentally shaped by James's much neglected queen consort."⁸ For Barroll, Anna's personal court and the masques and entertainments that she both commissioned and participated in were essential to the formation of seventeenth century English culture and patronage, and had a significant impact on the ways that other early modern aristocrats practiced patronage.

⁶ Ibid., 224.

⁷ Leeds Barroll, "The Court of the First Stuart Queen," in *The Mental World of the Jacobean Court*, Peck, Linda Levy, ed (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 205.

⁸ Leeds Barroll, *Anna of Denmark, Queen of England: A Cultural Biography* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001), 1-2.

Barroll also expands the role of the queen consort to include an entirely female sphere of influence for her ladies-in-waiting. This creates a very important and uniquely-female authority over the generation of court culture in England. He argues that noblewomen "could hardly hope for royal office under the king, but here, for the first time in decades, was an opportunity for specifically female court activities."⁹ Here, the differences between the analysis of Strong and Barroll collide in a new way. Strong gives the exclusively male space of Prince Henry's court the monopoly of cultural influence. Barroll makes cultural patronage a female-friendly practice and thus bridges a crucial gap between early modern gendered norms and the ability to exert influence at court. Barroll not only examines the patronage practices of the queen, but also includes an analysis of the women who served the king; many of these women were wives and kinsmen to men who at the same time served the king and England's princes.¹⁰

By Charles I's succession to the throne in 1625, the English court and a culture of patronage were closely linked, although the Caroline era ushered in its own style and influences. Henrietta Maria became the new queen consort. Scholars have found Henrietta Maria's role in English culture to be as precarious as that of Anna of Denmark's. Erin Griffey writes about the new monarchy: "With Henrietta Maria's passion for court masques, the royal couple could be interpreted as the ultimate complementary pair, male and female, English and French, Protestant and Catholic, visual arts and dramatic arts. They have become, in scholarship, a kind of embodied *ut*

⁹ Ibid., 39.

¹⁰ Ibid., 36-73.

pictura poesis, although Henrietta Maria's role is often marginalized."¹¹ Scholars have also long seen the Caroline era as a complementary bookend to the English Renaissance started under the Tudors.¹² Griffey expands this view to include Henrietta Maria as a central influence in the production and patronage of culture in a way that offers a counter-balance to the morals and ideals of Charles I. Thus, she also offers a new sense of fluidity between the courts of James I/Anna of Denmark (or Prince Henry, as Strong suggests) and Charles I/Henrietta Maria. Each of these figures brought his or her own agenda to the arts, but *the monarchy*, as a single unit, fostered the continuation of the English Renaissance nonetheless.

Strong, Barroll, and Griffey set up distinct camps around which particular courts generated the tone for English culture in the seventeenth century. While they differ about which royal figure was at the center of Jacobean and Caroline cultural production, they all work from the assumption that English culture originated at court. They work within a "top-down" model of the production of culture. In contrast to Strong, Barroll, and Griffey, Malcolm Smuts is more interested in how noblemen and women were involved in this process. He contests their beliefs that English culture radiated only outward from court. Smuts argues that for seventeenth century peers, "The court's great aristocratic households influenced each other and undoubtedly shaped the king's patronage, though in

¹¹ Erin Griffey, "Introduction," in *Henrietta Maria: Piety, Politics and Patronage*, ed. Erin Griffey (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008), 2.

¹² See Griffey, Levy Peck, and Barroll.

ways that remain somewhat obscure."¹³ Smuts contests the idea that the monarch or court in general was solely responsible for generating culture, and calls it: "the erroneous assumption that at court cultural influences, like power and patronage, travelled in only one direction: from the top down and the centre outward. It may have some validity with respect to works like the masques, which were essentially creations of royal households."¹⁴ His recent work applies this argument to the court of Henrietta Maria, and looks at her court as a "faction within the court of Charles I." In this study, Smuts once again demonstrates his previous theories of the dissemination of culture as he links "a political narrative to wider aspects of cultural and religious history, in ways that illuminate the highly cosmopolitan character of seventeenth-century court societies..."¹⁵

Because politics, court, and patronage collide in diverse ways during the seventeenth century, scholars also debate over the relationship between gender and patronage. Erin Griffey has observed that since aristocratic women were excluded from holding political offices, they, "achieved their political agenda through cultural and social means."¹⁶ Her work on Henrietta Maria also concludes, however, that, "Henrietta Maria, like other elite women, was participating in cultural conventions that were not necessarily

¹³ Malcolm Smuts, "Cultural Diversity and Cultural Change at the Court of James I," in *The Mental World of the Jacobean Court*, Peck, Linda Levy, ed (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 104-105.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 107.

¹⁵ Malcolm Smuts, "Religion, European Politics and Henrietta Maria's Circle, 1625-41" in *Henrietta Maria: Piety, Politics and Patronage*, ed. Erin Griffey (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008), 13.

¹⁶ Erin Griffey, "Introduction," in *Henrietta Maria: Piety, Politics and Patronage*, ed. Erin Griffey (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008), 1.

gender-bound."¹⁷ Elisabeth Salter presents a different perspective as she is dubious of relying too heavily on a gendered analysis of patronage in her study of six individual Renaissance men and women. She "avoid[s] a distinction of experience which is based solely on gender (although this is not to deny that there are some significant differences...)" because she is concerned that a gendered analysis leads to essentialism.¹⁸ While it is always advisable to avoid an essentialist point of view, a gendered analysis of patronage is important because elite women used cultural patronage to counter-act the social limitations placed on their political influence by their gender. Aristocratic men also patronized the arts for political purposes, but this was just one of many routes available to them; elite women had far fewer options.

It is not only important to consider the differences in the political influences exerted by men and women, but it is also important to consider the differences between queens/queen consorts and aristocratic women. The title of Queen or Queen Consort carried its own set of powers and limitations. Noblewomen did not necessarily share these traits. Elizabeth I, Anna of Denmark, and Henrietta Maria demonstrated national power through cultural influence. Many historians and literary scholars have emphasized the highly political and nationalistic meanings behind masques commissioned by monarchs and performed at court, especially when performed in front of an international

¹⁷ Ibid., 4.

¹⁸ Elisabeth Salter, *Six Renaissance Men and Women: Innovation, Biography and Cultural Creativity in Tudor England, c. 1450-1560* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007), 11.

audience.¹⁹ The work done by Smuts makes it possible for us to locate cultural production outside of court, but the nature and meanings of English culture change when we look exclusively at non-monarchical women.

If we look specifically at court, the Stanley women are not in our sights; we frequently need to look in the counties, in their own large estates, to find them. The Stanley women were at court only sporadically after the Stuart succession. This point situates the Stanley women on the edge of the debate many scholars have over the significance of county life in early modern England. Scholars like H. R. Trevor-Roper, John Morrill, Anne Hughes, and Thomas Cogswell have argued for the importance of looking at local history, or "country", in order to get a better perspective of political or "court" mentalities, countering the notion that a close and exclusive examination of court life reveals the whole story.²⁰ Malcolm Smuts, too, argues that it is essential to look at the individual lives of nobles because culture did not just radiate outward from court. An application of Smut's work to the patronage habits of the Stanley women connects them to important insights into the masques and patronage of Whitehall, while at the same time, it can also demonstrate a non-political sphere of aristocratic life as well.²¹

¹⁹ For a discussion on the political nature of court performances see: Malcolm Smuts, ed., *The Stuart Court and Europe: Essays in Politics and Political Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

²⁰ See H.R. Trevor-Roper, "The General Crisis of the Seventeenth Century," in *Crisis in Europe, 1560-1660: Essays from the Past and Present*, ed. Trevor Aston (London: Routledge, 1965); John Morrill, *Revolt in the Providences: The People of England and the Tragedies of War, 1630-1648* (London: Longman, 1999); Ann Hughes, *Politics, Society and Civil War in Warwickshire, 1620-1660* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987); Thomas Cogswell, *Home Divisions: Aristocracy, the State and Provincial Conflict* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1998).

²¹ See also Linda Levy Peck, "Court Patronage and Government Policy: The Jacobean Dilemma," in *Patronage in the Renaissance*, ed. Guy Fitch Lytle and Stephen Orgel (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1981), 27-46.

Scholars have long been aware of the personal patronage practices of early modern people outside royal families. The Stanley women were surrounded by many others who shared the same interests in the English Renaissance happening around them. Both historians and literary scholars have identified and explored the patronage between Spenser's dedications to Anne Russell Dudley, countess of Warwick, Margaret Russell Clifford, countess of Cumberland, Aletheia Talbot Howard, countess of Arundel, Robert Cecil, and Robert Carr, earl of Somerset, just to name a few.²² Scholarship on all of these individuals highlights a link between literary/artistic patronage and political patronage. Scholars have also used these examples to demonstrate various types of kinship networks among the aristocracy. Here, scholars have typically discussed gender roles in a rather loose way; clearly sex matters, but all of these scholars tend to argue that gender did not matter as much as class and political aspiration when it came to patronage habits among their subjects. Essentially, the historiography of individual patronage habits establishes the notion that court and national politics cannot be separated from cultural patronage when looking at members of the aristocracy.

In a survey of the scholarly works by literary critics on the subjects of patronage and dedications, the Stanley women are noticeably absent. Only a few scholars have looked at the Stanley women in any significant way, and they have done very little to

²² See Jon Quitslund, "Spenser and the Patronesses of the *Fowre Hymnes*: "Ornaments of All True Love and Beutie," in *Silent But for the Word: Tudor Women as Patrons, Translators, and Writers of Religious Works*, ed. Margaret Patterson Hannay (Kent: Kent State University Press, 1985), 184-202; David Howarth, "The Patronage and Collecting of Aletheia, Countess of Arundel 1606-54" in *Journal of the History of Collections* 10, no. 2 (1998): 125-137; Pauline Croft, "Robert Cecil and the early Jacobean court," in *The Mental World of the Jacobean Court*, 134-147; and A.R. Braunmuller, "Robert Carr, Earl of Somerset, as Collector and Patron," *Ibid.*, 230-250. There are numerous other examples of seventeenth century figures whose patronage has caught the attention of scholars. These examples, however, focus on the political/artistic links in early modern patronage and highlight this connection for members of the aristocracy.

situate their patronage habits into the larger context of patrons in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.²³ The Stanley women seem to be associated loosely with the theme, despite the fact that their patronage existed at both the local and national level; renowned poets and playwrights wrote for them, as did local "nobodies." It is interesting that despite their enormous spheres of influence, few scholars name them regularly among the most noted early modern patrons.

The few scholars who have studied the patronage habits of the Stanley women have approached their literary patronage in a different way. References to their literary circle tend to be more a discussion of the men patronized by the Stanley women. It is widely known that the Stanley women were patrons of Milton and Marston. But when it comes specifically to the Stanley women, scholars have tended to focus more on the texts rather than their contexts. Essentially, the poems and masques outshine the Stanley women. The most notable literary association for scholars is Milton's *Comus*. A number of literary scholars have discussed various connections between the Stanley women and *Comus*. Most have made *Comus* the pinnacle of the Stanley women's patronage rather than considering it within the larger narrative of their lives.²⁴ There is such a large quantity of sources either commissioned by the Stanley women or dedicated to them, that

²³ See: Heidi Brayman Hackel, "The Countess of Bridgewater's London Library," in *Books and Readers in Early Modern England*, Jennifer Andersen and Elizabeth Sauer, eds (Philadelphia: Pennsylvania University Press, 2002), 138-159.

²⁴ See Barbara Breasted, "Comus and the Castlehaven Scandal," in *Milton Studies* 3 (1971): 201-224; Cedric Brown, *John Milton's Aristocratic Entertainment* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985); William Hunter, Jr., *Milton's Comus: Family Piece* (Troy: The Whitston Publishing Co., 1983); and Nancy Weitz Miller, "Chastity, Rape and Ideology in the Castlehaven Testimonies and Milton's Ludlow *Mask*," in *Milton Studies* 32 (1995): 153-168. See also Chapter 7 for a full discussion of the Castlehaven affair, the Stanley women, and *Comus*.

it is important to consider their life-long relationship with literature, rather than just isolating the most famous pieces.

The patronage of the dowager countess of Derby is arguably the most widely discussed of the four Stanley women. French Fogle provides the seminal work on the dowager countess of Derby's patronage. His work is especially interesting because it was published along with Louis Knafla's paper on the patronage of Lord Ellesmere. The small book is unique in that it highlights them together, as patrons and spouses, but it also clearly splits their independent styles and approaches to patronage.²⁵ Fogle's article is really an introduction to all of the literary figures and offers a chronology of the dowager countess's patronage. He argues that, "the exact extent of the Countess Dowager's support of writers is open to some question." He stresses: "her literary connections with, rather than her contributions to, in whatever form, the writers of the period."²⁶ Fogle attests that Alice's marriage to Ferdinando introduced her to the world of patronage. He recounts their marriage arrangement and concludes that as a result of this marriage, "Lady Alice was closely involved in the most intimate areas of court intrigue, where both the opportunities and the dangers were dizzying. She had come a long way from the pastoral serenity of Althorp."²⁷ Her first marriage introduced her to the art of patronage.

Literary scholars widely associate Ferdinando Stanley with the patronage of his own group of players: Lord Strange's Men. The precise chronology of Ferdinando's

²⁵ French Fogle and Louis Knafla, *Patronage in Late Renaissance England: Papers Read at a Clark Library Seminar 14 May 1977* (Los Angeles: University of California, William Andrews Clark Memorial Library, 1983).

²⁶ Fogle, 3.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 10.

theatrical patronage is difficult to follow, although many have tried to plot it out. There is a particular interest in this endeavor because of the historical cult devoted to fleshing out every detail of Shakespeare's life; many have sought to establish a firm and significant connection between Lord Strange's Men and Shakespeare, even though only loose affiliations can be found in the historic record. Shakespeare did dedicate *Titus Andronicus* to Ferdinando Stanley, and the Bard ran in the same Lancashire circles as the Stanley family.²⁸ J.J. Bagley, a biographer of the earls of Derby, has argued that, "It has usually been assumed that Shakespeare was with Pembroke's Men in 1592 and 1593, but since it is almost certain he was with Strange's Men at the Rose in the first months of 1592, it is more likely he remained attached to Lord Strange's company and wrote for Pembroke's Men as well."²⁹ Even the popular historian Peter Ackroyd has dedicated significant efforts to flesh out the relationship between Ferdinando and Shakespeare. He argues that the most obvious encounter happened in 1588, when "The Queen's Men lost their position of primacy...and were supplanted by the combined talents of the Lord Admiral's Men and Lord Strange's Men. This may have been the moment when Shakespeare himself joined Strange's company."³⁰

Lord Strange's Men performed 209 times between 1568 and 1595. Many of these performances are mentioned in Philip Henslowe's diary. The troupe traveled around

²⁸ J.J. Bagley, *The Earls of Derby 1485-1985* (London: Sidgwick & Jackson, 1985), 73.

²⁹ Ibid. See also: E.A.J. Honigmann, *Shakespeare: The 'Lost Years'*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1985), 63.

³⁰ Peter Ackroyd, *Shakespeare: The Biography* (New York: Doubleday, 2005), 139.

England, although the majority of their performances took place in London.³¹

Unfortunately, it is very difficult to discern from the historical record exactly how involved Ferdinando and his bride were in the troupe. Many scholars and passionate readers of the English Renaissance have long tried to find a way to link the dowager countess, independently of her husband, directly to the theatrical world of the 1590's, but the historical record falls short. The newly dowager countess did sponsor Strange's Men in May 1594, just one month after Ferdinando's untimely death. At the event, the troupe performed under the name The Countess of Derby's Men.³² Ackroyd briefly mentions this performance, but he calls this "less certain patronage," and it seems that the Lord Chamberlain's Men quickly absorbed the troupe.³³ Even Fogle writes that, "It is interesting to speculate on the possibilities that Ferdinando and his lady may have had immediate connections with the rising dramatist."³⁴ Unfortunately, at this point we cannot do much more than just than simply speculate. There is no doubt that the Stanley family and Shakespeare knew each other, and that Lord Strange's Men were among the most noted acting troupes of the early 1590's. But a personal connection between the

³¹ See Yoshiko Kawachi, *Calendar of English Renaissance Drama 1558-1642* (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc, 1986); Philip Henslowe, *Henslowe's Diary*, ed. R.A. Foakes and R.T. Rickert (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1961); and Philip Henslowe, *Henslowe Papers: Being Documents Supplementary to Henslowe's Diary*, ed. Walter Greg (Folcroft: The Folcroft Press, Inc, 1969).

³² Fogle, 14; Alfred Harbage, *Annals of English Drama* (1940), revised by Samuel Schoenbaum (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1964), 297, 301-302. See also Kawachi, 76. Kawachi's calendar does not provide a date for the performance of the troupe under the name of The Countess of Derby's Men. His calendar does however only list this single performance.

³³ Ackroyd, 219.

³⁴ Fogle, 13. A family historian by the name of Peter Duxbury (1945-2005) set up a website dedicated to his own family tree, as well as seeking a direct relationship between the dowager countess of Derby and Shakespeare. Upon Mr. Duxbury's death, his wife and cousin continue to update the website on a fairly regular basis. <http://www.duxbury.plus.com/bard/alice/> (accessed October 14, 2005, August 18, 2008, and April 2, 2009.)

dowager countess, apart from her husband, and Shakespeare remains uncertain. These points alone will keep scholars and Shakespeare enthusiasts eternally interested. While Alice did not continue any affiliation with the theatre, she certainly maintained a love for the dramatic.

Her role as an active literary patroness was one of the few things the dowager countess had in common with her second husband. Fogle associates the dowager countess's patronage with her marriages, while Louis Knafla situates the patronage habits of Lord Ellesmere in the larger intellectual climate of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Knafla argues that:

The peculiar mixture of rustic and humanistic ideals that characterized [Ellesmere's] spartan life resulted from the convergence in the Renaissance of three streams of English life: (1) a new emphasis on the work ethic that had been embedded so deeply in the artisan and yeoman status groups of the late middle ages; (2) the growth of a new religiosity in the sixteenth century; and (3) the educational revolution of the mid-Tudor period.³⁵

Knafla describes Lord Ellesmere as more of a humanist and Renaissance legal reformer than a patron of the arts and claims that, "The evidence for Ellesmere's patronage of these arts is slim."³⁶ Alice took what she had learned from Ferdinando about patronage and passed it on to Ellesmere. Alice and Ellesmere no longer patronized theatrical troupes, but the couple fostered an interest in a different type of entertainment.

Alice demonstrated her flair for drama and grandeur when she and Lord Ellesmere hosted Queen Elizabeth and her royal entourage at Harefield House on 29 July 1602. As was to be expected, the entire community of Harefield turned out for the

³⁵ Knafla, 37.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 71.

spectacle. Parishioners presented the queen with gifts and entertained her with speeches and performances. The author of the performance and poems is unknown, but the texts demonstrate typical themes of honor and humility. The most magnificent presentations were the speeches made at the opening and closing of the queen's visit by the characters of *Place* and *Time*. *Place* and *Time* greeted the queen at her arrival to Harefield House with the lines:

Place: Farwell, goodbye *Time*; are you not gone? Do you stay here? I wonder what *Time* should stay anywhere; what's the cause?

Time: If though knewest the cause, thou wouldst not wonder; for I stay to entertain the Wonder of this time; wherein I would pray thee to join me, if thou wert not too little for her greatness; for it weare as great a miracle for thee to receive her, as to see the ocean shut up in a little creek, or the circumfrence shrink unto the pointe of the center.³⁷

The welcoming performance continued with the humble dialogue of *Place* and *Time* rejoicing at the queen's visit, articulating the humble honor of the countess and Lord Ellesmere for the chance to play host, and then concluded with Lady Walsingham presenting the queen with a rainbow colored robe and the reading of a poem. *Place* reappeared at the conclusion of the visit to bid the troupe farewell:

Place: Sweet Majesty, be pleased to look upon a poor widow, mourning before your Grace. I am this *Place*, which at your coming was full of joy; but now at your departure am full of sorrow. I was then, for my comfort, accompanied with the present cheerful *Time*; but now he is to depart with you; and, blessed as he is, must ever fly before you: But alas! I have no wings, as *Time* hath. My heaviness is such, that I must stand still, amazed to see so great happiness so soon berest me. Oh, that I could remove with you, as other circumstances can!³⁸

³⁷ *Queen Elizabeth's Progresses: The Queen's Entertainment by the countess of Derby, at Harefield Place, Middlesex, In July 1602...*(London: Printed by and For John Nichols and Sons, 1821), 12-13. The Queen's visit to Harefield is also recounted in J. Norris Brewer, *London and Middlesex: Or, and Historical, Commercial, & Descriptive Survey of the Metropolis of Great-Britain: Including Sketches of its Environs, and all Topographical Account of the Most Remarkable Places in the Above County*, vol IV (London: 1816).

³⁸ *Ibid*, 16-17.

After the recitation of another poem and the exchange of more gifts, the queen and her entourage moved on.

The dowager countess of Derby and the Lord Keeper had only been married for two years when they hosted Queen Elizabeth. The progression is noted as being one of Elizabeth's last, but the event holds more importance to the Egertons. It marks the first time that Alice (or any of the Stanley women) assembled grand entertainment. The affair shows that the dowager countess of Derby continued the patronage practices that she had learned from her first marriage. More importantly, Queen Elizabeth's visit to Harefield was not the only time the dowager countess played hostess to a monarch. It is possible that the dowager countess and the Lord Keeper also hosted Anna of Denmark at Althorp during her June 1603 progression through England. While Alice grew up at Althorp, by 1603 the estate belonged to her nephew, Sir Robert Spencer. Few documents survive about the festivities there, but Edward Blount did have the entertainment published in London in 1604. The printed account of the entertainment offers no names (other than the Queen and Prince) but it does confirm that the entertainment was held at "Althorpe, at the Right Honourable the Lord Spencers."³⁹ Barroll concludes that, "since Sir Robert himself was a widower and his thirteen-year-old son was too young to assume the ceremonial burden and stature of greeting and escorting Queen Anna as her host at Althorp, some persona had to substitute for the absent host."⁴⁰ He also believes that the privilege of hosting the new queen consort must have fallen to one of Sir Robert's three

³⁹ *A Particular Entertainment of the Queen and Prince their Highnesse to Althorpe* (London, 1604).

⁴⁰ Barroll, 63.

aunts: Anne, Elizabeth, and Alice. According to Barroll's assessment, "the youngest of these three sisters, Alice (about forty in 1603), most probably acted as hostess at Althorp."⁴¹ Sir Robert had been in Harefield for Queen Elizabeth's visit the previous year, and that the spectacle easily could have convinced Lord Robert that Alice and Lord Ellesmere were worthy to play the hosts at Althorp. *The Entertainment at Althorp* has become an important moment in the discussion of Anna of Denmark's future patronage, as some scholars have argued that the dowager countess of Derby and Lord Ellesmere are responsible for introducing the new queen to Ben Jonson, the writer who would come to regularly write masques for her court.⁴²

The Entertainment at Althorp was relatively short and simple. *Satire* greeted the Queen Consort and Prince Henry:

Looke, see: (beshrew this Tree)
What may all this wonder be?
Pipe it, who that lift for me:
I'll flie out abroade, and see.

That is Cyparissus face!
And the Dame hath Syrinx grace!
O that Pan were now in Place
Sure they are of heavenly race.⁴³

A Faerie and an Elf join *Satire*, and continue to play in a spritely manner. The entertainment is lighthearted and mischievous. The tone is neither serious nor moral; the author and hosts truly intended it be an entertainment. In comparison to other masques of the era, *The Entertainment at Althorp* was not a literary masterpiece but it did serve an

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 64.

⁴² See for example Rosalind Miles, *Ben Jonson: His Craft and Art* (London: Routledge, 1990). Barroll disagrees with Miles. He argues that Anna of Denmark was probably not impressed with the Althorp masque because she did not ask Jonson to write her first masque. See: Barroll, 65-66.

⁴³ *The Entertainment at Althorp*, 1.

important function for the dowager countess of Derby. The Spencers were among the first families that the new Queen Consort and prince met in England, and the dowager countess of Derby and the Lord Keeper were the hosts. Fogle wrote that Alice's first marriage took her far from the pastoral countryside of Althorp. But in 1602, Alice returned to Althorp with grandeur and brought all she had learned with her.

The connection between the dowager countess of Derby and Queen Anna merits a brief explanation. The full extent of their relationship remains a complicated and elusive one. Queen Anna held a number of masques in her court, and these masques required female participants. Scholars like French Fogle and Cedric Brown suggest that Alice played roles in Samuel Daniel's *Vision of the Twelve Goddesses* in 1604, and Jonson's *Masque of Beauty* (1608), *Masque of Blackness* (1605), and *Masque of Queens* (1609).⁴⁴ Their understanding of the masques is confused because by the early seventeenth century there were two countesses of Derby: Alice, the dowager countess of Derby, and Elizabeth, countess of Derby and wife of William Stanley. Alice most likely performed in the *Masque of Beauty*, but past scholars have confused the dowager countess of Derby with her sister-in-law. Even Fogle does admit that the presence of two countesses of Derby is confusing and does create the potential for misidentification.⁴⁵ Elizabeth, countess of Derby, served as one of Queen Anna's ladies-in-waiting throughout the queen's life in England, whereas Alice rarely attended court in that period. It seems most

⁴⁴ Cedric Brown, *John Milton's Aristocratic Entertainments* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 15; French Fogle, 22-23; and Thomas Heywood, *The Earls of Derby and the Verse Writers and Poets of the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (Printed for the Chetham Society, 1853), (hereafter referred to as *The Stanley Papers*), 42-43.

⁴⁵ Barroll, 51-52, Fogle, 23.

probable that Elizabeth was actually the one who danced the roles in the queen's masques.

Regardless of the composition of Anna of Denmark's court, *The Entertainment at Althorp* presents some important insights into the patronage and influence of the dowager countess and Lord Ellesmere. If the two were the primary hosts at Althorp, then that meant that they fashioned two major monarchial entertainments in less than one year. This is a remarkable feat for any early modern noble family. It would also show that they were clearly so proficient at the art of entertainments that even their extended family, namely Sir Robert, saw them fit to host an event of this magnitude on the behalf of others. Malcolm Smuts, Martin Butler, and Caroline Hibbard have all painted masques as an almost exclusive creation of court, and each argues for a highly political and nationalistic interpretation of masque imagery.⁴⁶ While the entertainments offered by the dowager countess and Lord Ellesmere were not performed at Whitehall or Greenwich, they did entertain *the court* in their country estates or the estates of their kin. In a sense, the presence of a royal entourage made Harefield House and Althorp a court space. Honor, nobility, the greatness of the monarchy, and the humility of those noble men and women in relation to their monarch served as the themes for the performance commissioned by the couple. These were themes that both highlighted and celebrated the state.

Smuts argues that masques were primarily "creations of royal households." The Stanley women and their families, however, not only commissioned masques when

⁴⁶ See *The Stuart Court and Europe: Essays in Politics and Political Culture*, ed. Malcolm Smuts.

royalty were present; they also used masque entertainments in celebration of one another and their own private accomplishments. The Stanley women and their families commissioned three private masques over the course of their lives: John Marston's *Entertainment at Ashby* in 1607, John Milton's *Arcades* at Harefield in the early 1630's, and Milton's *Comus* at Ludlow Castle in September 1634. If masques were a vital, or perhaps *the* vital, component to court culture, it is quite revealing that the Stanley women reproduced this culture in their own spaces. John Knowles quite correctly points out that, "These entertainments, preformed away from court and often without the royal audience of the masque, raise complex and interesting issues."⁴⁷ Some scholars argue that masques performed in country seats were acts of "oppositional politics," but the patronage habits of the Stanley women and their families indicate that they held a different meaning.⁴⁸ The plethora of sources dedicated to the poets whom the Stanley women patronized and their fascinating imagery make it is easy to fall down the rabbit hole and get distracted in the land of literary debates. Therefore, in an effort to historicize the performances themselves, it is imperative to keep a clear focus on the relationship between the Stanley women, their families, and their patronage. The masques commissioned by the Stanley women and their families are important, both in the lives of these contemporaries as well as in an historical and literary context. It is equally important, however, to remain focused on what the celebration was actually about. The masques were the entertainment; they were not the reasons for the

⁴⁷ James Knowles, "Marston, Skipwith and *The Entertainment at Ashby*," in *English Manuscript Sources 1100-1700* 3 (1992): 138.

⁴⁸ See David Norbrook, "The Reformation of the Masque," in *The Court Masque*, ed. David Lindley (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984), 94.

celebrations. Marston, Milton, and their masques were intended to reflect the family's excellence, not overshadow it.

The Stanley women and their families emulated and reproduced court culture in their own homes. The three masques commissioned by the Stanley women and their families each coincided with a major event in their lives: the 1607 Act of Parliament that ended their lawsuit against William Stanley, the Castlehaven trial, and Bridgewater's official appointment as the President of the Marches of Wales. The Stanley women and their families marked these victories by commissioning masques and gathering their kin for celebration. The dowager countess navigated the family through the perils of their inheritance battle and the Castlehaven scandal; *The Entertainment at Ashby* and *Arcades* paid honorable tribute to the family's matriarch. Milton's *Comus* served as the entertainment at the Michaelmas festivities for the earl of Bridgewater's instillation.

The 1607 performance famously marks Alice's arrival at the home of her daughter and son-in-law, the earl and countess of Huntingdon. The masque is replete with pastoral and cosmic imagery, and honors Alice with lines that highlight her ambition toward securing honorable status for her family:

Oh we are full of joy no breast more light,
But those who owe you theirs by Natures right
From whom vouchsafe this present. Tis a work
wherein strange miracles and wonders lurk
For know that Lady whose ambition towers
Only to this to be termed worthy of yours
whose forehead I could crown with clearest rays
but that her praise is, she abhors much praise...
[Lines 149-156]⁴⁹

⁴⁹ There are two original copies of *The Entertainment at Ashby*. EL 34, HEH, and Sloane 848, BL.

A close examination of this stanza can easily suggest that Marston wrote the entertainment to celebrate the outcome of the 1607 Act of Parliament. In the lines, "But those who owe you theirs by Natures right, From whom vouchsafe this present." Marston acknowledges that the host and hostess of the event are indebted to the dowager countess for protecting their "Nature's right." He follows this sentiment with mention of "strange miracles" done by "that Lady whose ambition towers." Towering ambition certainly illustrates Alice's attitude in defense of Ferdinando's will. And, the overwhelming success the Stanley women had in negotiating seventeenth century land laws in their pursuits against the earl of Derby could easily be described as a miracle.⁵⁰

While the text of the masque is filled with similar imagery, it is a two-page insert found in the Huntington Library's version of the masque that first drew scholarly attention. The insert is a script for a lottery with to be read by the dowager countess, the countess of Huntingdon, Lady Hunsdon, Lady Berckly, Lady Stanhope, Lady Compton, Lady Fielding, and seven other unmarried women.⁵¹ The dowager countess opens the performance with the following lines:

As this is endless, endless by your joy:
Value the wish and not the wishers toy,
And for one blessing past God send you seven,
And in the end the endless joys of heaven.
Till then let this be all your crosse
To have discomfort or your loss.⁵²

The presence of these pages has sparked a number of interpretations of the event. Arnold Davenport has concluded that the contents of these pages indicate that the "occasion

⁵⁰ See Chapter 6 for discussion of the Stanley inheritance lawsuits.

⁵¹ A manuscript copy of *Comus*, EL 34 B 9, HEH.

⁵² *Ibid.*

could well have been the announcement of a formal betrothal."⁵³ He argues that the Stanley women gathered at Ashby-de-la-Zouche in order to celebrate the engagement between Anne and Lord Chandos, and that Marston's masque was intended to celebrate Alice's successful marriage arrangement for her eldest daughter. James Knowles sees the additional pages of the masque to be an indication that the midland's poet, William Skipwith, should actually be credited as one of the authors. Knowles concludes that Marston authored the primary text but that Skipwith authored the additional pages.⁵⁴ Matthew Steggle takes the reading of *The Entertainment* even further to explain that Marston recycled many of the lines he used in the 1606 Fleet Conduit Eclogue for King Christian VI's visit.⁵⁵

The most insightful reading of the Ashby entertainment is offered by Mary Erler. Erler compares the text to the production at Queen Elizabeth's entertainment at Harefield five years earlier. She concludes that, "The similarity of the amusements at Harefield and Ashby suggests some factor which stands outside of the male invention, a factor which might be labeled female choice."⁵⁶ Because she sees a strong female influence in the masque, she argues that the *Entertainment at Ashby* idealizes the mother-daughter relationship between the Stanley women. She also agrees with Davenport that the event

⁵³ Arnold Davenport, ed., *The Poems of John Marston* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1961), 42.

⁵⁴ Knowles, 172.

⁵⁵ Matthew Steggle, "John Marston's Entertainment at Ashby and the 1606 Fleet Conduit Eclogue," *Medieval and Renaissance Drama in England* 19, (2006): 249-255.

⁵⁶ Mary Erler, "Chaste Sports, Juste Prayses, & All Softe Delight': Harefield 1602 and Ashby 1607, Two Female Entertainments," in *The Elizabethan Theatre XIV*, edited by A.L. Magnusson and C.E. McGee (Toronto: P.D. Meany, 1996), 21.

was most likely a celebration of marriage, although she believes it commemorates a different marriage than the one seen by Davenport. Erler believes that "Ashby's triumphant public statement" is actually about the successful match between the earl and countess of Huntingdon. At the end of her article, Erler briefly draws a parallel between the 1607 gathering in Leicester and the private Act of Parliament. She mentions that, "perhaps Ashby represents a recognition of this substantial female victory, thirteen years after Ferdinando's death."⁵⁷ This statement is really just an afterthought. For Erler, the primary focus should be on Alice's strong matriarchal influence and in the way that her daughters perpetuated it.

Erler calls this a "representation," which only hints at the real purpose behind the event. She is interested in the imagery of the masque itself, rather than the reason for the gathering. Looking at only one masque in isolation does not show that the Stanley women had a lifelong habit of commissioning masques after pivotal moments in their lives. Thus, Erler can only suggest that the entertainment is perhaps a representation of the female influence exerted by Alice. It is only when we look at the Stanley women's long term habits of patronage that the real connection to the end of the inheritance lawsuit can emerge. It is important to consider the imagery and significance of the entertainment from a gendered perspective, as Erler does. But it is equally important to situate the event in the real-life context of the Stanley women in order to better understand their life-long relationship with patronage. The point here is not about literary imagery; it is about the moments in their lives when they opted for grand spectacles, large gatherings, and

⁵⁷ Ibid., 23.

familial celebrations. The Stanley women congregated at Ashby in 1607 to celebrate their legal victory over the sixth earl of Derby. Marston's masque was their entertainment.

We see this again in the early 1630's, when the family gathered at Harefield to watch the dowager countess's grandchildren perform Milton's *Arcades*. Fogle takes the line "Such a Rural Queen" from Milton's poem for the title of his work on the dowager countess. He describes that, "The noble persons of her family were in all probability some of the Countess Dowager's numerous grandchildren, who came on some special occasion to do honor to one of the very distinguished ladies of the period, by this time advanced in years and honors, the center of a large immediate family of her own and closely connected by marriage with other great families of England."⁵⁸ Fogle is absolutely correct about all of these qualities of the dowager countess, but the gathering had a much more specific purpose than for "some special occasion." Cedric Brown argues that "the entertainment of which *Arcades* was a part might have been dedicated to her out of a sense of obligation and grateful recognition for the way in which she had served as centre to the family in a difficult time."⁵⁹ The difficult time that he refers to is the Castlehaven scandal in 1631. Anne accused her husband, the earl of Castlehaven, of assisting his footman in raping her. The earl and two of his servants were tried and executed for rape and sodomy.⁶⁰ Brown's observation leads us in the right direction, but

⁵⁸ Fogle, 4.

⁵⁹ Brown, 20.

⁶⁰ For a full discussion of the event and the role that the dowager countess played in her daughter's defense, see Chapter 7.

his point takes on even more significance when situated against the notion that this was the second time that the Stanley family had gathered to celebrate a legal victory and the role that Alice played in securing this victory for her family.⁶¹ They did not just commission the performance out of a sense of obligation and gratitude; they maintained their family's habit of demarking legal victory with a family gathering and a masque as entertainment.

Milton emphasizes the powerful influence Alice exerted when he wrote:

Mark what radiant state she spreads,
In circle round her shining throne
Shooting her beams like silver threads:
 This, this is she alone,
 Sitting like a Goddess bright
 In the centre of her light...

I will bring you where she sits,
Clad in splendor as befits
 Her deity.
Such a rural Queen
All Arcadia hath not seen.
[Lines 15-19 and 91-95]

The scene takes on an even more personal meaning when we envision that it was Alice's grandchildren reciting the lines to her in the presence of their larger kin network. Just as Marston's masque, twenty-five years earlier had marked Alice's ambition and greatness, Milton draw from the same themes in *Arcades*. The inheritance suit against William Stanley and the Castlehaven trial were highly complicated and trying crusades in which the Stanley women and their families ultimately received vindication.

While both *The Entertainment at Ashby* and *Arcades* denote these significant moments in the lives of the Stanley women, they are overshadowed in a literary sense by

⁶¹ See Chapter 7 for a full discussion of these events.

a third masque the Stanley/Egerton family commissioned in 1634: Milton's *A Masque at Ludlow Castle* (which is now known simply as *Comus*.) *Comus* is not only the best known of the Stanley women's masques, but it is also one of the most celebrated and debated literary pieces of the seventeenth century. It has become so popular that a publisher of children's books still issue fully illustrated versions of the story.⁶² The masque is about a young girl and her two brothers who go for a walk in Ludlow forest. The girl is separated from her brothers. She encounters Comus, an evil demon who lives in the forest, who brings her back to his lair. Comus then tries to seduce the young girl to steal her virtue. She ardently resists and defends herself against him. Her brothers find her just in time and the three escape, unscathed, and return safely home.

William Hunter Jr. addresses the primary debate about Milton and *Comus* when he writes, "When confronted by this aesthetic problem which *Comus* so expressly poses, twentieth century critics have tended to interpret it as they have much of the rest of Milton's poetry, as autobiographical statements: the play's thesis of the power of chastity and virginity, that is, is a public affirmation of its author's own private beliefs."⁶³ Hunter believes that literary scholars must have more respect for the influence of the patron in the commissioning of masques when he argues, "the writer of a masque had to do exactly as he was told, for any significant deviations that were not welcome would, of course,

⁶² *Comus*, adapted by Margaret Hodges and illustrated by Triana Scharf Hyman (New York: Holiday House, 1996.) The children's book is illustrated with vibrant oil paintings and the story is written as a narrative with dialogue, rather than in poetic verse.

⁶³ William Hunter, Jr., *Milton's Comus: Family Piece* (Troy: The Whitston Publishing Co., 1983), 2.

have been recognized and changed or deleted by the participants in the rehearsals."⁶⁴

Historical records do not reveal exactly which member of the Stanley/Egerton family commissioned Milton to write the masque. We do know that three of the Bridgewater's children, Alice, Thomas, and John, played the main parts. The three were also the dowager countess's grandchildren. We also know that they performed the masque on Michaelmas night 1634 at Ludlow Castle, near the Welsh border.

Barbara Breasted offers a more complex reading of *Comus*, one that has sparked an important literary debate since her work was first published in 1971. Breasted agrees with all other literary scholars and historians that, "The occasion of the party on that September evening at Ludlow Castle was the celebration of the Earl of Bridgewater's accession to his new viceregal position as Lord President of the Council of Wales."⁶⁵ She does, however, offer a very different reading of the masque itself. The Castlehaven affair three years earlier "provided a context for *Comus* that may have influenced the way the masque was written, the way it was cut for its first performance, and the way it was received by its first audience."⁶⁶ Breasted's work has given rise to an entire debate linking *Comus* to the Castlehaven scandal, arguing against any connection, or offering alternative origins of the masque all together.⁶⁷

⁶⁴ Ibid., 4.

⁶⁵ Barbara Breasted, "Comus and the Castlehaven Scandal," *Milton Studies* 3 (1971): 202.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ See: John Creaser, "Milton's *Comus*: The Irrelevance of the Castlehaven Scandal," *Milton Quarterly* XXI (1987): 24-34; Leah Marcus, "Justice for Margery Evans: A 'Local' Reading of *Comus*," in *Milton and the Idea of Women*, ed. Julia Walker (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1988), 66-85; Nancy Weitz Miller, "Chastity, Rape and Ideology in the Castlehaven Testimonies and Milton's Ludlow *Mask*," *Milton Studies*

All of these works overlook the long-term patronage tradition of the Stanley women and their families. If Milton wrote *Arcades* as the entertainment for the family gathering at the end of the Castlehaven trial, then *Comus* would have been commissioned for a different purpose. *Comus* does center on themes of virtue and the ability to resist seduction, themes that are mirrored in the Castlehaven trial. However, because the family had already gathered and commissioned *Arcades* in closer proximity to the end of the Castlehaven ordeal, it is rash to assume that *Comus* was linked to the trial for the Stanley women. Bridgewater's newest career advancement serves as the most reasonable motivation for event. To suggest that the Stanley/Egerton family used Bridgewater's installation as a moment to relive the themes of the Castlehaven affair is to misjudge the characters of the Stanley women and to ignore the ways in which the family utilized masques in their private spaces.⁶⁸ The literary themes might suggest this, but the historical context indicates something else.

Alice learned the art of patronage from Ferdinando during the time the couple spent in Lancashire. She brought her new found interest in theatrical patronage to her second marriage. She also shared it with her daughters. Early in her marriage to Ellesmere, the dowager countess used her knowledge of patronage and entertainments to host Queen Elizabeth. She and Ellesemere were so successful, it is likely that Sir Robert Spencer called upon his aunt to help play hostess again to a new queen. These entertainments marked a new era of patronage for the Stanley women. They began to

32 (1995): 153-168; and Michael Wilding, "Milton's *A Masque Presents at Ludlow Castle, 1634*: Theater and Politics on the Border," *Milton Quarterly* XXI (1987): 35-51.

⁶⁸ For a detailed discussion of *Comus*, the Castlehaven scandal, and the Stanley women please see Chapter 7.

recreate the court culture of masques in their private homes to celebrate their own personal accomplishments.

Looking at the three masques commissioned by the Stanley/Egerton/Hastings family over the course of their lives reveals that they patronized reputable writers at major moments in order to celebrate legal victories and political advancements, and to put grueling experiences behind them. This also offers a very different motive for the commissioning of masques than those used at court or for political opposition. The practices of Stanley women and their families demonstrate that masques were not solely court creations. The Stanley women and their families were truly Renaissance patrons as they found new and personal ways to celebrate masques in their homes. While the performances and grand gatherings were important components to constructing a commanding reputation, these celebrations were also vital personal interactions between the Stanley women and their families.

Chapter 6

Inheritance, the Law, and the Stanley Women

The recent popular renaissance that Tudor-Stuart England is having in modern films and television series might lead us to believe that the early modern aristocrat's life consisted of nothing but sex, intrigue, swordplay, feasts, and dancing. Unfortunately, these cinematic stories not only misrepresent some serious hygienic issues, but also neglect some crucial aspects in the early modern aristocrat's life. They fail to explore the ubiquity of lawsuits and squabbles among the aristocracy. Most television audiences tune in for the lurid details of Henry VIII's sex life. Yet the real lives of these peers reveal how vicious and captivating early modern litigation could be. The Stanley women frequently found themselves involved in high stakes legal battles over property, marriage, and inheritances. Unlike their Hollywood counterparts, these women did not maneuver their way through these situations by coyly batting their eyelashes. The Stanley women utilized marriage, kinship, fierce letter-writing, and sometimes the laws themselves in defense against their copious legal entanglements. In lawsuits which frequently raged on for years and mutated into complex and colorful forms, they each used the institution of marriage in different ways to protect their collective as well as personal interests.

Of course, the lack of sex appeal in early modern litigation might not be the only reason that Stanley women's legal problems have not made their way into mainstream historical narratives. The relationship between early modern women and the law is elusive and often difficult to discern. Amy Erikson and Tim Stretton have done remarkable work in describing the place for women in the early modern legal system that

was at best precarious, and a worse, impossible to comprehend. Primogeniture and patriarchy were the indisputable foundation of the early modern legal system, and scholars have exposed the unstable nature of these ideologies. They have also identified other complex aspects of the precarious relationship between women and the law.¹

Arguably, the most significant obstacle to a clear understanding of women and the law is the fact that by the mid-seventeenth century, four distinct court systems functioned simultaneously in England: common law courts, equity courts, manorial or customary courts, and ecclesiastical courts.

Common law was the overarching law in England, based on cases and precedent. It included traditions of primogeniture and coverture. Courts governed by common law included assizes and quarter session courts as well as the Court of King's Bench. Courts with equitable jurisdiction, like the Chancery and Exchequer, dealt with individual cases that required special consideration. Equitable jurisdiction stemmed from the notion that the general and expansive range of common law made it far too broad to apply to every situation. These courts took unique circumstances into account, and had the authority to override common law practices. Manorial courts functioned at a local level and used local tradition to resolve communal disputes. Ecclesiastical courts were church courts,

¹ For an overview of women and early modern law see: Maria Cioni, *Women and the Law in Elizabethan England with Particular Reference to the Court of Chancery* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982); Alice Clark, *Working Life of Women in the Seventeenth Century* (London: Routledge, 1982); Amy Erickson, *Women and Property in Early Modern England* (London: Routledge, 1993); Ralph Houlbrooke, *Church Courts and People During the English Reformation, 1520-1570* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979); Sara Mendelson, "To shift for a cloak': Disorderly Women in the Church Courts," *Women & History: Voices of Early Modern England*, ed. Valerie Frith (Toronto: Coach House, 1995), 3-10; Eileen Spring, *Law, Land, and Family: Aristocratic Inheritance in England, 1300-1800* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1993); and Barbara Todd, "Freebench and Free Enterprise: Widows and Their Property in Two Berkshire Villages," in *English Rural Society 1500-1800: Essays in Honour of John Thirsk*, eds. John Chartres and David Hey (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 175-200.

based on canon law. They dealt with probate and moral issues like fornication, drunkenness, marital agreements and disputes.² The existence of multiple courts prevented a clear view of the relationship between men, women and the law from emerging because these courts not only coexisted and overlapped, they also frequently contradicted one another. There were also inconsistencies within each court system. For example, common law in general was exceedingly patriarchal, deploying or following the laws of coverture to deny married women the right to control individual property. In the resolution of inheritance disputes, however, common law courts tended to favor female heirs-general over collateral male heirs, as we will see. Modern scholars are not the only ones who have trouble making clear demarcations in the quagmire of early modern law; contemporaries frequently found their own legal system to be baffling and contradictory.

Tim Stretton explains “early modern law was uncertain...The boundaries between different jurisdiction were often blurred.”³ Yet he believes that studying the law can provide much needed insights into experience of women, while the legal inconsistencies within the law itself makes this endeavor quite difficult. His point is that the tricky nature of legal sources have mislead previous historians and given them the impression that women did not participate in litigation. Stretton also uses Elizabethan plays and literature to understand the sixteenth century culture of litigation. He explains that, “Authors working within various genres concocted a variety of representations of women

² Lynne Greenberg, *Essential Works for the Study of Early Modern Women: Part I, Vol. 1, Legal Treatises*, 1, eds. Betty Travitsky and Anne Lake Prescott (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005), x-xii.

³ Tim Stretton, *Women Waging Law in Elizabethan England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 37.

in print.”⁴ Stretton uses this literature to understand the various ways that early modern society perceived and depicted women in public forums, so that he can better understand how people thought of legal action taken by women. Early modern women held precarious positions in society. These positions allowed them social leverage and autonomy at times, while the law relegated them to male domination. This meant that litigation brought on by women held different cultural meanings, and that the women themselves used different language and perspective in courts. Stretton also argues that the Elizabethan period was a time of change for common law in general and in the ways that women accessed the law. He sees an increase in the number of litigation trials, but also sees that measures were taken to limit female participation. He argues, however, that this was not necessarily solely because of gender imbalances of power, but also due to the fact that, “women’s rights were in flux in the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries largely because the jurisdictions that extended them rights were in flux.”⁵ Elizabethan women experienced the law differently, as did Elizabethan men, because the law itself was changing.

These obstacles make it challenging to understand the relationship between women and the law and can lead to the false assumption that women were not active participants in the legal system. The actual historical documentation of women and the law is far more substantial. In fact, legal sources make up a significant portion of the surviving records of the Stanley women. These sources reveal that the Stanley women

⁴ Ibid., 44.

⁵ Ibid., 232.

participated actively in their disputes and sometimes even initiated suits. Martin Ingram and Laura Gowing have shown that women were regular participants in ecclesiastical courts and in suits over sex, slander, and marital disputes.⁶ Because they came from the upper echelons of society, the Stanley women turned to the law to resolve disputes over property and inheritance. Margreta de Grazia points out that "it does at times appear as if women had found ways to obtain agency in property matters before the law conferred it on them legally."⁷ The Stanley women did everything in their power to work around this fact. They engaged in a thirteen year long battle against William Stanley in defense of Ferdinando's will. Upon the death of her second husband, Alice fought her son-in-law/stepson over Lord Ellesmere's will, and she participated in a nasty fight with Sir Edward Kynaston, a local Hertfordshire knight, when he accused some of her tenants of killing his deer. The dowager countess also acquired a number of wardships. Elizabeth and the earl of Huntingdon sued Lady Eleanor Davies, their son's mother-in-law, when her husband's estate failed to pay the full marriage settlement that the families had agreed upon when Ferdinando Hastings wed the young Lucy Davies. By the 1630's, these confrontations proved to be mere training exercises for the most sensational and grueling

⁶ See Laura Gowing, *Domestic Dangers: Women, Words, and Sex in Early Modern London* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996); and Martin Ingram, *Church Courts, Sex and Marriage in England, 1570-1640* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987).

⁷ Margreta de Grazia, "Afterward," in *Women, Property, and the Letters of the Law in Early Modern England*, eds. Nancy Wright, Margaret Ferguson, and A.R. Buck (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004), 299.

of the Stanley women's lawsuits: the prosecution of Anne's second husband, the earl of Castlehaven, for rape and sodomy.⁸

Undoubtedly, the Stanley women's most arduous lawsuit was against William Stanley. On 25 September 1593, the fourth earl of Derby died, and his earldom and properties passed to his eldest son. Ferdinando only enjoyed the title for a short time, as he died only seven months later.⁹ Just two days before his death, Ferdinando drafted a will, dated 12 April 1594. In it, Ferdinando appointed Richard Holland, Edward Warren, William Farring, and Michael Doughty "to assure and convey unto my well beloved wife or unto such person or persons as she shall therein or in that behalf nominate and appoint in all singular such estate and interests." Ferdinando also declared that: "I the said Earl do constitute and make my well beloved wife Alice Countess of Derby my sole and only executrix of this my last will and testament." He then appointed "the right honorable Gilbert Earl of Shrewsbury, and Thomas Lord Buckhurst to be supervisors of this my said last will to and for the good of my said wife and children."¹⁰ It was quite normal for a husband to make such arrangements in his will, and many husbands named their wives as their executors while also appointing male kinsmen as supervisors. Amy Erickson points out that "It was assumed that the widow executrix had not only the children's interests at heart, but also the authority and experience to manage their portions."¹¹

⁸ See Chapter 7 for a complete account of this trial.

⁹ See Chapters 2 and 3 for discussions of the death of Ferdinando Stanley.

¹⁰ The Last Will and Testament of Ferdinando Stanley, 5th Earl of Derby, Prob/11/84, TNA.

¹¹ Erickson, 171.

Ferdinando must have believed his wife would protect the best interests of his three young daughters. When he died, Anne was thirteen, Frances was eleven, and Elizabeth was only seven years old. He obviously thought that his wife would act in the best interests of his children. Ferdinando's will demonstrates a fondness for his wife and children, which is normal. But his will also displays a rather odd characteristic as well: it does mention his brother William, the Stanley heir apparent, once. Ferdinando's will expressed his concern that his estates would be divided upon his death: "Item touching the disposition of my manors Lordships Lands tenements and hereditaments which if I should not dispose of by will would otherwise descend unto my three several daughters and Coheirs, and so be divided and dismembered into many parts and portions ." He then instructed that his lands were to remain completely intact:

For avoiding of which inconvenience my will and mind is and I do will and bequeath all and singular such my Manors lordships lands tenements and hereditaments with all there and every of their Appurtenances whereof I am now sealed in possession or [reversion] of an estate in fee simple and not in taile unto my well beloved wife Alice Countess of Derby in augmentation of her dower of the residue of my lands entailed whereof I do make no disposition by will to have and to hold all and singular my said Manors Lordships lands tenement and hereditaments with all their appurtenances unto my said wife for and during her natural life¹²

He not only wanted his lands to remain intact, but he also wanted his widow to have control of them. After Alice's death, Ferdinando envisioned that his estates should then pass in entirety to his eldest daughter Anne (if his wife was not pregnant with a son.)¹³

His will continued:

The remainder thereof if my said wife be not [inserted] with a son unto my eldest daughter the Lady Ann Stanley and the heirs of her body

¹² The Last Will and Testament of Ferdinando Stanley, 5th Earl of Derby, Prob/11/84, TNA.

¹³ See Chapter 2 for discussion of Alice's pregnancy at the time of Ferdinando's death.

lawfully to be begotten And for default of such issue the remainder thereof unto Francis my second daughter and to the heirs of her body lawfully to be begotten, And for default of such issue, the remainder unto Elizabeth my third daughter and the heirs of her body lawfully to be begotten.¹⁴

Ferdinando did not make one provisions in his will for his younger brother, William.

Upon his death, he envisioned that William would inherit the title and Alice, and then

Anne, would gain control of all of the Stanley land holdings. His will did not even

mention the Stanley seats of Knowsley Hall or Lathom specifically. Ferdinando's will

makes it easy to speculate that either he was completely devoted to his wife, he

absolutely hated his brother, or a combination of the two. It is also possible that

Ferdinando wanted to ensure that the Stanley lands would remain in the control of

bloodline descendants. Eileen Spring has made an insightful connection between female

inheritance and reproduction when she argued that "a female continues the blood of her

father more certainly" than male relatives. The bloodline may, however, be

overshadowed by the fact that daughters took their husband's last name at marriage.¹⁵

While the lands may have remained in the control of bloodline-descendants of the

Stanleys, they could carry the Brydges/Egerton/Hastings name.

Regardless of Ferdinando's motivations, his requests were highly problematic.

Not surprisingly, Ferdinando's will enraged William Stanley. Although he inherited the

earldom, this did not guarantee him control of the Stanley seats in Lancashire, and he

took serious issue with windfall of estates and leases which his sister-in-law and nieces

had inherited. He had gendered norms and patriarchy on his side. He also had a mess of

¹⁴ The Last Will and Testament of Ferdinando Stanley, 5th Earl of Derby, Prob/11/84, TNA.

¹⁵ Spring, 19-22.

a legal system to wade through. In review of William's predicament, Barry Coward has concludes that "unfortunately, so ambiguous was the land law at this time that it gave no guarantee that the family estates would descend with the peerage."¹⁶ Gender historians Mary Chan and Nancy Wright view the situation slightly differently. What Coward sees as ambiguity in the land laws, Chan and Wright see as flexibility. They argue that "the flexibility introduced to the laws of succession...exaggerated the potential for the commodification, subordination, and unequal distribution of rights as well as property among men and women of [the upper] class."¹⁷ While ambiguity implies that no one really knew how to appropriately apply the law, flexibility implies that the law was intentionally vague. Regardless of the motivation behind the land laws, however, William and Alice found themselves facing a very uncertain terrain.

Coward also highlights another significant obstacle in the consistent application of land laws when he argues that "deficiencies in the land law combined with biological accident to make this period one of exceptional instability for noble landed fortunes. The failure of the direct male line was not uncommon among late sixteenth and early seventeenth-century peerage."¹⁸ Amy Erickson has determined that in this period, "It is certainly true that land pulled inexorably towards males, but it spent a good deal of time in female hands along the way. Another 20 per cent of marriages produced only

¹⁶ Barry Coward, *The Stanleys, Lords Stanley, and Earls of Derby, 1385-1672: the Origins, Wealth, and Power of a Landowning Family* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1983), 41.

¹⁷ Mary Chan and Nancy Wright, "Marriage, Identity, and the Pursuit of Property in Seventeenth-Century England: The Cases of Anne Clifford and Elizabeth Wiseman," in *Women, Property, and the Letters of the Law in Early Modern England*, eds Nancy Wright, Margaret Ferguson, and A.R. Buck (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004), 169.

¹⁸ Coward, 41.

daughters, who inherited land together jointly."¹⁹ Katherine Walker adds to Coward and Erickson's interpretation by arguing that, "in this period noble widows were more numerous, more assertive, better educated, and more readily able to find allies within the legal profession than their predecessors had been."²⁰ If these qualities were the norm for early modern widows, then the dowager countess of Derby was a true master of widowhood. This point again calls into question a static application of *widowhood*. Some widows were better prepared to face the legal world than others: personality mattered. William thus found himself in a legal showdown with the dowager countess and her daughters. While he had patriarchal authority on his side, she had the Stanley family patriarch's will and the quagmire of legal land laws on her side.

The basis for William's contestation of Ferdinando's will was vested in his claim that his grandfather Edward, the third earl of Derby, had entailed the family lands in Lancashire in March 1570 for sixty years.²¹ The third earl's entails would be binding until 1630. William argued that Ferdinand's will conflicted with his grandfather's entails, and therefore that Ferdinando had no right to give control of the Stanley lands to his wife and daughters. Because the land laws were so imprecise, the lawsuit between the dowager countess and William Stanley became about which side played the game most

¹⁹ Erickson, 5.

²⁰ Katherine Walker, "The Widowhood of Alice Spencer, Countess Dowager of Derby, 1594-1636," *Transaction of the Historical Society of Lancashire and Cheshire* 149 (2000): 5.

²¹ Coward, 44. The logistics of the numerous lawsuits filed between Alice Stanley and William Stanley have been accounted numerous times. The best narrative account is done by Barry Coward, Chapter 4, "The Disputed Inheritance: 1594-1610." The majority of the above narrative is based on Coward's work unless otherwise cited. See also Barry Coward, "Disputed Inheritances: Some Difficulties of the Nobility in the Late Sixteenth and Early Seventeenth Centuries," *Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research* 44 (1971): 194-215.

effectively. At the outset, it appeared that William would prevail, but Alice, in her resourcefulness, found ways to truly complicate things for the new earl.

Thomas Egerton got involved in the argument at the very beginning. In 1594, he had not yet ascended to the post of Lord Keeper or Lord Chancellor, but at the time served as Master of the Rolls. Queen Elizabeth had granted him the post just two days before Ferdinando's death.²² He had also been a chief legal advisor for the Stanley family since the time of William and Ferdinando's father. On 23 September 1594, Francis Bacon, Michael Doughty, Hugh Ellis, Henry Jones, and John Panton sent a trunk of evidence "bound up in packcloth, sewed up and sealed with the seal of the earl by the said Mr. Doughty, and by the said Mr. Ellis with his own seal, on behalf of the countess."²³ Egerton served as the steward for the evidence in the trunk. Katherine Walker argues that "Given Egerton's position as legal adviser to the Stanley family, he perhaps saw himself as the upholder of Earl Ferdinando's will, and in light of this he sided at first with the heirs general."²⁴ Walker ignores the fact that Egerton just as easily could have served as a legal advocate for William but opted rather to support the Stanley women. This alliance was very important for the Stanley women because William had strong allies of his own. On 26 January 1595, he married Elizabeth de Vere, daughter of

²² J.H. Baker, "Egerton, Thomas, first Viscount Brackley (1540-1617)," in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, edited by H.C.G. Matthew and Brian Harrison (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004); online ed., ed. Lawrence Goldman, May 2005, [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/8594> (accessed 6 November 2006)].

²³ Memorandum confirming the delivery of a trunk of evidence to Sir Thomas Egerton, Master of the Roll, 30 October 1594, EL 773, HEH.

²⁴ Walker, 7.

the earl of Oxford and Anne Cecil. Elizabeth called Robert Cecil "uncle" and Lord Burghley "grandfather."²⁵

By March 1595, these alliances had hardly been tested when William and Alice reached an accord. William agreed that: "the said Alice Countess is to have a third part of all the residue of the Manor lands tenements profits and hereditaments ascended or come unto Ferdinando Earl of Derby deceased late Lord and husband of the said Alice Countess of Derby during her natural life." His agreement stipulated: "Notwithstanding any estate lease or leases for life or lives That is to say, of the third part of the rent and renortion of so much of the said, Manor lands tenements profits and hereditaments lawfully promised to any person or persons for life or years and of the residue in possession." He agreed to pay her £5000, Anne £8000, and Francis and Elizabeth each £6000. He would also provide £100 annually for maintenance to each of his nieces until they turned twenty one or married.²⁶ It appeared that all matters had been settled, but it did not take long for this agreement to unravel. Alice had already begun to make leases on properties she considered to be part of her dower before she and William had outlined exactly what lands were part of her dower. Typically a dower was one third of the freehold lands of the deceased husbands. But always true to her form, Alice believed that Ferdinando's will entitled her to more.²⁷ William argued that her new leases were in

²⁵ See Chapter 2 for discussion of steps Alice took to prevent this marriage from taking place.

²⁶ Documents pertaining to the lawsuit between the coheirresses of Ferdinando Stanley and William Stanley, sixth earl of Derby, EL MS Box 23: 781-848 (Specifically: A Book containing copies of documents relating to the affairs of Ferdinand, Earl of Derby, and the arrangements made after his decease, EL 784), HEH. See also: Coward, 44.

²⁷ Coward, 44-45.

violation of existing leaseholds. This quickly sparked arguments over who actually controlled which properties and like a poorly made sweater, the whole thing started to unravel.

The agreement came apart altogether over disputes over the Isle of Man. The tiny island held a rather precarious constitutional and legal position in the scope of the British Isles. In 1522, a Chancery council had determined that the Isle of Man "was not part of the Realm of England, nor was governed by the law of this Land."²⁸ In 1406, Henry IV granted the "lordship of Man to Sir John Stanley," and the Stanley family had controlled the Isle ever since.²⁹ William claimed that the Isle belonged to him. Alice claimed it was part of her dower. It is unclear from the historical record why she believed this as the Isle of Man was not discussed in Ferdinando's will and the couple marriage settlement no longer exists. On 31 August 1594, Rand Stanley, Humfrey Scarsbrick, and William Luos, three inhabitants of the Isle of Man, sent a petition on behalf of the inhabitants of the Isle of Man for the rebuilding of the Castles of Russhen and Peele. They addressed it "to the right honorable the earl of Derby and the Lady Alice Countess dowager of Derby."³⁰ The men covered all their bases as it was not clear who owned the island. To complicate things even further, the Privy Council saw Ferdinando's death as an

²⁸ J.R. Dickinson, *The Lordship of Man Under the Stanleys: Government and Economy in the Isle of Man, 1580-1704* (Manchester: Published for the Chetham Society by Carnegie Publishing, 1996), 18.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 15.

³⁰ Petition on behalf of the inhabitants of the Isle of Man, 31 August 1594, EL 972, HEH.

opportunity to usurp control of the Isle for the crown.³¹ By August 1595, Elizabeth I had seized control of the island, and appointed her own captain, Sir Thomas Gerard. Gerard also happened to be a close ally of the Stanley women. The March agreement between William and Alice had fallen completely apart.

By 1600 each party started to take more serious action. William had thus far been unsuccessful in challenging the common law's preference for female heirs-general over collateral male heirs. To make matters worse for the earl, Alice upped the ante by marrying Thomas Egerton in October 1600. By this time, Queen Elizabeth had also appointed Egerton as her Lord Keeper. The Stanley/Egerton union became a double-threat to William when Frances married her stepbrother, John Egerton; an Elizabethan power *couple* became Elizabethan power *couples*. Certainly the Lord Keeper would assist the dowager countess in finding a way to bend an ambiguous or flexible land law in his new family's favor. He started by purchasing the lands of Ellesmere in Shropshire from William. Rising legal costs forced the earl to sell chunks of his lands. By 1599, for example, Robert Cecil was under the impression that William needed "to raise at least £30,000 to settle his legal debts."³² William must have swallowed a lot of pride to sell profitable estates to the countess of Derby's new and powerful husband.

The crown retained control of the Isle of Man, and William took up a suit in the Chancery to try to win it back. The court eventually ruled that the Stanley family did have a rightful claim to the island. Thus William had to purchase the island back from

³¹ The tittle of the Lady Strange Lady Frances & Lady Elizabeth Stanley daughters and heires of the right honourable Ferdinando late Earle of Derby deceased to the Ile of Manne, EL 782, HEH.

³² J.J. Bagley, *The Earls of Derby 1485-1985* (London: Sidgwick & Jackson, 1985), 69.

the crown for £2000. It does not appear that the heirs-general paid anything for their share.³³ The Chancery, keeping in tune with common law traditions, also determined that the Stanley daughters held an equal claim to the island. The court then divided control of the Isle of Man: half went to William, and they divided the other half into thirds between Anne, Frances, and Elizabeth. William then filed suit against this decision. Finally, a hearing was held before the judges at the Sergeant's Inn. The judges ultimately ruled again in favor of the Stanley women. The details of the final monetary transaction are unclear as "neither the legal costs involved nor the sum paid to the heirs general for their interests in the Isle of Man are known." Coward speculates that it ultimately cost William close to £30,000 to settle the affair.³⁴

While the Chancery debated who should control the Isle of Man, they also came to another interesting conclusion. In scrutinizing Ferdinando's will in order to reach a verdict, the council determined that:

And first by the same deed and will and all the part thereof it appeareth that the said Earl meant to make provision for all his 3 daughters and not for the eldest alone, for so first he expresseth the consideration of his conveyances to be the love which he bareth to his 3 daughters and nameth them particularly likewise that the same should continue unto them all as it is limited.³⁵

The Stanley daughters became coheiresses, collectively with the rights of heirs-general.

This means that the Stanley women were not actually successful in defending

Ferdinando's will because he had requested that the land holdings pass in their entirety to

³³ See: Coward, 48.

³⁴ Ibid, 49.

³⁵ Minutes from the meeting before the Judges at Sergeants Inn, regarding the Isle of Man, [22 November 1602], EL 976, HEH.

Alice and then to Anne; his will did not stipulate his daughters should have been co-heiresses. The judges' decision only strengthened the Stanley women's claims to the land. Legal triumph moved even further from William's grasp. In the end, he bought out his nieces' shares in the Isle for an unknown sum of cash. Despite this purchase, letters patent from the crown dated 17 March 1606 granted the dowager countess control of abbey lands on the Isle of Man for forty years.³⁶

Coward concludes that "Not all the advantages by any means were on the side of the earl, especially since the state of the land law prevented him from defeating the claims of the heirs general by process of law." Even the Cecils started to urge him to settle.³⁷ He finally did, and it cost him greatly. The two sides came to concrete agreement in 1602, and the deal was solidified in a private Act of Parliament in 1607. The settlement stated that William would pay the heirs-general £20,400: £8000 cash, £11,200 for lands in Middlesex that he would purchase from them, they retained control of Colham and Eynsham, and £1,200 for lands that he had illegally sold before the resolution. Alice was no longer eligible for her dower properties, because she married Egerton, but he had already starting purchasing lands from William and adding them to Alice's jointure. The settlement named Thomas Spencer and Edward Savage as the Stanley women's trustees for life.³⁸ The precise allocation of this money is not known.³⁹

³⁶ Coward, 63.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 46.

³⁸ Act of Parliament, 1607, E(B)53, NRO.

³⁹ Coward, 46-47.

But the fighting finally ceased, and the Stanley women could put the upheaval of Ferdinando's death behind them.

Barry Coward looks at this suit from the perspective of a legal historian. He offers significant insights into the conditions of early modern land laws and inheritance trends. But the battle between the Stanley women and the sixth earl of Derby also reveals some important perspectives as to how women waged law and the consequences these women faced for doing so. The female heirs-general prevailed over the collateral male heir as the traditional application of common law seemed to promise would happen. The Stanley women may have triumphed over the collateral male heir, but common law practices also had ways of keeping land-owning women in check so as to protect the patriarchal foundation of early modern society. Common law classified a woman as either a *feme sole* or a *feme covert*. As a *feme sole*, a woman held virtually the same legal rights as a man, although the law prohibited a woman from holding public office. Once a woman married and assumed the *feme covert* classification, her husband held all legal rights over her. As a *feme covert*, a wife typically could not control any landed property. If her husband died, the *feme covert* again assumed the privileges of the *feme sole*. These categories essentially delineated all legal options available to early modern women.⁴⁰ To an extent, control over their inheritances remained out of the Stanley women's reach even after defeating William because by 1607 the Stanley women were *feme coverts*. Legally Thomas Egerton, Grey Brydges, John Egerton, and Henry Hastings controlled the

⁴⁰ Greenberg, xix-xxvi. This introduction provides a thorough overview of women under common law.

inherited lands. This, however, does not mean that common law patriarchy had completely conquered Alice, Anne, Frances, and Elizabeth.

There is an even more famous lawsuit involving a woman fighting for her inheritance in early modern England. Lady Anne Clifford waged perhaps the most famous of these legal battles.⁴¹ Lady Anne's mother, the countess of Cumberland, filed a suit in 1605 on behalf of her minor daughter when the earl of Cumberland left the majority of his estates to his brother. The Clifford women disputed Cumberland's will while the Stanley women defended Ferdinando's will. Despite this difference, some interesting parallels can be drawn. The Stanley women and Lady Anne shared a blood relation. Ferdinando Stanley and Lady Anne had the same grandfather: Henry Clifford, earl of Cumberland. Ferdinando's mother, Margaret, and Anne's father, George, were half-siblings, but while Margaret descended from Tudor blood, George did not. Both Lady Anne and the Stanley women came from aristocratic families that invested in educating their daughters and promoted female literacy. Lady Anne and the dowager countess of Derby were both independent and rather outspoken women, although Alice was thirty-one years Lady Anne's senior. Although Alice's reputation frequently

⁴¹ For more on Lady Anne Clifford's legal problems see: Katherine Acheson, ed., "Introduction" in *The Diary of Anne Clifford 1616-1619: A Critical Edition* (New York: Garland, 1995), 1-14; Mary Chan and Nancy Wright, 162-182; J.W. Clay, "The Clifford Family," *The Yorkshire Archaeological Journal* 18 (1905): 354-411; Barry Coward, "Disputed Inheritances: Some Difficulties of the Nobility in the Late Sixteenth and Early Seventeenth Centuries," *Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research* 44 (1971): 194-215; Barbara English, *The Great Landowners of East Yorkshire 1530-1910* (New York: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1990); Mary Ellen Lamb, "The Agency of the Split Subject: Lady Anne Clifford and the Uses of Reading," *English Literary Renaissance* 22 (1992): 346-368; Barbara Keifer Lewalski, *Writing Women in Jacobean England* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993); and Richard T. Spence, "Clifford, Anne, countess of Pembroke, Dorset and Montgomery (1590-1676)," in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, ed. H.C.G. Matthew and Brian Harrison (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), [http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/5641, accessed June 6, 2008].

overshadows her daughters, each of the Stanley women exercised considerable autonomy.

The countess of Cumberland served as her daughter's principal advocate, just as Alice did for her daughters, but the martial experiences of the Stanley women and Lady Anne in relation to their lawsuits is perhaps the most interesting point of comparison. Both of Lady Anne's marriages, first to Richard Sackville, earl of Dorset, and then to Philip Herbert, earl of Montgomery and Pembroke, provided her with significant wealth and distinct titles. Unfortunately, both marriages were also plagued by infidelities and bitter fighting. Both of her husbands worked to undermine her efforts to secure her inheritances, and as a result, her legal pursuits dragged on for nearly half her life. After analyzing Lady's Anne's extensive writings, Mary Chan and Nancy Wright argue that "the fact that she saw her life in terms of documents, evidence, and records, was perhaps, a consequence of her thirty-eight year legal struggle to claim her right of succession."⁴² It would be wrong to reduce Lady Anne's entire life to that of legal victim, but it is important to recognize the enormous impact that these lawsuits had on her. The Stanley women were able to reach a resolution much faster than Lady Anne. Eileen Spring argues that the difference in the experience between the Stanley women and Lady Anne resulted from a "decline in female inheritance" that occurred throughout the course of the seventeenth century.⁴³ This decline may in part be due to inconsistent interpretations of the land law or the changing nature of the common law preference for female heirs. It is

⁴² Chan and Wright, 177.

⁴³ Spring, 107.

also in part due to the different types of marriages these women had. The Stanley women and Lady Anne were active agents in their legal disputes, but their subsequent marriages played an essential part in the outcome of these lawsuits. Lady Anne fought a two-front war, while the Stanley women selected husbands who they knew would help advance their cause in their interest.

The marital situation for Anne Stanley is somewhat difficult to discern because there is some confusion in the historical record as to when she actually married Chandos. On 20 March 1603 John Chamberlain wrote to Dudley Carleton that the two had secretly wed but 28 February 1608 is sometimes given as their wedding date.⁴⁴ The introduction of the 1607 Act of Parliament, however, lists Grey Brydges as the husband of Lady Anne.⁴⁵ If Anne and Chandos were not married until 1608, then the 1607 Act settled the Stanley inheritance while *feme sole* laws still applied to Anne. This would have given Anne outright control over her property. Her marriage agreement with Chandos could then specify that he "had rights in only a portion of her estate (in her possession at the time of her marriage)."⁴⁶ Anne could then still retain some control over her inheritance because she could continue to hold lands that she owned outright prior to the marriage. If, however, they were married at the time of the 1607 settlement, then Chandos gained full control over the Stanley inheritance under the regulations of *feme covert*. Their

⁴⁴ *The Letters of John Chamberlain*, vol 1, ed. N.E. McClure (Philadelphia: The American Philosophical Society, 1938), 190; Mary Ann O'Donnell, "Brydges, Anne, Lady Chandos [*other married name* Anne Touchet, countess of Castlehaven] (1580-1647)," in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, ed. H.C.G. Matthew and Brian Harrison (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), [http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/65144, accessed November 6, 2006].

⁴⁵ Act of Parliament, 1607, E(B) 53, NRO.

⁴⁶ Greenberg, xxviii.

marriage settlement has not survived, but the fact that he is named as Anne's husband in the introduction of the Act seems to confirm that Anne was a *feme covert* at the time of the settlement. This also suggests that the 28 February 1608 wedding date is inaccurate.

Things were slightly different for Elizabeth. Under the original terms of Ferdinando's will, she only stood to inherit anything if her mother and two older sisters died and left no legal heirs. This initially put any Stanley inheritance far out of her reach. In 1594, Elizabeth's future seemed typical for a youngest child living in a society that practiced primogeniture. A solid marriage was her only real option. Her family's wealth and her mother's persistence still made her a desirable bride, and her social stock increased dramatically once the Chancery determined that Ferdinando had actually meant to make his daughters coheiresses. The debt-strapped Hastings family had found a prized bride for their heir. She and Henry Hastings married on 15 January 1601, and she brought with her a dowry of £4000. On 29 June 1603, the couple and their families made an addendum to their marriage settlement which added land to Elizabeth's jointure.⁴⁷ Her mother must have wanted to avoid another fight over a dower. Alice wanted to ensure that her daughter's future would be secured by jointure instead. The common law practice of coverture meant that Hastings legally controlled all of his wife's property. The 1603 addendum shows that as the Stanley estates kept rolling in (or the cash from those estates); the Stanley women took important steps to ensure that their husbands would not dispose of their hard-won inheritances. While typically the law prevented husbands from disposing of dower properties, the ordeal the Stanley women had been

⁴⁷ Marriage Settlement for ESH and HH, 1603, HA PP 14/3, HEH.

through surely inspired them to proceed in their future marriages with caution. Common law favored the heirs-general, but with the rules of *feme covert*, common law also favored their husbands. Elizabeth and her mother wanted to have their cake and eat it too; putting the property into a jointure was the only way to do this. Amy Erickson explains that most aristocratic women preferred a jointure to a dower because a dower would only give a wife one third of the husband's property upon his death and there were limitations to the property that could be granted in a dower. (Alice had obviously learned this lesson the hard way.) A jointure allowed a husband to use money a wife brought into a marriage to purchase land. These lands could then be set aside for a wife to control if her husband predeceased her. Jointures also had the benefit of including leasehold lands, of which Alice and Egerton had plenty after the suit with William.⁴⁸

Frances's social stock, like her younger sister's, also increased significantly when the Chancery determined her to be a coheirress. The marriage between Frances and her stepbrother, John, also consolidated their parents' interests while ensuring their own future financial stability. Beginning in 1600, Thomas Egerton started purchasing large quantities of land. Some of this went into Alice's jointure. If she died before Thomas, he would gain control of everything, and it would then pass to his son. Frances and her children would obviously benefit from this inheritance. If Thomas predeceased Alice, the dowager countess would get her jointure and then bequeath it to her daughters; therefore, John again stood to inherit property on his father's death. Either way, marrying her stepbrother ensured significant land holdings for Frances.

⁴⁸ Erickson, 25.

Alice's ultimate decision to remarry must not have been an easy one. As a widow, she regained the legal privileges of *feme sole* although (as discussed in Chapter 2), the precarious nature of widowhood may have overshadowed the privileges of *feme sole*. For six years, she used the rights of *feme sole* to wage law on her brother-in-law. By 1600, she was ready to try something else to finally bring an end to the suit and secure her success. As previously discussed, there is no doubt that this Stanley-Egerton union had a large influence in the outcome of the lawsuit with William. It is important to remember, however, that Alice remained actively involved in her daughters' lives and their legal efforts even after this marriage. In a gross oversimplification of the lawsuit, Bernard Falk explained that Ferdinando's death, "gave rise to numerous complications, but, guided by Egerton, the Countess and her three daughters could congratulate themselves on having their claims on the 6th Earl almost entirely met." Falk sprinkled his interpretation with a bit of poetic license when he told that "in the true spirit of romance the Lord Keeper claimed as his reward the hand of the rich and attractive Countess, who, he claimed would not only grace his establishment and watch over his interests, but ally him with the old aristocracy."⁴⁹ Fortunately decades of feminist revisionism have reconfigured this "damsel in distress" model to shed some more useful insight onto the lives of the Stanley women and the Egerton men. Alice had learned considerable lessons since her first marriage. Just as she worked to secure jointures for her daughters, she saw to it that her second marriage would include the contract as well. Thomas Egerton made a jointure for

⁴⁹ Bernard Falk, *The Bridgewater Millions: A Candid Family History* (Hutchinson & Co: London, 1942), 31.

his wife, and his son John endorsed it.⁵⁰ She may not have been in a position to request a jointure with her first marriage, but she certainly held that right at the time of her second marriage. Again we see considerable differences between Alice's first marriage and her second, broadening the discourses associated with the role of *wife*.

Not only was Alice's legal experience different with her second marriage, but the whole union seemed to be different. Ferdinando reflected fondly on his beloved wife in his will. Letters that Alice wrote while mourning him were filled with emotions of grief and loss.⁵¹ All of these feelings are missing from sources produced at Egerton's death. It is clear that the marriage between Egerton and the dowager countess did not have a fairy tale life together. Scholars have used considerable poetic license when writing about their marriage. When talking about the fondness Egerton felt for his stepdaughter/daughter-in-law, Falk wrote, "Often, when gazing on France's sweet features, he must have asked himself how so acrid a shrew as the mother could have begotten such a miracle of tenderness and feminine virtue."⁵² Louis Knafla has commented that "the rate of her spending brought their relationship to one of strife and conflict."⁵³ The sentiment that Falk and Knafla picked up on comes from several memorandums Egerton wrote on 25 August 1610. He then added comments to each of them a year later, on 11 July 1611. By this time, Egerton had assumed the title Lord

⁵⁰ "A short abstract of the wrytinges & assurances" by Elles regarding AE's jointure, [1599<>1617], EL 226, HEH.

⁵¹ See Chapter 2.

⁵² Falk, 33.

⁵³ Louis Knafla, *Law and Politics in Jacobean England: The Tracts of Lord Chancellor Ellesmere* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), 59.

Chancellor Ellesmere and he had considerable assets and land holdings to secure.⁵⁴ No happy marriage could possibly produce a document that contained such animosity.

Always the detail orientated lawyer, the Lord Chancellor started with a piece he called "Some Notes and Remembrances for preserving and continuing of quietness between my wife and my son, after my death." The memo began amiably: "There is no worldly thing, that I more desire, then after my death, there may be no just cause or occasion of offense or unkindness between my son whom I have made the executor of my last will and testament, and the countess of Derby my loving wife." He then told of two very large promises that he had made to the dowager countess upon the marriage: 1. " That I was contented she should despose at her pleasure, all that I might be interested in by her mariage, So as neither I, nor any by me, might any way [proreindice] or hinder any person or persons to whome she should assigne or appoynt the same after her decease," and 2. "I dyd assigne & appoynt for her Joynture, a farre greater quantite & portion of Landes, then my weake estate could beare, that I dyd further promise, That I woulde alwayse indeavour to adde such increase to that which I appointed for her, as God shoulde inhable me."⁵⁵ The dowager countess of Derby did not take any chances in her second marriage, and she established ground rules to protect her landed interests. Lord Ellesmere wrote about these promises as if they were conditions that he must meet if he wanted to reap the benefits of marrying dowager countess.

⁵⁴ See Chapter 1.

⁵⁵ "Some Notes and Remembrances for Preserving & Continuyinge of Quietnes Between my Wyffe and my Sonne, After my Death" by Elles, 25 August 1610, EL 214, HEH.

Being a man of his word, Ellesmere then outlined specific properties that belonged to her jointure and reminded her of their precise agreements. He added:

For where amongst other thinge the landes which I purchased of Edward Talbott esq were assigned unto her, I have since increased the value therof above xxx£ yerely by puchasinge the dower of Mr Henry Talkbotts wyffe, and dedes Rents charge & annuities, Whereas those lands were charged, besides many other Improvements of good value. I have also to my great charge & trouble Recovered [dedes] parte of the Late Erle of Derbys Landes in Shropshyre, which were deteyned by Sir Edward Kynaston, Arthur Maynwaringe & others, and have made [sundry] valuable Improvements there./

Ellesmere then charged that "I do earnestly and heartily entreat and desire her to content herself therewith, and to be loving and kind to my son, and his wife, and their poor infants and little babies, to whom she is grandmother" (in case she needed to be reminded who her daughter and grandchildren were.) He got a bit nastier at the end:

But if my wife shall be instead by harkening to sycophants and shamed by sinister and lewd counsel; to fall into an unquiet willful and contentious cause, then I would have my son to pass and consider the declaration and directions here enclosed, and to use the same as the necessity of his occasion shall infer him, but otherwise to conceal and suppress it with silence, and manner to break or open the seal of it.⁵⁶

Fortunately, the voyeuristic tendencies of historians can be satiated because the enclosed letter survived. Ellesmere entitled the document, "An unpleasant declaration of things passed, between the Countess of Derby and me since our marriage and some directions for my son, to be observed between the said Countess and him, after my decease if he be [inforced] thereunto, as I fear he is like to be." In the memo, he expressed remorse for the excessive lifestyles of the Stanley women and he wrote, "Immediately after our marriage, my family and household charge was much increased by reason of the train which the countess brought with her: namely for three daughters,

⁵⁶ "Some Notes and Remembrances for Preserving & Continuyinge of Quietnes Between my Wyffe and my Sonne, After my Death" by Elles, 25 August 1610, EL 214, HEH.

and her and their attendants servants and followers (a wasteful company.)" He considered the years he spent married to Alice as "a punishment inflicted upon me by almighty God." Alice's fierce fight with William Stanley must have left a lasting impression on Ellesmere as he conveyed grim concern for his son's future with the lines, "I cannot but know that the end of my life will be the beginning of troubles to my son." He predicted Alice's course of action: "that this lady will handle as violent and strainable a course as can be devised against him and all that are descended from me, which if she do, then my son shall be thereby constrained to use all lawful means he can, to withstand her malice."⁵⁷ Ellesmere used the remainder of the document to speculate as to what precise actions of contestation Alice would take, which specific properties she would go after, and what her justifications of entitlement would be. This was his last ditch effort to take the wind from Alice's sails and to provide his son with a surplus of personal fodder to use against the dowager countess if the situation arose. Poor Ellesmere had to wait another seven years before the sweet release of death. To no one's surprise, Alice contested his will.

Ellesemere wrote the final version of his Last Will and Testament on 16 August 1615, although he did not die until March 1617. He made John his sole executor, as he claimed he would. He made provisions for his surviving daughters from his first marriage as well as their children. He also bequeathed:

[to his] loving wife Alice countess of Derby, all the jewels plate goods and chattels, whereof she was possessed at the time of our marriage, and all such jewels as I have given unto her, since our marriage. And all other goods and chattels whatsoever, wherefore wherein I am, of

⁵⁷ "An unpleasant declaration of things passed, between the Countesse of Derby, & me," written by Elles, EL 213, HEH.

have been, or might or ought to be possessed or interested by reason of the intermarriage between us.⁵⁸

Ellesmere's will also stipulated that if Alice should contest any aspect of her inheritance and jointure then all his "gifts and legacy unto her shall be utterly void and of none effect, and that then and thereupon she shall be utterly excluded to have or take any benefit or advantage at all."⁵⁹ He then reminded his wife and son that they were to proceed in life cordially and quietly. Obviously, his wife had no regard for his wishes during his life so it followed that she would ignore them after his death. She filed a probate petition against the confirmation of Ellesmere's will. On 7 February 1618, the court passed a "Special Probate of the Will of Sir Thomas Egerton" in favor of John, who had just been granted the title of earl of Bridgewater. The court ruled that Ellesmere was "sound in mind and in whole perfect memory" when he wrote his will.⁶⁰ The challenge Alice made against the will did not, however, void her jointure. She once again assumed the status of *feme sole* as a very wealthy widow.

When it came to matters of inheritance and widowhood, it seems that no one could really control the dowager countess of Derby. She spent thirteen years defending her first husband's will and a year contesting the will of her second husband. She alienated herself from the Stanleys and came dangerously close to doing the same with Bridgewater. In 1618, the marriage of Frances and John proved to be even more valuable. Bridgewater continued to be an advocate for Alice even after her petition

⁵⁸ Will of Thomas Egerton, Baron Ellesmere, 16 August 1615, EL 720, HEH.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ "Special Probate of the Will of Sir Thomas Egerton, Lord Chancellor, granted to John Earl of Bridgewater," 7 February 1617, EL 726, HEH.

against him failed. This was probably only due to their shared affection for Frances.

Alice spent the last two decades of her life as a widow. She was fifty-eight when Ellesmere died. She would not bear any more children. Her two lucrative marriages left her vast wealth combined with prominent titles. She had no need to marry for a third time.

Unfortunately, the prosperity of her jointure also came with some baggage in the form of Sir Edward Kynaston, a local Shropshire knight. The Kynastons, a minor land-owning family, lived at Oteley in Shropshire.⁶¹ Ellesmere had purchased some lands in the county from William Stanley in 1600. It was also from these lands that he took the name Lord Ellesmere. He mentioned these lands in his 1610 memorandum to his son and wife. In it he wrote, "I have also to my great charge and trouble recovered deeds parts of the late earl of Derby's lands in Shropshire, which were detained by Sir Edward Kynaston...All of which my mind is [Alice] shall enjoy and have benefit of..."⁶² Kynaston refused to acknowledge the boundaries between his lands and those belonging to the Egertons. A continuous clash between this local knight and the dowager countess began. In September 1616, Kynaston and one of his men trespassed onto the land of one of Ellesmere's tenants. In doing so, they were in "clear breech of the said order."⁶³ They did this again in March 1617, just days after Ellesmere's death, which made it Alice's

⁶¹ J. Milling, "Kynaston, Edward (*bap.* 1643, d.1712?)," in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, ed. H.C.G. Matthew and Brian Harrison (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), [http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/15821, accessed March 3, 2009].

⁶² "Some Notes and Remembrances for Preserving & Continuyinge of Quietnes Between my Wyffe and my Sonne, After my Death" by Elles, 25 August 1610, EL 214, HEH.

⁶³ "Copy of the Lady of Derby's Bill" (concerning suit with Sir Edward Kynaston), EL 6649, HEH.

problem. She claimed that Kynaston and his men "carry away the wood growing and being upon the said parcel of land called Park Humfrey and with daily and frequent entries disturbed [Alice] and her tenants in the occupation thereof so as the same cannot be quietly enjoyed by her or them."⁶⁴

Not surprisingly, Kynaston offered a different interpretation of the events. He did acknowledge that he and his men visited the tenants' homes in both September and March, but he gave situation a different spin. Kynaston claimed that in 1596 or 1597 he had been granted control of those lands, so that the tenants residing on the property were his. He also claimed that he had permission to enter the property. As for the quarrel over Humfrey Park, Kynaston explained that he, "came upon the part of the said tenement and then and there accepted a surrender of his estate and interests from the said [tenant] and then presently after departed without any disturbance of the said countess or any of her tenements." Humfrey Park sparked controversy in the disagreement because Kynaston contended that "Humfrey Kynaston esq [Sir Edward Kynaston's] great grandfather was of the same in his life time seized in demean as of fee as [Kynaston] heard credibly reported and believed to be true." He told the court that he had been "much wronged thus to be molested and troubled without just cause" and he requested that the court dismiss the suit.⁶⁵

A year later Kynaston and the dowager countess were at it again. The squabbles got more absurd. The countess said her tenants had complained to her that deer from

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ "Answer of Sir Edward Kynaston, Edward Kynaston and John Ball, three of the defendants, to the bill of Alice, dowager Countess of Derby, plaintiff, concerning Park Humphrey in Northwood," 8 July 1617, EL 6650, HEH.

Kynaston's hunting park had been wandering onto her land and eating her tenants' crops. The tenants believed the total value lost to be over £200. The countess's local officer, Thomas Charleton, issued a statement upon her orders forbidding Kynaston from hunting on her lands. Alice also told her tenants to kill any Kynaston deer they found on her property. In 1618 Morgan Leigh, one of the countess's tenants, used greyhounds to kill one of Kynaston's deer that he found near his home. Kynaston threatened to fine Leigh £30, not for killing the deer, but for keeping greyhounds, which he claimed violated a law passed by James I. Leigh claimed that the dowager countess had given him permission to keep greyhounds. He retaliated by threatening to tell that John Charlton, one of Kynaston's clerks, had killed a partridge on the countess's lands. Kynaston said that he would forgive and forget if Leigh would just "confess that he had killed Sir Edward's deer and done him wrong." Apparently Leigh apologized since Kynaston dropped the whole thing.⁶⁶

The peace was short-lived. In that same year another of Alice's tenants, Robert Lowe, killed a deer that Kynaston and his hunting party had chased onto the countess's land. Lowe hid the deer in his house. Kynaston and thirty men ascended on Lowe's home demanding that he hand over the deer. Lowe denied killing the deer and the angry party left. Later, Kynaston sent two men to Lowe's house to look for the deer. The two men ransacked Lowe's barn. Eventually Lowe brought the deer to Kynaston but claimed that he had nothing to do with slaying the deer.⁶⁷ The countess was livid over a local

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Briefs concerning the suit between AE and Kynaston, AH 937 and AH 938, Hertfordshire Archives and Local Studies

knight's audacity to accost her tenants. Past situations reveal how good the dowager countess was at holding a grudge. Once crossed, Alice could be quite vengeful and had no reservations about interfering in others' affairs.

On 12 November 1618 Alice drafted a petition to Sir Francis Bacon, the Lord Chancellor, against Kynaston's appointment to the Commission of the Peace. Her sex prevented her from holding public office herself, but it also empowered her to exercise her influential kinship network in order to do her bidding. Alice must have counted on her letter carrying some weight with Bacon, given that she had been married to the previous Lord Chancellor and the lands in Shropshire had at one point belonged to both of her husbands. Always the honey-tongued devil, Alice did not write with malice but rather expressed concern for the welfare of her tenants in Salop. She explained to Bacon that her desire to keep Kynaston out of powerful offices did not come from a "present disadvantage to her, but for the future good and freedom of others."⁶⁸ The antics of this local knight agitated the dowager countess of Derby. If she would not tolerate him harassing her tenants, she would certainly do anything in her power to prevent his advancement.

Unfortunately, the trail of sources ends here, without revealing the outcome of the countess's plea. But this was not the last time that the countess of Derby and Sir Kynaston crossed paths. On 6 December 1627, Bridgewater, Frances, and Alice drew up an indenture between Sir Kynaston, Mary, his wife, Richard Mytton, Edward Mytton,

⁶⁸ "Petition (draft.) Alice, Dowager Countess of Derby, to Sir Francis Bacon, Lord Chancellor against Sir Edward Kynaston of Oatly Salop being put in the Commission of the Peace," 12 November 1618, AH 940, Hertfordshire Archives and Local Studies.

Thomas Stanley, and John Charleton regarding Thechill Moor and Hordley Moor in Ellesmere and Hordley. The contract divided the cost of maintaining ditches that each party had constructed in Shropshire, and also came to a precise agreement as to the property boundary the ditches would demark.⁶⁹ Despite their numerous squabbles, Alice and Kynaston found ways to at least conduct business with each other, even if that business was to enforce borders along their respective lands.

The dowager countess of Derby had experience with legal pursuits outside the scope of land law and bickering with a local knight. As a landowning widow, the status of *feme sole* gave her the right to hold wardships. She first encountered the Court of Wards and Liveries in her effort to regain legal guardianship of her daughters after Ferdinando's death. Because her daughters were minors when their father died, they became wards of the crown. Upon Ferdinando's death, Alice made her first priority to regain legal guardianship of her daughters. Anne Stanley was twelve when her father died, Frances was ten, and Elizabeth was only six. (The countess of Cumberland did the same thing for her daughter, Lady Anne Clifford, upon the death of her husband.) On 14 January 1598, Alice finally received the "Surrender from the Queen...of the wardships of Ladies Frances and Elizabeth Stanley."⁷⁰ Anne had already come of age. Once Alice regained the wardship of her daughters, she could freely negotiate their marriage settlements. This privilege may be one important reason as to why she waited so long to

⁶⁹ Draft of Indenture between FE, JE, and AE, and Edward Kynaston, 6 December 1627, EL 6652, HEH.

⁷⁰ Surrender from the Queen of the wardships of ESH and FE to AE, 14 January 1698, EL 776, HEH. For a discussion of Elizabethan wardship, see also: Joel Hurstfield, *The Queen's Ward: Wardship and Marriage under Elizabeth I* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1958).

remarry. She wanted to regain outright custody of her children before the limited range of *feme covert* restricted her control over her daughter's potential marriages.

The timing of Alice's acquisition of her minor daughters's wardships also coincided with the death of her mother-in-law, Margaret Stanley. When Margaret died on 29 September 1596, she bequeathed some of her lands in Lincoln to her granddaughters. Initially, these lands became the crown's property. On 15 March 1598 Alice received a Grant of Annuity from the Queen, which the Court of Wards and Liveries assigned. The grant covered the properties that Margaret Stanley left to her granddaughters, and also provided Alice with "the custody and marriage" of Frances and Elizabeth.⁷¹ Alice then continued to wage her legal battles against her brother-in-law. She could also set about securing beneficial marriages for her daughters.

Twenty four years later, at the age of sixty three, Alice submitted another petition to the Court of Wards and Liveries. This time she sought the wardship of her grandson, George Brydges, Lord Chandos. Grey Brydges died on 10 August 1621, just a day after his son's first birthday. On 11 May 1622, King James granted the dowager countess of Derby the wardship of her two-year-old grandson. No surviving record provides insight as to why Alice and Anne determined this course of action. But it proved to be in the young Lord Chandos's best interests, given the disastrous second marriage which his mother soon entered into. George Brydges and his younger brother William spent most of their formative years living with their grandmother at Harefield House. The dowager countess named George, and then William, as her heirs in her 1637 will. She also

⁷¹ Grant from Queen Elizabeth to AE for an annuity assigned by the Court of Wards and Liveries, 15 March 1597, EL 6748/20, HEH.

bequeathed one silver cup valued at £20 to the Master of Wards and Liveries and a silver cup valued at £10 to the Attorney of Wards and Liveries.⁷² Throughout her long life, the grants she secured in Court of Wards and Liveries helped her to truly exercise her authority as a mother and grandmother.

The dowager countess's wardships, also extended beyond the scope of her family. Her control over land also entitled her to certain wardship privileges. This type of wardship was "the profitable right a lord had to administer the land of a tenant who died leaving an heir who was a minor."⁷³ These wardships could also be very lucrative, because they entitled the holder to any profits from the ward's marriage settlement. Just as a monarch had the right to approve marriages among the aristocracy, the holder of a wardship exercised the same privilege over those who inhabited their land as tenants or in knight's service. At the time of her death, the countess of Derby held the wardship of John Nashe, a Harefield minor. In her will, Alice bequeathed to Lord Chandos, "all the benefit and profit which I ought to have of the value of the marriage or profit of the lands of John Nashe of Harefield who being my ward by reason of his father's tenure of some lands of me by knights service did marry himself under age without my consent."⁷⁴ It would be up to Lord Chandos to work out the details of collecting the profits of the wardship which he inherited.

The dowager countess of Derby was not the only Stanley woman to expertly navigate the pitfalls and perils of early modern law. The countess of Huntingdon also

⁷² The Last Will and Testament of Alice Egerton, Prob\11\174, TNA.

⁷³ Spring, 40.

⁷⁴ Last Will and Testament of Alice Egerton, Prob\11\174, TNA.

demonstrated a keen knack for waging law against those who she deemed had wronged her own family. The best case study of this is the Hastings suit against the Davies family, Lady Eleanor Davies in particular. The Hastings family still amassed considerable debts after the marriage between Elizabeth and Henry Hastings. On 7 August 1623, the countess and earl of Huntingdon married their son and heir, Ferdinando, to the ten-year-old daughter of Sir John Davies and Lady Eleanor. Davies's career somewhat mirrored that of Lord Ellesmere's. He too was born to humble roots but found prosperity in the law. His legal ease helped him rise rapidly through the ranks and accumulate significant personal wealth. Lucy Davies brought with her a dowry of £6500, although the Hastings family would not see that money for a long time.⁷⁵ All parties anticipated the best. Just two months after the nuptials, the countess of Huntingdon sent a letter to Sir John Davies expressing, "I assure you my son is proud of my sweet Daughter's lines, I pray God bless them both, as to my own milieu I wish to her all happiness."⁷⁶ Just like her mother, the countess of Huntingdon was poised and amiable as long as things went her way. Esther Cope has also observed the similarity between the natures of Alice and Elizabeth. She writes that Elizabeth "was a woman who would express her opinions and expected to be heard. She, like her mother,... was protective of her family and would make the most of the legal claim upon Lucy that the marriage gave them."⁷⁷

⁷⁵ Marriage Settlement between Ferdinando Hastings and Lucy Davies, HA AF 8/18, HEH.

⁷⁶ ESH to Sir John Davies, 28 October 1623, HA Corr 4828, HEH.

⁷⁷ Esther Cope, *Handmaid of the Holy Spirit: Dame Eleanor Davis, Never Soe Mad a Ladie* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1992), 27.

The countess of Huntingdon's amiable disposition ended with the death of Sir John Davies in 1627, although she remained fond of her daughter-in-law. True to her nature, the countess of Derby weighed in and reminded her daughter that Ferdinando needed to consummate the union so there could be no doubt as to its legality.⁷⁸ But Alice did not need to worry too much about her Hastings family; Elizabeth had learned a lot from her family's dealings with the law. The earl and countess of Huntingdon quickly took action to secure Lucy's unpaid marriage portion, and the estate of Englefield, for their son. The earl of Huntingdon hated to leave his estates in Leicester, but the countess made the trip to London for Davies's funeral. From her mother's house in Harefield, the countess of Huntingdon wrote to her husband, "I know you will expect a large account of my son's business, but I have had to do with such an irresolute woman that it is impossible to draw certain conclusion from her fantastical a creature as my Sister Davies." The rest of the letter recounts the extravagant cost of Davies's funeral and Lady Eleanor's desire to maintain possession of Englefield. The countess also expressed some frustration over Lucy's desire that her mother should hold the estate instead of her husband.⁷⁹ If we did not know better, we might think that dowager countess of Derby wrote the letter.

Unlike the inheritance dispute between the Stanley women and the earl of Derby, the Hastings received their resolution relatively quickly. On 28 October 1629, David Evans, a steward for the earl of Bridgewater, recounted in his logbook that he went to the

⁷⁸ HH to [Roby], [1627], HA Corr. 10543, HEH.

⁷⁹ ESH to HH, [1627], HA Corr 4840, HEH.

"King's Bench to hear my Lord Hastings cause again my Lady Douglas which was given in charge to the jury but no verdict today: the next day the verdict went for my Lord Hastings."⁸⁰ This entry also reminds us of the interconnected nature of the Stanley women; the earl of Bridgewater sent his steward to attend the session a court session for his nephew. The Hastings family received the settlement and Ferdinando and Lucy moved into Englefield. This swift resolution also brought nearly a decade of disdain between the Stanley women and Lady Eleanor. The situation worsened two years later when a court found Lady Eleanor's brother, the earl of Castlehaven, guilty of sodomy and orchestrating the rape of his wife, Anne Stanley.

The Stanley women at times found marriage to be a useful and profitable institution. Marrying landed men with promising careers meant that the Stanley women reaped the benefits of great estates and enhanced their own powerful social leverage. But the Stanley women also remind us that it was essential for early modern aristocratic women to marry *the right men*; the marriages of Lady Anne Clifford yielded far different results. All the husbands of the Stanley women, with the obvious exception of the earl of Castlehaven, assisted them in their early legal endeavors, acted as much needed advocates, and secured their Stanley lands in jointures for them. The countess of Derby also experienced the benefits of profitable marriages in widowhood as she claimed wardships and sustained suits against Sir Edward Kynaston. Under common law, it

⁸⁰ David Evans' Journal (Steward of Lord Bridgewater), 1629-1632, EL 6477, HEH. The lawsuit between the Hastings family and Lady Eleanor is also accounted in greater detail in Esther Cope, 43-46.

would have been far more difficult, if not impossible, for Alice to acquire those lands on her own.

While the Stanley women relied on lucrative marriages to help sustain them during their legal pursuits, sometimes these marriages came with a price. Alice's jointure from her second marriage left her even more wealth, but unhappiness and contempt plagued this almost seventeen year union. Her contestation of Ellesemere's will could have cost her the service Bridgewater offered her. David Evans's journal mentions twice doing some work on Lady Derby's behalf.⁸¹ Although the countess of Derby certainly preferred to wield her own sword at the law, the alliance she shared with Bridgewater only strengthened her position. The land she controlled from her jointure also brought obnoxious interactions with Sir Kynaston. The earl and countess of Huntingdon believed that a marriage for their son would solve their financial problems, but it also brought another lawsuit and a nightmare of in-law relations. Lawsuits among the early modern aristocracy could be long and occurred on a fairly regular basis. Prevailing in them could be enormously important in increasing social and financial stock for both the individual and their family. The Stanley women were remarkably successful at waging law in a very convoluted and tumultuous period. Their constant legal entanglements make them part of the norm, but their abilities to wage law so effectively inspires us to take a closer look at the realities of women and early modern English law.

Despite the arduous legal terrain, the Stanley women found ways to manage and even prosper. Marriage was an essential component in the ways that the Stanley women

⁸¹ Ibid.

waged law, but they used the institution of marriage in elastic and dynamic ways. This again calls into questions the simple use of the category *wife*. The Stanley women worked as a team, using both the privileges and limitations of marriage to maximize their inheritances. The Stanley women willingly became *feme covert*s in order to prevail in their suit against William Stanley. The Stanley women were also vocal in their legal pursuits. They were active leaders in their legal battles and did not sit ideally by and let their husbands fight on their behalf. They also did not expect the law to protect them, their families, or their interests. They approached their legal ventures with assertive control. The Stanley women and their legal pursuits demonstrate a divide between the law and the reality of the law as women experienced it. All of these experiences would come to pale in comparison to the greatest legal battle the Stanley women would face in their lifetimes: the trials and executions of the earl of Castlehaven and two of his servants.

Chapter 7

“Besmear’d With a Sensual Life:” The Stanley Women and the Castlehaven Scandal

The Castlehaven scandal was notoriously famous in its time, and it is certainly well known today to scholars of English history. Its sensational events, scandal, intrigue, and violence make it a most compelling story.¹ The ramifications of these events, however, prove to be much more complicated than the average soap opera. They provide considerable insight into issues of gender, class, reputation, social norms, sodomy, and rape in the early modern period. This trial and its aftermath were also pivotal moments in the lives of the Stanley women. As Anne's second marriage, reputation, and family fell apart, she did not face this horror alone. Her mother was a major force in both the trial and the King's subsequent actions in the months following the trial. Several scholars have written about the trial and its legal ramifications, and on the issue of sodomy in the early modern period. In these accounts, the earl of Castlehaven plays the antagonist. This chapter will shift the focus away from the earl and make the countess of Castlehaven the central figure. Evaluating the Castlehaven affair from the countess's perspective is important because her fate was also sealed by this trial, although in a different way than her husband's and for far less obvious reasons. It also reveals the steps that she and her mother took when it became obvious that Anne's choice in a second husband did meet the acceptable expectations of seventeenth century aristocratic norms. The sensational aspect of this case makes it easy to be seen as an anomaly. English peers viewed Castlehaven as

¹ See Introduction for timeline and description of the initial accusations, trials, and executions.

an outsider, whereas his wife belonged to some of the most powerful families in England. There was not another known trial that involved this same situation. Despite these unique qualities, connections to larger relevant narratives and discourses of rape, gender, and class in this period can be seen when the countess's experience becomes the focal point.

This perspective also allows us to better understand the influence that the countess of Derby had over these events. While it is important to understand the Castlehaven affair from Anne's point of view, this incident provides invaluable insight into the relationship the countess of Derby had with her daughters and grandchildren. It also demonstrates the influence she had over their lives. In many ways, the Castlehaven affair serves as an ideal case-study for the complex dynamics of the Stanley women's relationships. The dowager countess of Derby never approved of her eldest daughter's choice of a second husband. Yet, when Anne's household began to fall apart, Alice did not turn a cold shoulder. She leaped into action, pulling every string to which she had access. She vigorously advocated for her daughter and grandchildren. Even after resolution came with verdicts of guilt and swift executions, the Stanley women worked to mend their family's damaged reputation.

Currently, the most extended analysis of the Castlehaven trial and its aftermath is Cynthia Herrup's, *A House in Gross Disorder: Sex, Law, and the 2nd Earl of Castlehaven*.² Herrup looks closely at the testimonies given at both the trials of the earl,

² Cynthia Herrup, *A House in Gross Disorder: Sex, Law, and the 2nd Earl of Castlehaven* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999). Herrup has also published several articles which delve into other aspects of the Castlehaven affair. See: "The Patriarch at Home: The Trial of the 2nd Earl of Castlehaven for Rape and Sodomy," *History Workshop Journal* 41 (1996): 1-18; and "To Pluck Bright Honour From the Pale-Faced

and the subsequent trials of Giles Broadway, and Lawrence Fitzpatrick. The trials were conducted in an unusual way, and Herrup is interested in uncovering the reasons why the jury permitted the highly unorthodox testimony of a wife against her husband. Her research and narrative walks the reader through a seemingly dark and unruly household, sensational trials, and swift executions. Her primary objective is not to demonstrate the guilt or innocence of Castlehaven and his servants, but to reconstruct the reasons why English aristocrats would turn against a fellow peer. She argues that while Castlehaven himself was English, he carried an Irish title and was not well known to English aristocrats until he married the reputable Widow Chandos. Herrup concludes that “Castlehaven’s obscurity was also to weaken his ability to exonerate himself in 1631 because the superficial details of his personal history touched upon two sites of ongoing tension within the English polity: religion and nationality.”³ The combination of his close Irish ties, Catholic tendencies, and seeming inability to control his sexual desires lead twenty-seven English jurors to find him guilty of the charges brought against him. Herrup explains that Castlehaven was rather ambiguous about his religious affiliations. Jurors believed that his Irish ties made him a Catholic, regardless of his claims to be loyal to the Church of England. Herrup is particularly interested in the experience and persona of the earl, the legality of how the trial functioned, and with the implications of the sodomy charges. Her goal in this micro-historical account is to create a balance between legal history and social history.

Moon': Gender and Honour in the Castlehaven Story," *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 6th series, no. 6 (1996): 137-159.

In Herrup's work, the countess of Castlehaven plays a supporting role. Herrup certainly addresses the rape because it was the charge that positively sealed the earl's fate. Nevertheless, *A House in Gross Disorder* contributes a great deal to the historiography of sodomy and legal history, while leaving much unanswered about the rape charge. One reason that this trial has remained interesting to historians is the fact that the court permitted the countess to testify against her husband and, perhaps more importantly, that she was the one who made the charge against him. Sara Mendelson and Patricia Crawford have argued that "Cases of marital rape could not be legally sustained. Since neither husband nor wife could testify against each other in court, a wife could not complain against certain actions of her husband."⁴ While this might have been seen as the norm, Laura Gowing's work on trials in the early modern England indicates that the number of female plaintiffs increased dramatically over the course of the seventeenth century. Gowing shows that while in 1570 only 30% of all plaintiffs in London courts were women, that number skyrocketed to 70% between 1630 and 1639.⁵ The Castlehaven trial was situated in a time when the number of women bringing trials to court was on the rise. This may have been one of the influencing factors that lead to the court's decision to permit not only the trial but to allow the countess of Castlehaven to testify against her husband. Gowing also explains that as the number of female plaintiffs

³ Herrup, 15.

⁴ Sara Mendelson and Patricia Crawford, *Women in Early Modern England: 1550-1720* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), 38.

⁵ Laura Gowing, *Domestic Dangers: Women, Words, and Sex in Early Modern London* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), 34.

increased, so too did the number of female witnesses rising “from 31% in 1570-80 to 48% in 1630-40.”⁶ Although Gowing analyzes trial statistics, her work does not focus specifically on rape trials. It does, however, create a space for historians to consider that the early modern criminal court system was in flux during the first half of the seventeenth century. Nothing may have prepared early modern women to negotiate rape trials, but the Stanley women were certainly not strangers to the legal system. The lawsuits against the sixth earl of Derby, along with their numerous other legal entanglements, suggest that by the 1630's, the Stanley women were proficient in waging law on men who threatened their wealth and reputations.

Early modern women engaging in legal battles over property and inheritance were common; early modern women making rape charges were not. The foundational scholarly work on rape in early modern England is Nazife Bashar's chapter “Rape in England between 1550 and 1700” in the 1983 publication, *The Sexual Dynamics of History: Men's Power, Women's Resistance*. This work is cited in nearly every historical and literary discussion of rape, and marked the first time an early modern scholar addressed the subject in order to place the crime within a historical context.⁷ Bashar tries to reconcile the legality of rape by examining statutes and written laws against the reality of what can be seen in court records. She explains that on paper, “Rape was classified as an important crime and incurred severe penalties, which were becoming even more

⁶ Ibid., 50.

⁷ There are very few historical studies of rape in early modern England. See also: Michael Adams, "Specular Rape: Reflections on Early Modern Reflections of the Present Day," *Centennial Review* 41 (1997): 217-250; Anna Clark, "Rewriting the History of Rape," *New Society*, no. 1235 (August 1986): 12-13.

severe by the end of the sixteenth century.”⁸ In the medieval period, people viewed rape as a crime against property; a woman belonged to a man as his wife, daughter, or sister.⁹ In the early modern period, people's perceptions of rape changed. According to Bashar, by the seventeenth centuries, lawyers viewed rape as a violation of a woman's personal rights and space. In the twenty five years since Bashar's article, her argument has become the predominant discourse of early modern rape.

When Bashar looked at “the law's *practical* application at the Assize courts and at Quarter Sessions, a completely different picture of rape and punishment for rape emerged.”¹⁰ She argues that early modern juries were unlikely to convict men of rape because women had a difficult time proving that they had been raped. Rape trials frequently became forums of one's word against another, or more specifically, a man's word against that of a woman. She suggests that the dominant role of patriarchal discourses in early modern society meant that jurors distrusted female sexuality and, therefore, tended to side with men. She states that, "In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, rape law in its practical operation in the courts focused on the sexual assault of women, but convictions were nonetheless rare." Women rarely made accusations that they were raped because, according to Bashar, "Whether regarded as a crime against property or a crime against the person, rape was a crime by men against women, and the

⁸ Nazife Bashar, “Rape in England between 1550 and 1700” in *The Sexual Dynamics of History*, ed. The London Feminist Group (London: The Pluto Press, 1983), 33.

⁹ For a further discussion of medieval rape laws see: John Carter, *Rape in Medieval England: An Historical and Sociological Study* (Lanham: University Press of America, 1985).

¹⁰ Bashar, 33.

law as an intrinsic and powerful part of patriarchy operated for men against women."¹¹ Her research shows a decline in rape trials as the seventeenth century progressed. Bashar does not take this decline to mean that men stopped committing the crime. She argues, rather, that women were less likely to accuse men of rape because of the slim chances of conviction. This thesis is quite different from pre-feminist scholarship that argued rape must not have been a common crime in the early modern period. Bashar's work, in contrast, indicates that the patriarchal court system of early modern England silenced female victims of the crime.

Bashar's article shaped early scholarly discussions on rape in a historical context. This problem with sources, or the lack of them, became the focus of the historiography of rape. It is not possible to understand the countess of Castlehaven's experience with rape and the trials of her husband and servants without first establishing this historiographical framework. Roy Porter articulates the need to study rape in its historical context in his 1986 article, "Rape-Does it have a Historical Meaning?" He argues that, "Feminists rightly insist that the history of rape cannot be brushed aside as just the psychopathologies of individual perverts; it must be understood in terms of gender relations and sexual politics, stigmatization and scapegoating, violence and crime as a whole."¹² This statement legitimizes the need to reevaluate the Castlehaven trials from the countess's perspective because it is important to understand the larger social and

¹¹ Ibid., 42.

¹² Roy Porter, "Rape-Does it have a Historical Meaning?" in *Rape*, eds. Sylvana Tomaselli and Roy Porter (New York: Basil Blackwell, 1986), 216.

political networks that led to the earl's conviction. A reevaluation of these events also reveals the dominant role that the countess of Derby played in these networks.

Porter also stresses the need to examine past rapes within their historical contexts in order to avoid imposing current views of the offense and to understand what the crime truly meant for the people involved. His argument rests on feminist claims that gender roles change over time and therefore require contextualization. While Bashar's early work claims this is due to a lack of sources, subsequent scholars all address our inability to grapple with the historic meaning of rape because it is a crime that we are uncomfortable with in our own time. Sylvana Tomaselli writes in the introduction to *Rape*, "The fact that we have no history of rape, a fact discussed by Roy Porter...is more revealing of modern attitudes to rape than an indication of our forefathers' (and mothers') indifference to it."¹³ The challenge for scholars has been to set aside their own discomfort with the subject of rape and look for a history to it.

In order to do this we must turn to remaining primary sources and start to read them in their own context. This in itself proves to be challenging in regards to rape testimonies, as demonstrated in Miranda Chaytor's 1995 article. She makes seventeenth century narratives of rape her focus. Chaytor is interested in the ways that women who did give depositions or testimonies about rape constructed their stories. She writes that "although my subject is rape, everything I have to say about rape-its meaning, its representation-depends on this point about source...they are selective, subjective; stories

¹³ Sylvana Tomaselli, "Introduction," *Rape*, 2.

told in the shadow of a specific event...”¹⁴ She is concerned with how to filter the stories of rape told by women, often times young and from lower social classes, to men in higher social positions. She is not interested with the motivations women had to bring forth rape accusations, but looks at *how* their stories were told. She reads through many different depositions given by women who claimed to have been raped and finds that their stories always follow a similar pattern and form. Chaytor believes that these similarities in rape narratives exist because victims were limited in their access to language and the way that they could think and perceive the crime perpetrated against them. The distribution of power in the relationships between the accuser and the accused dictated the depositions themselves.

Her understanding of a larger meaning in depositions given under heavy patriarchal scrutiny is significant, although her examination often rests on dangerously broad generalizations. She classifies narratives into two large groupings: women who were raped by strangers or acquaintances, and women who were raped by men linked to them through some sort of kinship. This distinction is only important to Chaytor because if the woman was linked to the perpetrator, then her narrative was altered because he already controlled some larger element associated with her life. She argues that this is because of the role reproduction played in these relationships.

The mere fact that Castlehaven was the countess’s husband indicates that he already had some patriarchal claim to her. According to Chaytor, their relationship

¹⁴ Miranda Chaytor, “Husband(ry): Narratives of Rape in the Seventeenth Century,” *Gender and History* 7, no. 3 (November 1995): 379.

would influence the way that she recounted the event to the jury and investigators. The circumstances surrounding the Castlehaven trial, however, do not fit Chaytor's analysis of rape and power relations. There is no indication that reproduction played any role in the marital relationship between the earl and the countess. Later scholarly research done by Barbara Harris and Laura Gowing indicates that many people married a second or third time with no intention of reproducing, but rather, these marriages had political, economic, or personal objectives.¹⁵ Their work indicates that if children existed from previous marriages, as was the case with the Castlehavens, aristocratic widows and widowers would still consider remarriage as a means of expanding their households and property holdings. Chaytor makes generalizations based on similar words used in rape narratives, but does not take into account other important variations in relationships between the victim and the perpetrator.

Garthine Walker also finds substantial shortcomings in Chaytor's linguistic analysis of rape. She responds directly to Chaytor's article and writes "modern understandings of rape testimonies might provide inappropriate interpretative frameworks for those produced in other historical contexts."¹⁶ She also faults Chaytor for using psychoanalytical tools for reading rape narratives. For Walker, "Entrenched in the practice and strategies of an individual's everyday life and embedded in an institutionally framework, there are several reasons why the personal, reflexive nature of these tales

¹⁵ See Barbara J. Harris, *English Aristocratic Women 1450-1550: Marriage and Family, Property and Careers* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002) and Laura Gowing, *Common Bodies: Women, Touch and Power in Seventeenth-Century England* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003).

¹⁶ Garthine Walker, "Rereading Rape and Sexual Violence in Early Modern England," *Gender and History* 1, no. 1 (April 1998): 2.

cannot be dislocated from the circumstances in which they were told.”¹⁷ Chaytor looks for commonality among rape narratives, while Walker articulates that to place the rape in its true historical context, individual variables must be taken into account. Here, Walker correctly calls upon historians to reconstruct the contextual history around the experience in order to understand its meaning and significance. Reconsidering the Castlehaven trial from the countess's perspective does just that. This route can also help to demonstrate how the Castlehaven affair can fit into a larger narrative of early modern rape while still maintaining its exceptional qualities.

Walker also highlights an important difference in the way that men and women in the seventeenth century thought about rape. She writes that, “In most narratives rape was defined in terms of male violence, not sex...Men redefined rape as a sexual act, thereby shifting the emphasis back onto female behavior and repositioning culpability accordingly. Men often claimed that sex, not rape, had occurred.”¹⁸ This ties into a crucial element in the testimonies of both the countess and the earl of Castlehaven. The countess charged that she was raped, and her written testimony explained that the earl told her that, “now her Body was his... and that if she lay with any other Man with his Consent, it was not her Fault, but his and that if it was his Will to have to so, she must obey, and do it.”¹⁹ The earl did not refute this comment in his testimony; indeed he made

¹⁷ Ibid., 3.

¹⁸ Ibid., 5-6.

¹⁹ “The Trial of Mervin Lord Audley,” *Complete Collection of State Trials and Proceedings*, 392.

it a central point of his case. The earl contended the encounter was sexual rather than violent because it was his personal wish to see his wife with another man.²⁰

Historians have had trouble accessing these discourses in seventeenth century legal documents because there are few available sources describing accounts of rape. While historical records may not exist, early modern literature and plays provide numerous presentations of rapes. In past studies of rape, historians have been somewhat reluctant to utilize literary texts as models for real-life situations, and therefore focus their discussions around the lack of historical sources. Literary scholars, however, have done remarkable work in analyzing the meanings and discourses of early modern plays and poetry.²¹ Barbara Baines addresses the concerns of Roy Porter and Sylvana Tomaselli by helping to bridge the gap between art and life in an attempt to make historians more comfortable with utilizing literary texts to access perceptions of early modern rape. She writes that, "Although I would agree that historicizing what has been effaced is no easy task, I wish to take issue with Tomaselli's assertion, for 'the reluctance to acknowledge the reality of rape' *is* the history of rape. Men and women in the past were no less reluctant than we are today to deal with the problem. That reluctance can be shown; the

²⁰ His testimony also claimed that Giles Broadway did not penetrate the countess, but the jury rejected this claim.

²¹ See for example: Lee Ritscher, *The Semiotics of Rape in Renaissance English Literature* (Ann Arbor: ProQuest, 2005); Julia Rudolph, "Rape and Resistance: Women and Consent in Seventeenth-Century English Legal and Political Although," *Journal of British Studies* 39 (2000): 157-184; and Carolyn Sale, *Consented Acts: Legal Performances and Literary Authority in Early Modern England* (Ann Arbor: ProQuest, 2002).

silence can be heard.”²² Baines searches for connections between literary representations of rape, in both poetry and performance, and the ways in which early modern people perceived of the crime and the victim. Her work makes it possible for historians to see significant parallels that can be drawn between fact and fiction.

Throughout the secondary literature the most frequently analyzed literary work of the period is Shakespeare’s “The Rape of Lucrece.”²³ Like many of Shakespeare’s works, he did not develop the story but rather re-wrote it for a seventeenth century audience. In the story, Lucrece is Collatine’s virginal and devoted wife. He boasts of his wife’s beauty to his friends, which sparks jealousy in Tarquin. Tarquin in turn rapes Lucrece so that he can claim her “purity” and beauty for himself. After the rape, Lucrece commits suicide to end her shame. In her death scene she says:

Mine honour I’ll bequeath unto the knife
That wounds my body so dishonoured.
‘Tis honour to deprive dishonour’d life;
The one will live, the other being dead:
So of shame’s ashes shall my fame be bred;
For in my death I murder shameful scorn:
My shame so dead, mine honour is new-born.²⁴

Here Shakespeare captures the most frequently discussed result of rape: the guilt and shame inflicted on the victim. Baines writes that, “The literary work of the Renaissance that both confronts real rape and tropes it excessively and that also best reflects the

²² Barbara J. Baines, “Effacing Rape in Early Modern Representation,” in *ELH* 65, no. 1 (1998): 69. See also, Barbara Baines, *Representing Rape in the English Early Modern Period* (Lewiston: Edwin Mellen Press, 2003).

²³ See for example: Mercedes Camino, *“The Stage am I”: Raping Lucrece in Early Modern England* (Lewiston: Edwin Mellen, 1995); and Carolyn Williams, “Silence, Like a Lucrece Knife’: Shakespeare and the Meaning of Rape,” *Yearbook of English Studies* 23 (1993): 93-110.

²⁴ William Shakespeare, “The Rape of Lucrece,” in *William Shakespeare: The Poems*, ed. David Bevington (New York: Bantam Books, 1988), 67-144.

mutually reconfirming influence of literature and law is Shakespeare's *The Rape of Lucrece*."²⁵ The language and imagery of *Lucrece* is obviously dramatic and extreme, but the reality of the sentiment is crucial to understanding the perceptions of rape, by both the victim and society.

Suicide and death are common themes in stories involving rape. In Shakespeare's *Titus Andronicus*, Titus' daughter, Lavinia, is brutally raped and mutilated. In the end of the play, Titus kills her "Because the girl should not survive her shame, and by her presence still renew his sorrows." As he stabs her, Titus cries out, "Die, die, Lavinia, and thy shame with thee; And with thee shame thee father's sorrow die!"²⁶ In "The Rape of Lucrece" Lucrece feels that she cannot bare the weight of the shame inflicted upon her, but in *Titus*, the humiliation of rape is so overwhelming that Titus cannot stand to let his daughter live. By killing her, he ends his own sorrow over the event. In her analysis of *Titus Andronicus*, Carolyn Sale claims that "It is surely significant that Lavinia does not kill herself-despite the fact that she receives not one but two marked suggestions that that's precisely what she ought to do."²⁷ Again we see Shakespeare implying that death, in one form or another, is the correct response to the shame brought on by rape.²⁸

²⁵ Baines, 84.

²⁶ William Shakespeare, *Titus Andronicus: The Pelican Shakespeare*, ed. Russ McDonald, (New York: Penguin Books, 2000), 100.

²⁷ Carolyn Sale, "Representing Lavinia: The (in)significance of Women's Consent in Legal Discourses of Rape and Ravishment and Shakespeare's *Titus Andronicus*," in *Women, Violence, and English Renaissance Literature: Essays Honoring Paul Jorgensen*, eds. Linda Woodbridge and Sharon Beehler (Tempe: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2003), 21.

²⁸ For further literary analysis of the rape in *Titus Andronicus*, see: Emily Detmar-Goebel, "The Need for Lavinia's Voice: *Titus Andronicus* and the Telling of Rape," *Shakespeare Studies* 29 (2001): 75-92; and Sid

Shakespeare was not the only early modern playwright who submitted that some sort of extreme action was required to redeem rape victims of their shame. *The Spanish Gipsie*, by Thomas Middleton and William Rowley, also presents a plan for dealing with shame. In this play, Roderigo rapes the virgin Clara because he cannot resist the promise of her purity. This prevalent theme carries with it connotations that raped women are partially responsible for the violation because they tempt men with beauty, virginity, or passive submissiveness. Clara tries to redeem herself after the rape by saying to her assailant:

Clara: A friend, be then a gentle Ravisher,
An honorable villaine, as you have
Dsroab'd my youth of natures doodliest portion,
My Virgin purity, so with your Sward
Let out that blood which is infected now,
By your soule-slaying lust.

Rod: Pish

Clara: Are you noble?

I know you then will marry me, say.²⁹

Here Middleton and Rowley demonstrate the third option of redemption available to victims of rape: marrying their assailant.³⁰ Roderigo stole Clara's "virgin purity," but if they marry, he will figuratively "make an honest woman of her." Through marriage, Clara can regain her virtue.

Jocelyn Catty studies the construction of rape in sixteenth and seventeenth century literature and concludes that "Raped women are...most likely to be dead by the

Ray, "'Rape, I Fear, was Root of thy Annoy': The Politics of Consent in *Titus Andronicus*," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 49 (1998): 22-39.

²⁹ Thomas Middleton and William Rowley, *The Spanish Gipsie*, (1653), 4.

³⁰ See also: Jennifer Heller, "Space, Violence, and Bodies in Middleton and Cary," *Studies in English Literature* 42, no. 2 (Spring 2005): 425-441.

end of the play. They are conventionally aristocratic or noble, and most are either married or more or less formally betrothed...”³¹ Catty goes on to demonstrate that while death is the prevailing treatment of raped women, three major categories of action are represented in literature: suicide (Shakespeare’s *The Rape of Lucrece*, Cyril Tourneur’s *The Revenger’s Tragedy*, Phillip Massinger’s *The Unnatural Combat*), murder (Shakespeare’s *Titus Andronicus*, John Fletcher’s *Boduca*, William Rowley’s *All’s Lost*), and marrying the rapist to try to counteract some of the shame (Thomas Middleton’s *The Spanish Gipsie*, George Whetstone’s *Promos and Cassandra*.) These plays represent dominant discourses present in the seventeenth century and provide important filters through which we can further analyze the Castlehaven trial.

Literary examples provide an ideological stage on which we can envision various scenarios of rape. But for the earl and countess of Castlehaven, their drama played out in a far more foreboding arena: an early modern courtroom. The four men who oversaw the trial were: Lord Weston (Lord Treasurer), the earl of Manchester (Lord Privy Seal), the earl of Arundel (Earl Marshal), and the earl of Pembroke (Lord Chamberlain.) The jurors for the trial were: the earl of Kent, the earl of Worcester, the earl of Bedford, the earl of Essex, the earl of Dorset, the earl of Salisbury, the earl of Leicester, the earl of Warwick, the earl of Carlisle, the earl of Holland, the earl of Berkshire, the earl of Danby, Viscount Conway, Viscount Dorchester, Viscount Wentworth, Lord Clifford, Lord Percy, Lord

³¹ Jocelyn Catty, *Writing Rape, Writing Women in Early Modern England* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1999), 95.

Strange, Lord North, Lord Petre, Lord Howard, and Lord Goring.³² Lord Coventry served as Lord High-Steward for the day. Before the trial began, the jurors spent considerable time debating the legal abnormality of a wife testifying against her husband. Gowing's work helps to place this trial in a larger historical moment, but it does not completely resolve the complex elements of this particular case. Prior to the trial, the earl of Castlehaven submitted a set of questions to the judges. These questions directly addressed the rare and confused nature of the charges. A discussion of these concerns helps to establish the tone and nature of the trial. The court answered each one of the earl's questions:

1 Quere: Whether may a wife bear witness against her husband?

Ans: In civil causes she cannot, in criminal she may especially where she is the party greived;

One of the initial anomalies of the Castlehaven affair was the fact that a wife was bringing charges against her husband. The court ruled that this was permissible because the countess of Castlehaven was the victim of the crime. She was not advocating for someone else, only for herself.

2 Quere: Whether buggery without penetration be condemned by the Statute?

Ans: It may. The use of the body to spend seed doth is.

The earl and Giles Broadway both claimed that Broadway ejaculated on the countess, rather than penetrating her. The countess disputed this claim. The earl questioned whether he could even be charged with rape if penetration did not occur.³³

³² Herrup provides a complete appendix of the jurors, their general biographic information, their relations to each other, and how they voted. See: Herrup, 157-159.

³³ The laws of early modern England made no distinction between the charge of rape and the charge of accessory to rape.

3 Quere: Whether one can ravish a woman of ill fame or no?
Ans: A whore may be ravished & it is felony to do it.

This question helped to define the rape charge. No one claimed that the countess of Castlehaven was a woman of ill fame.

4 Quere: Whether there be a necessity of occasion for a ravishing in convenient time?
Ans: In a indietment there is not. In an appeal there is.

In this query, the earl alluded to the fact that the countess did not initially bring the rape charge until her son-in-law/step-son made his accusations that his father was squandering his inheritance. The countess claimed that the rape occurred in October 1630, but the earl was not charged until April 1631.

5 Quere: Whether men of non-worth shall be sufficient proof against a Baron?
Ans: In case of fellony any man is sufficient.³⁴

Although Giles Broadway was charged with raping the countess, he was also scheduled to testify against the earl. The earl contested the court's decision to allow his wife and servant to testify against him.

If the court was going to charge the earl for rape, they had to permit the countess's testimony, because she was the one pressing the rape charge. Permitting the charge itself can be seen as an early indication that court already sided with the countess. If they had wished to uphold and perpetuate a legal system based entirely on patriarchal authority, as discussed in Bashar's article, they would have denied the countess's ability to testify against her husband. Without her claim there could be no rape charge. On the surface we see the extraordinarily rare account of a wife charging her husband with a crime and

³⁴ "Queeries of the Earle of Castlehaven." HA Legal 5 (2)/2, HEH.

testifying against him. The trial of the earl of Castlehaven took place on 25 April 1631. Her testimony was read on her behalf. Although she made the charges, the countess did not appear in person at the earl's trial. The judges debated the proper protocol for the situation and determined:

Whether it is adjudg'd a Rape, when the Woman complaineth not presently? And, wheter there be a Necessity of Accusation within a convenient time, as within twenty four Hours?

The Judges resolved, That insomuch as she was forc'd against her Will, and then shew'd her Dislike, she was not limited to any time for her Complaint; and that in an Indictment, there is no Limitation of Time, but in an Appeal there is.³⁵

This was done to try to spare the countess the embarrassment of having to address the court in person, and to help her preserve as much dignity as possible. This also probably worked to the countess's advantage. Because so much controversy centered on a wife testifying against her husband, her testimony was likely to be far less distracting to the jurors because she was not there in person.

The first part of the countess's testimony recounted the earl's desire to watch her sleep with other men. She then described the night the earl and Broadway raped her: "That one Night, being a-bed with her at *Fonthill*, he call'd for his Man *Broadway*, and commanded him to lie at his Bed's Feet; and about Midnight (she being asleep) called him to light a Pipe of Tobacco. *Broadway* rose in his Shirt, and my Lord pull'd him into Bed to him and her, and made him lie next to her." The countess had told the court that the earl had long desired to watch her lay with other men. Once Broadway climbed into

³⁵ "The Trial of Mervin Lord Audley", *The Complete Collection of State Trials*, 393. There are numerous manuscripts that recount the earl of Castlehaven's trial. IL 3339, NRO. PwV86, UoN. These accounts are very similar, both to each other and to the published account in the *Collection of State Trials*. For consistency, all following transcriptions are taken from the published account.

her bed, "*Broadway* lay with her, and knew her carnally, whilst she made Resistance, and the Lord held both her Hands, and one of her Legs the while." After the assault, "as soon as she was free, she would have kill'd herself with a Knife, but that *Broadway* forcibly took the Knife from her and broke it; and before that Act of *Broadway*, she had never done it. [attempted suicide.]³⁶

Broadway's testimony supported the countess's account. Interestingly, a statement made by Lady Audley was also read at the earl of Castlehaven's trial. In 1631, Lady Audley was sixteen years old. Her testimony did not pertain to either the rape or the sodomy charge. Rather, she told of how the earl of Castlehaven arranged for her to take up a sexual relationship with his one of his "favorites", Skipwith. Her statements claimed "that she was first temped to lie with *Skipwith* by the Earl's Allurements." Her statement told that the earl was not satisfied in knowing that the two were having an affair, but "that the Earl himself saw her and *Skipwith* lie together divers times; and nine Servants of the House had also seen it." She also told the court that she had not wanted to sleep with Skipwith but that the earl of Castlehaven had manipulated her. She explained that "When the Earl solicited her first, he said, that upon his Knowledge her Husband lov'd her not' and threatened, that he would turn her out of doors, if she did not lie with *Skipwith*; and that if she did not, he would tell her Husband she did."³⁷ While the earl of Castlehaven had tried to sabotage his son's marriage for his own sexual satisfaction, Lady Audley's

³⁶ "The Trial of Mervin Lord Audley," *The Complete Collection of State Trials*, 392.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 393.

testimony seems remarkably out of place given, she did not formally charge the earl with anything, nor did she formally charge Skipwith. Skipwith never stood trial for anything.

The earl adamantly contested the statements made by his wife and servant. He also accused his son, Lord Audley, for conspiring with the countess and Broadway. Yet, the earl said nothing against the statements made by his young step-daughter/daughter-in-law. After Broadway gave his testimony, and those of the countess of Castlehaven and Lady Audley were read aloud, the earl "objected against the Incompetency of the Witnesses, as the one his Wife, the other his Servant; and they drawn to this by his Son's Practice, who sought his Life: and desir'd to know, if there were not a Statute against the Incometency of Witnesses?" The earl then re-raised the issue of whether rape without penetration could truly be a rape. He "desir'd to be resolv'd, whether' because *Broadway* doth not depose any Penetration, but only that he emitted upon her Belly while the Earl held her, that should be judg'd Felony as for a Rape?" Once again the judges reiterated their acceptance of the rape charge, and their view that "so consequently to be Felony."³⁸ The judges ruled against every objection the earl made. They unanimously found him guilty of rape. This verdict alone ensured the earl of Castlehaven's execution.

The court, however, still had to rule on the sodomy charge. Although the rape charge already sealed his fate, the sodomy charge only destroyed his reputation further. Early modern England contemporaries did not associated sodomy with homosexuality; that term did not come about until the early nineteenth century.³⁹ Sodomy was a crime

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ See the entry for the term "homosexual" in the *OED*.

because it was sex without the possibility of reproduction; it was sex for sheer pleasure.⁴⁰

To English aristocrats, this indicated a complete lack of control over one's body and senses. They saw men who engaged in sodomy as driven completely by sexual indulgence rather than a respect for social order.⁴¹ In fact, under early modern law the charge of sodomy and the charge of buggery were the same. The jurors of the

Castlehaven trial relied on the language of Henry VIII's Statue on buggery, which reads:

An Act for the Punishment of the Vice of Buggery: For As much as there is not yet sufficient and [condigne] punishment appointed and limited by the due course of the laws of this Realme for the detestable and abominable vice of buggery committed with mankind or beast;⁴²

To the jurors, lust drove the earl, rather than a healthy sexual relationship with his wife.⁴³

The countess of Castlehaven's testimony mentions nothing about her husband's sexual relationships with other men. She, therefore, did not play an extensive role in the earl's guilty verdict on this charge, nor did she testify against Lawrence Fitzpatrick at his joint trial with Giles Broadway.

The verdict sent the earl's family into upheaval . A series of petitions to the King came flooding in. After the trial, three of the earl's sisters, Amy Bount, Elizabeth Griffen, and Christian Mervyn sent a petitioned the King in which they "Pray him to

⁴⁰ See: Michael Young, *James VI and I and the History of Homosexuality* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1999).

⁴¹ See : Herrup; and Ian Moulton, *Before Pornography: Erotic Writing in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).

⁴² *The Statutes of the Realme*, Henry VIII, 1533-1534, Chapters 4-6, 441.

⁴³ Herrup writes extensively about the sodomy charge.

examine those persons upon whose testimonies the Earl has been adjudged to die."⁴⁴ They believed, like the earl of Castlehaven, that Anne and Lord Audley were actually conspiring against their brother. On 7 May 1631, Charles I decreed that the verdict would be upheld. He did, however, conclude that owing to Castlehaven's noble ancestry, the earl could have his head cut off in lieu of being hanged. On 10 May, the earl's brother-in-law, Sir Archibald Douglas, again pleaded with the King to reconsider the earl's sentence. Douglas argued that the countess of Castlehaven was untrustworthy and had conspired against her husband.⁴⁵ His pleas did nothing to change the situation. The earl of Castlehaven was beheaded on 14 May 1631.

After her husband's execution, the now dowager countess of Castlehaven appeared briefly in person at the joint trial of Giles Broadway and Lawrence Fitzpatrick held on 27 June 1631 before the King's Bench.⁴⁶ Because the earl had already been executed by the time of the servants' trial, there was no doubt that they too would be convicted.⁴⁷ The trial transcripts tell that the countess of Castlehaven "came in up on the Instant, when the Lord Chief Justice demanded of her, Whether the Evidence she had formerly given at her Lord's Arraignment was true; and the full Matter of Charge she had then to deliver against the Prisoner?" She responded that her former testimony had been

⁴⁴ Petition of the Ladies Amy Bount, Elizabeth Griffen, and Christian Mervyn, sisters of the condemned earl of Castlehaven, to the King, SPD 16/189:139, [April] 1631.

⁴⁵ Information of Sir Archibald Douglas, addressed to the King with the view of saving the life of the earl of Castlehaven, SPD 16/190: 119, [May 10] 1631.

⁴⁶ The trial of Giles Broadway and Lawrence Fitzpatrick, KB 9/795/69 and KB 9/795/70, TNA.

⁴⁷ Herrup, 96.

completely true. She then recounted the rape in detail: "when she testified he lay with her by Force, her Meaning was, that he had known her carnally, and that he did enter her Body." The countess made an odd request:

The was she wished to look on the Prisoner; unto which Motion and Commandment she made a short Reply, That altho' she could not look on him, but with a kind of Indignation, and with Shame, in regard of that which had been offer'd unto her, and she suffer'd by him, yet she had so much Charity in her, and such Respect to God and his Truth, that she had deliver'd nothing for Malice; and therefore hoped that her Oath and Evidence thereupon should be credited: and so desired to be believed and dismissed. Which being granted, she departed with as much Privacy as might be into her Coach.⁴⁸

In desiring to confront Broadway, the countess of Castlehaven shrewdly played the cards she was dealt. She made it clear (in both trials) that she was the victim. But at Broadway's trial, she also demonstrated a magnanimous attitude toward her assailant, reminding jurors of her noble heritage and honorable character. The jurors found both Broadway and Fitzpatrick guilty. The duo was hanged on 6 July 1631. The trials were over for the countess of Castlehaven, but the ordeal was far from done.

Cynthia Herrup uses the court's acceptance of the rape and sodomy charges to explore the reasons why the jury may have disliked the earl. She believes that it was because of his Irish and Catholic connections, which focuses her arguments around issues of religion and nationalism. But if we put the countess at the center, the verdict can also be seen as a reflection on the way that the jurors viewed her. It may be an indication that they favored her from the beginning. If the jurors saw the earl as an outsider whose behavior destabilized the English sense of order and acceptability, as Herrup argues, then they may have seen the countess as representing something that needed to be protected.

⁴⁸ "The Trial of Lawrence Fitz-Patrick and Giles Broadway," *The Complete Collection of State Trials*, 396.

After all, she was one of the celebrated coheiresses of the earl of Derby, the daughter of the dowager countess of Derby, and the step-daughter of the deceased Lord Chancellor Ellesmere. The countess of Castlehaven's brother-in-laws were the earls of Bridgewater and Huntingdon, and her sisters were respected countesses. She was mother to the heirs of Lord Chandos, the "King of Cotswold." Her great-great-great father was Henry VII. The jurors were well aware of her pedigree.

It would not be in the best interest of the jurors to ignore her impressive family tree, for in doing so, many of them would be ignoring their own pedigrees. Birth and close kinship networks connected the countess of Castlehaven, and her daughter, to ten of the jurors.⁴⁹ The earl of Bedford's wife, Catherine, had been Grey Brydges's first cousin. On Anne's Stanley side, she was related to four of the jurors. Lord Strange and the countess of Castlehaven were first cousins.⁵⁰ The countess of Castlehaven was also distantly related to the earl of Arundel and Lord Clifford on her Stanley side. Lord Clifford and Ferdinando Stanley had the same grandfather: Henry Clifford, 2nd earl of Cumberland. (Lord Clifford and the earl of Derby, however, had different grandmothers.) Ferdinando Stanley was the great-grandson on his Stanley side of Thomas Howard, second Duke of Norfolk. The earl of Arundel was the Duke of Norfolk's great-great-great-great-grandson.

Kinship connections to jurors for the countess of Castlehaven came from her estranged uncle William Stanley's marriage to Elizabeth de Vere. In the 1590's, the

⁴⁹ See appendix charting these relationships.

⁵⁰ See Herrup, 155-159; and *The Complete Peerage*, ed. G.E. Cokayne. (London: The St. Catherine Press, 1916). Also see the appendix.

dowager countess of Derby demonstrated concerns over the earl of Derby's marriage to Elizabeth de Vere. Forty years later, however, the connections forged by this marriage proved to be quite valuable.⁵¹ In 1631, it became quite convenient for Anne to be able to call Elizabeth de Vere "Aunt Elizabeth." The earl of Pembroke wife, Susan de Vere, was Elizabeth's sister. Viscount Wimbledon was Elizabeth's cousin. Wimbledon's father, Thomas Cecil, earl of Exeter, was the second husband of Frances Brydges, Grey Brydges's sister. This also connected her through marriage to the earls of Salisbury and Berkshire.

The dowager countess of Derby also connected her daughter to several of the jurors through marriage on her Spencer side. The earl of Dorset's father, Robert Sackville, was the third husband of Anne Spencer, the dowager countess of Derby's sister. Dudley Carleton's second wife, Anne, was Robert Sackville's niece. The countess of Castlehaven's sister and brother-in-law, the earl and countess of Huntingdon, also provided a kinship link to one of the jurors. William Petre's wife, Katherine, was the earl of Huntingdon's first cousin.

The countesses of Castlehaven's familial connections were not the only significant relationships she had with jurors. Perhaps the most notable tie was between the countess of Castlehaven's family and Henry Montagu, earl of Manchester. Lord Ellesmere served as a close professional mentor for the earl in his early career.⁵² After the death of the Lord Chancellor, the earl of Manchester remained a close friend and important political

⁵¹ See Chapter 2.

⁵² *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (DNB), eds. H.C.G. Matthew and Brian Harrison. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

ally of the dowager countess of Derby.⁵³ In her 1637 will, she made him one of the executors and even requested in it that her grandson, George Brydges, should marry Susan Montagu, the earl of Manchester's daughter. George and Susan were in fact married on 14 December 1637. The countess of Derby also left the earl a personal token valued at £50, and a silver mug valued at £5 to the countess of Manchester. Her will also bequeathed a silver cup valued at £20 to Thomas Coventry, the Lord Keeper, who had been involved in the prosecution of the earl from the time of Lord Audley's initial charge.⁵⁴

Along with these personal relationships, there are other reasons why the jurors might also have been willing to take the countess more seriously than other seventeenth century women who brought the accusation of rape. Her age would have been particularly important to the way the jurors viewed the situation. In 1631 the countess was fifty-one years old. Laura Gowing argues that, “The ability to defend oneself against unwanted touch was bound to be partly dependent on age, marital status and social position.”⁵⁵ The general belief was that older, more established women would have less to gain through false accusations of rape, as their position in society had already been established. It was also significant to this trial that the countess was thirteen years the earl’s senior. While she held a stable position in society, his was far less reputable and

⁵³ See Chapter 1.

⁵⁴ Last Will and Testament of Alice Egerton, dowager countess of Derby, Prob/11/174, TNA.

⁵⁵ Gowing, 55.

more obscure.⁵⁶ Typically the sexuality of younger women claiming rape may have concerned or distracted jurors, but the countess's age made her appear more matronly, and therefore more respectable. She was beyond the years of reproduction and she had older children from her previous marriage. She was forty-one years old when her first husband died. The jurors probably found it respectable that she opted to remarry rather than remain single.⁵⁷ Barbara Harris' work states that "the majority of aristocratic widows were relatively free, therefore to consider the advantages and disadvantages of remaining single."⁵⁸ While Harris is looking at an earlier period, this point remains fairly constant into the seventeenth century. Herrup argues that the countess married the earl of Castlehaven because this marriage meant that, "together they could claim ancient lineage, extensive property, and court connections."⁵⁹ He was good on paper. But, as this dissertation has argued, personality matters. The countess of Castlehaven's mother remarried after six years of widowhood. There was, however, a significant difference between the countess of Castlehaven's choice in second husbands and her mother's choice: the dowager countess of Derby's second husband became Lord Chancellor and the dowager countess of Castlehaven's second husband was executed for rape and sodomy.

⁵⁶ Herrup, 14-15.

⁵⁷ See discussion of widowhood in Chapter 1.

⁵⁸ Harris, 162.

⁵⁹ Herrup, 13.

The earl and countess of Castlehaven's choice to marry their children together also cast lingering shadows over Anne's reputation after the earl's execution. It was bad enough that she married a criminal, but she also chose to wed her daughter to his son. Barbara Harris claims that blended families were quite common, and Herrup writes, "wedding of stepsiblings was a common way to consolidate alliances between great families."⁶⁰ The countess's younger sister, Frances, married John Egerton, earl of Bridgewater, who was her stepbrother, her stepfather, Thomas Egerton's son. The countess of Castlehaven was certainly familiar with the idea of blended families, but the disastrous results of this marriage also had serious social ramifications for both the countess and her daughter. On the surface, her choices to remarry and to blend her families mirrored the same decisions her mother made. The results were enormously rewarding for the dowager countess of Derby; her daughter's results were catastrophic.

It is important to consider the personal experiences of the jurors of Castlehaven's trial help to contextualize how they may have viewed the choices the countess of Castlehaven made. None of the jurors married their stepsiblings, or had "blended families." Yet, several of the jurors had remarried widows in their family, or they themselves had married widows. The earl of Essex's mother, Frances Devereux, was the widow of Sir Philip Sidney when she married Devereux's father, Robert Devereux. After his death, she remarried again. Her third husband was Richard De Burgh, fourth earl of Clanricarde, and the first earl of St. Albans. Unlike the countess of Castlehaven, however, Frances Devereux married a wealthy and well-regarded peer, thus enhancing

⁶⁰ Harris, 71; and Herrup, 17.

her status and the estate of her family. Despite the noble unions of his mother, the earl of Essex had marital problems of his own. In 1613 he divorced his first wife, Frances Howard Devereux, “on the monstrous grounds of his incapability as to this woman in particular.” In 1631, Devereux married Elizabeth Paulet. This union lasted a short time and Devereux again sought divorce because his wife was allegedly involved in a crime of petty theft with Sir William Uvedale.⁶¹ It is possible that he was in the middle of a divorce at the time he sat on the jury of the Castlehaven trial.

Only a small portion of the jurors had married widowed women. The earl of Leicester took Sarah Blout Smyth as his second wife, who was herself the widow of the Sir Thomas Smythe. The earl of Warwick’s second wife was Susan Rowe Halliday, widow of William Halliday who had been the Sheriff of London. Both Smythe and Halliday had vast wealth. Marrying widows was a shrewd financial move on the parts of the earls of Leicester and Warwick. Viscount Dorchester’s second wife was Anne Glemham Bayning, widow of Paul Bayning, viscount Bayning. The earl of Manchester took as his second wife Anne Wincoll Halliday, whose first husband was Sir Leonard Halliday, Lord Mayor of London. His third wife was Margaret Crouch Hare, who had been widowed by John Hare, Clerk of the Court of Wards. Both the earls of Arundel and Pembroke’s mothers were widowed and never remarried. Of the twenty-seven jurors, the earl of Danby was the only one to remain a bachelor his entire life. Yet while there were jurors who married widows, the majority of them did not. Nor did the majority of the jurors have widowed mothers who remarried. This suggests that most of the jurors did

⁶¹ Herrup, 155-159.

not have direct personal experience with women who made the same life choices as the countess. All of these men found the earl guilty of rape. It is possible, however, that they condemned the earl, yet still did not approve of the countess's decision to marry him in the first place. Their decision to allow Lady Audley's testimony at the earl's trial exemplifies their disapproval of the earl's character. Her testimony had nothing to do with either charge. It only amplified the earl's shady and lustful nature.

The jurors' impressions of the earl of Castlehaven's character, combined with the countess of Castlehaven's impeccable social standing, led them to reach a unanimous verdict of guilt in the charge of rape. They only narrowly found him guilty of sodomy (by two votes). The rape charge sealed his fate. This verdict also sealed the countess of Castlehaven's fate, in both direct and indirect ways. The indirect outcome was much more problematic for the countess. Even if the countess truly embodied the social qualities and standing revered by the jurors, they may also have seen her as partly responsible in the affair because she married an unacceptable man. The exact elements that led to his conviction thus worked against her at the same time. While the jury found that she was a victim of rape, the social condemnation she encountered after the trial indicates that she was also seen as a perpetrator against social order by betraying her status with such a disastrous marriage.⁶²

Early modern discourse about marriage, particularly for women, imposed a great deal of social significance on the union. John Gillis argues that, "for virtually all women, marriage has never been just a private matter between individuals. That may have been

⁶² See discussions of marriage and social order in Chapter 1.

the official position of church and state, as reflected in the law and the official marriage ceremony, but it was not the popular understanding of marriage.”⁶³ Her status as a widow, the esteem of her first marriage, her role as a mother, and her honorable bloodline gave her some autonomy. But seventeenth century gender systems and perceptions of marriage meant that her marriage was a very public union, susceptible to public scrutiny. As the seedy details of life at the Castlehaven estate rose to the surface, jurors and the public at large were entitled to condemn the countess for her poor choice in a husband. This public condemnation is also linked to the way that the early modern public perceived accusers of rape. Here, the countess’s actions combined with larger social ideologies placed her in a very precarious position. While she did have some autonomy, gender roles and discourses associate with rape dramatically limited her behavior and control over her reputation.

The jurors and seventeenth century contemporaries found the Castlehaven affair to be a shocking abomination.⁶⁴ The scandal surrounding these events makes it easy to view the Castlehaven trial as an anomaly. Legal aspects of the trial may be unique and the earl's behavior may be rare. When Sir Thomas Crew read the charges against the earl

⁶³ John R. Gillis, *For Better, For Worse: British Marriages, 1600 to the Present*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), 4.

⁶⁴ Twice in the seventeenth century, London publishers circulated accounts of the trial. See: *The Arraignment and Conviction of Mervin, Lord Audley, Earl of Castlehaven, (who was by 26. Peers of the Realm Found Guilty for Committing Rapine and Sodomy) at Westminster, on Monday, April 25, 1631* (London: 1642); and *The Trial of the Lord Audley, Earl of Castlehaven, For Inhumanely Causing His Own Wife to be Ravished and for Buggery* (London: 1679). Newsletters that various people in London sent abroad to Viscount Scudamore also regularly reported the gossip, trials, and executions of the earl of Castlehaven, Giles Broadway, and Lawrence Fitzpatrick. The letters just recount the trials and offer no new perspectives or commentary. See: Scudamore Letters, C115/104/8074, 8079, 8081-8082, 8133, 8174, TNA.

in court, he exclaimed, "The Person is honourable; the Crimes of which he is indicted dishonorable; which if it fall out to be true (which is to be left to Trial) I dare be bold to say, never Poet invented, nor Historian writ of any Deed so foul."⁶⁵ His sentiments may be appropriate, but his knowledge of poetry is lacking. When we view the events from the countess's perspective in light of the existing historiography on rape, we are able to draw a number of useful insights. The countess's response to her rape and the ways in which people treated her after the earl's conviction all follow typical patters for rape victims in early modern England. Her actions and experiences reflected a number of themes found in accounts of rapes in early modern literature.

First is the relationship between marriage and rape. The majority of women raped in literature were married, as was the countess of Castlehaven. While in these plays the perpetrator was not typically the husband, parallels can be drawn. In literature, men raped married women because the woman possessed something that intimidated or overpowered the men. Typically, literary women/victims were still virgins. While the countess of Castlehaven was not a virgin, she still possessed other honorable qualities. Feminist historiography has established that married aristocratic women held certain positions of power and authority in England. The lives of the Stanley women certainly demonstrate this point. Aristocratic wives maintained some personal autonomy while relying on their husbands for some of their status at the same time. In the Castlehaven affair, the countess was a powerful and well-connected woman in her own right. She

⁶⁵ "The Trial of Mervin Lord Audley," *The Complete Collection of State Trials*, 390.

testified that her husband told her, "That now her Body was his."⁶⁶ If he felt threatened by her reputation, raping her or exerting sexual control over her was one way for him to assert and to regain power.

Another central theme in plays and poems of the period is death and suicide. In testimony read at the earl's trial on behalf of the countess, she claimed that the moment the rape was done, "as soon as she was free, she would have kill'd herself with a Knife, but that *Broadway* forcibly took the Knife from her and broke it; and before that Act of *Broadway*, she had never done it."⁶⁷ Broadway confirmed the countess's attempt to kill herself in his testimony. The countess testified that the violation of her body drove her to want to die immediately. Almost six months elapsed between the time of the rape and the earl's trial, and there does not appear to be any record indicating whether or not the countess tried to kill herself during that period. Regardless of the fact that she did not actually carry out the suicide, her initial desire to kill herself immediately after the rape is significant. The countess initially tried to follow the seventeenth century script of how to deal with rape. She tried to respond in accordance to Shakespeare's *Lucrece*.

Lastly is the theme of shame and guilt. As discussed above, the countess did not bring forth the claims of rape until her stepson/son-in-law made the accusations that the earl had planned to misappropriate Lord Audley's inheritance. It is important to note that Lord Audley did not act as the countess's voice against his father; he did not even testify in his father's trial. Lord Audley's accusation was merely a path taken to bring to light

⁶⁶ Ibid., 392.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

these other charges. Here we see that she was not unlike the other women discussed by earlier scholars; she did not initially report her rape. It was only after investigators were sent into the Castlehaven home to evaluate the family's situation that her story emerged. Had Lord Audley not made his claims against his father, the Castlehaven rape might not have been made public. No historical records survive which discuss her personal feelings about the rape, but her role in the trial can be read as an indication that there were aspects of shame involved. The countess did not appear in person at her husband's trial. Her testimony was read on her behalf. This was done to try to spare the countess the embarrassment of having to address the court in person, and to help her preserve as much dignity as possible. No doubt it would have been traumatic for the countess to recount her sexual assault in front of so many male friends and relatives. It is also possible that because so much controversy centered on a wife testifying against her husband, the issue was far less distracting to the jurors because the countess was not there in person. She briefly appeared in person at the trial of Broadway and Fitzpatrick. By this time, however, the court already took her testimony as fact. Because the earl had already been executed by the time of their servants' trial, there was no doubt that they too would be convicted.⁶⁸ Also, the countess was not married to either of the two men on trial; her presence was not as controversial as it would have at her husband's trial.

The executions of the countess of Castlehaven's assailants did not bring an end to the scandal. Her accusation of rape left her vulnerable to public attacks on all sides. Early modern English society (not completely unlike modern societies) had ways of

⁶⁸ Herrup, 96.

projecting blame on rape victims. People who sided with the earl made vile comparisons between the countess and some of the bible's most hated women. It is easy to understand why many seventeenth century husbands would have disliked the notion of a wife being permitted to testify against her husband, and to accuse her husband of allowing a servant to rape and violate his wife's body. But threatened husbands were not the countess's most notorious public antagonists; Lady Eleanor Touchet Davies Douglas, the earl's older sister, was. By the time of her brother's trial, Lady Eleanor was developing a formidable reputation for herself in both the Jacobean and Caroline courts with disturbing prophecies and argumentative predictions. Castlehaven's niece, Lucy, married the countess's nephew, Ferdinando, son and heir of the earl and countess of Huntingdon. Lucy's mother was Lady Eleanor. Lucy's was Sir John Davies, a wealthy lawyer and friend of the Stanley women. The marriage not only allowed Sir John and Lady Davies to forge a kinship relationship with the ancient Hastings and Stanley families; when the earl and countess looked at the young Lucy, they surely saw £-signs. They believed her marriage settlement could relieve their old family debts (just as the Hastings's had hoped Elizabeth Stanley could do.) However, their expectations were not fulfilled. Lady Eleanor and the Hastings family were in the midst of an ongoing legal battle regarding Lucy's jointure when Castlehaven was tried and convicted. On the earl's execution, Lady Eleanor flooded London with scathing materials against the countess of Castlehaven, Lady Audley, and the Stanley family.

Teresa Feroli's 1994 article "Sodomy and Female Authority: The Castlehaven Scandal and Eleanor Davies's *The Restitution of Prophecy* (1651)" draws parallels

between the countess and Davies, claiming that they were both women living on the margin of society because of their disturbing yet effective social influences.⁶⁹ While Feroli's piece does make some interesting comparisons between the two women, Davies's writings not only demonstrated her feelings of personal vendetta against the countess, but also conflictingly projected commonly held discourses against women who had been raped. Without intending it, Davies's messages validated the countess's accusation of rape by treating her like a rape victim.

In 1633, Davies circulated her first pamphlet, "Woe to the House," meaning the House of Stanley. In it, she metaphorically called the countess of Castlehaven a Jezebel and a "Lye Satann," which was an anagram of her name.⁷⁰ The short publication addressed Davies's horror that a woman was permitted to testify against her husband. Although it was a court of English peers that convicted her brother, Davies believed the countess was his true murderer. For her, the countess's actions should have earned her a painful death:

Hast thou killed, and also taken possession, in the place, etc. and the dogs shall eat Jezebel by the walls of Israel...And when Jehu was come to Israel, Jezebel heard of it, and she painted her face, and tyr'ed her head, and looked out of a window, etc. And he trod her under foot.⁷¹

⁶⁹ Teresa Feroli, "Sodomy and Female Authority: The Castlehaven Scandal and Eleanor Davies's *The Restitution of Prophecy* (1651)," in *Women's Studies: An Interdisciplinary Journal* 24, no. 1-2 (1994): 31-49.

⁷⁰ Eleanor Davies, "Woe to the House," in *Prophetic Writings of Lady Eleanor Davies*, ed. Esther S. Cope (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 57.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 58.

Davies wished that the countess had been the party to die as a result of the allegations, rather than her brother, because, according to Davies, the countess was the true criminal for betraying her husband.

Davies's reference to Jezebel is significant. The name Jezebel was, and still is, associated with a painted whore, a figurative prostitute who lures men with make-up and an unnatural face. She is also an evil figure in the New Testament. The Book of Revelations states:

But I have this against you, that you tolerate the woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess and is teaching and beguiling my servants to practice immorality and to eat food sacrificed to Idols. I gave her time to repent, but she refuses to repent of her immorality.⁷²

Davies's reference to this passage parallels the Castlehaven affair. The biblical Jezebel enticed servants to perform wretched acts, reminiscent of a servant accused of raping his mistress. Jezebel also seduced people into eating sacred food much as Eve was said to have tempted Adam to eat the apple, thus getting both cast out of the Garden of Eden. Davies's claim that the countess was like Jezebel is reminiscent of Eve because she convinced a jury to condemn the earl as a social outcast. Eve is blamed for mankind's expulsion from paradise; Jezebel is blamed for encouraging wrongful acts. Davies blamed the countess for the earl's execution, and depicted *her* as the downfall of Fonthill Gifford.

Davies's second attack on the countess and her family came in 1644, with the publication of "The Word of God to the Citie of London." By then, the countesses of Derby, Bridgewater, and Huntington were all dead. Anne was living in virtual seclusion

⁷² *The Holy Bible*, Book of Revelations 2:20.

at Heydon House, in Ruslip. In 1642, a London publisher issued a transcript of the earl of Castlehaven's arraignment.⁷³ Two years later, Lady Eleanor could not resist flooding London with her own account of the trial, thus keeping the scandal in public memory. In her pamphlet, Lady Eleanor recounted her version of the accusations, the trial, and the wrongful outcome. She wrote on her brother's behalf "*affrming for that fact whereof the Earle of Castle-Haven was accusd by his wife (such a wicked woman)...And how the Lord slew them both [meaning the earl and the countess]*"⁷⁴ Lady Eleanor argued that the countess's accusation of rape misrepresented reality: the countess was the "whore." Lady Eleanor, like her brother, argued that sex, not rape, had taken place. Feroli's analysis of the publication concludes that, "By giving the Whore of Babylon the name of a specific woman, Davies reinforces a misogynous image for the purpose of terrifying her audience." Feroli sees that Davies continued to hold on to the idea that the countess of Castlehaven was responsible for her brother's death: "The idea that a woman driven by unbridled lust could gain a position of authority becomes not merely a fiction of the Book of Revelations...but a reality borne out of the person of Lady Castlehaven."⁷⁵ It is just as likely, however, that Lady Eleanor's writing asserted misogynistic images for another reason. The devices she used in her publications were actually drawn from a much larger discourse regarding the perceptions of rape victims that functioned during the

⁷³ *The Arraignment and Conviction of Mervin, Lord Audley, Earl of Castlehaven, (who was by 26. Peers of the Realm Found Guilty for Committing Rapine and Sodomy) at Westminster, on Monday, April 25, 1631* (London: 1642).

⁷⁴ Eleanor Davies, *The Word of God To the Citie of London* (1644), 6-7.

⁷⁵ Feroli, 41.

seventeenth century. Without intending it, Lady Eleanor demonstrated a common attitude toward women who were victims of rape: shame, ridicule, scrutiny of sexuality, and the ultimate determination that the victim was a sexually promiscuous. Lady Eleanor did not believe that her brother raped the countess. But the language and imagery she used to chastise the countess for her "false" accusations was exactly the same imagery used in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries to impose guilt and shame on women who had been raped. Lady Eleanor was really saying that the countess of Castlehaven "brought it on herself."

Scathing pamphlets published by an irate sister-in-law and well-known poems and plays depicting rapes are not the only literary connections that provide important insights into the complex corners of the Castlehaven scandal. Cynthia Herrup has collected, published, and discussed several libels about the Castlehaven affair. She calls the poems, "attempts to settle the unsettled meaning of the trial."⁷⁶ Herrup provides insightful readings of the libels, but they merit another mention. The first was written from the earl of Castlehaven's perspective, although the true author is unknown. It tells:

I neade noe Trophies, to adorne my hearse
my wyffe, exalts my hornes in everie verse:
and paste them hath, soe fullie on my tombe
that for my armes, there is noe vacant rome.
Who will take such a Countess to his bedd
that firste gives hornes, and then cutts off his head:⁷⁷

Herrup writes, "The epitaph reduced the relationship of Castlehaven and the Countess to that of a cuckold and adulteress. Gone were rape and sodomy, disinheritance and

⁷⁶ Herrup, 122.

⁷⁷ "I neade noe Trophies, to adorne my hearse." See: Herrup, 120-123 and 160-164. See also: Early Stuart Libels, http://www.earlystuartlibels.net/htdocs/castlehaven_section/Q0.html. [accessed 9 November 2005].

patriarchal irresponsibility. " Instead we find "a simple argument between husband and wife over fidelity and danger."⁷⁸ This libel demonstrates that other seventeenth century contemporaries depicting the countess of Castlehaven in the same ways Lady Eleanor did: as a whore, not a victim.

Not all people saw the countess this way. An unknown author wrote a poetic response to the above lines:

Blame not thy wife, for what thy selfe hath wrought
Thou causd thy hornes in forcing me to nought
For hadst thou beene but human, not A Beast
Thy Armes had bene Supportors to thy Crest
Nor needst you yet have had a Tombe, or Hearse
Besmear'd with thy sensuall life in verse
Who then would take such a Lord unto her bedd
That to gaine hornes himself, would loose his head⁷⁹

Herrup reads these lines to be, "The epitaph's answers, most probably (but not certainly) composed by men, represented a restatement of patriarchal responsibility and control; not an ideal of woman necessarily, but an ideal of a wife."⁸⁰ While Herrup's reading is certainly valid, the lines take on a slightly different meaning if we read them in light of the countess's perspective. Their marriage and her willingness to marry Lord Audley to her daughter Elizabeth could certainly be seen as a willingness to support "thy Crest." The countess of Castlehaven offered the earl a place in an old and noble kinship network. His actions, not hers, severed that connection. As a result, she was left besmear'd with thy sensuall life in verse." The countess of Castlehaven and Lady Audley spent the

⁷⁸ Herrup, 121.

⁷⁹ "The Ladyes answer." Ibid.

⁸⁰ Herrup, 122.

remainder of lives away from public life in an effort to both protect their own reputations and prevent anymore damaging lines from besmearing their family.

One of the largest scholarly debates on the relationship between the Castlehaven trial and the written word is actually centered on a text that does not directly mention any details of the trial or people involved at all. The most debated text in relation to the Castlehaven affair is John Milton's only masque: *Comus*. In the story, a young girl is separated from her brothers as the trio walked through the woods. The girl meets Comus, an evil demon, who lures her into his den so that he can rob her of her virtue. The young girl resists Comus's seductions and remains pure. In the end, she and her brothers are reunited and return safely home. Milton wrote the masque in celebration of the earl of Bridgewater's appointment to the post of President of the Marches of Wales. Bridgewater received the appointment on 8 July 1631, just two days after the executions of Broadway and Fitzpatrick.⁸¹ The earl of Bridgewater waited three years to officially take office. On 29 September 1634 the Bridgewater family and their close friends and relatives gathered at Ludlow Castle, the official seat of the President of the Marches of Wales. It was at this gathering that Milton premiered *Comus*, which he wrote specifically for the event. The Bridgewater's youngest children played the lead parts; the young Lady Alice Egerton played the role of the virgin and her two brothers, John and Thomas, played the parts of her brothers. Their music teacher, Henry Lawes, composed the original score and played the title role. Milton finally published a slightly altered version

⁸¹ Appointment of JE to the post of President of the Marches of Wales, SPD 16/196:25, 8 July 1631.

of the masques for the public four years later in 1638, but on that jovial Michaelmas night in 1634, the Egerton/Stanley family met to celebrate their great success.

Barbara Breasted was the first person to suggest a connection between the masque and the Castlehaven trial. She argues that Milton wrote the central themes of *Comus* to purify the Egerton/Stanley family from the shadows cast by the ordeal. *Comus* is a tale about a young virginal girl lost in the woods, searching for her family. She meets the lascivious and seductive Comus who tries to lure her off the path of righteousness, but the young lady is strong in her convictions and is therefore able to resist Comus's dangerous temptations. Alice Egerton, the daughter of Frances and John Egerton, and Elizabeth Brydges, Lady Audley, were first cousins fairly close in age. Breasted argues that in *Comus*, Lady Alice was able to resist the same temptations that served as Elizabeth's downfall. Breasted suggests that the performance of *Comus* could have brought a glimmer of redemption for the Egerton/Stanley family, and that Milton deliberately wove metaphors of social recovery into the performance.⁸² Literary critics have been debating the influence and entanglement of the Castlehaven trial and *Comus* since the publication of Breasted's article.

The majority of the scholarly debate on the subject centers around the themes of *Comus*. Literary scholars tend to overlook a poem Milton wrote before *Comus* for the Stanley family. As discussed in Chapter 5, *Arcades* was more significant to this moment

⁸² Barbara Breasted, "Comus and the Castlehaven Scandal," *Milton Studies* 3 (1971): 201-224. For other relevant works that debate the relationship between the Castlehaven trial and *Comus* see: Cedric Brown, *John Milton's Aristocratic Entertainments* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985) and Nancy Weitz Miller, "Chastity, Rape and Ideology in the Castlehaven Testimonies and Milton's Ludlow Mask," *Milton Studies* 32 (1995): 153-168.

in the Stanley women's lives than *Comus*. The exact date that Milton wrote *Arcades* is unknown, although it is generally believed to be sometime after the Castlehaven affair and before the performance at Ludlow Castle. He wrote *Arcades* specifically for the countess of Derby and it was performed at Harefield House by some of her grandchildren. The poem christens the dowager countess as "a rural Queen" and tells that:

Fame that her high worth to raise
Seem'd erst so lavish and profuse,
We may justly now accuse
Of detraction from her praise,
 Less then half we find exprest,
 Envy bid conceal the rest.⁸³

Cedric Brown has observed that, "It seems to me quite unlikely that the scandal did very much to determine [*Comus*] thematically...What might be noticed, however, is the relevance of the Castlehaven affair to the familial situation out of which *Arcades* grew. It is quite possible that there would have been no *Arcades* had the upheavals caused by the affair not taken place."⁸⁴ While Breasted looks at abstract metaphors of purity and family in *Comus*, Brown focuses on the role that the dowager countess assumed in the lives of her children and grandchildren. He rightfully concludes that "the entertainment of which *Arcades* was a part might have been dedicated to her out of a sense of obligation and grateful recognition for the way in which she had served as centre to the family in a difficult time."⁸⁵

⁸³ John Shawcross, ed., *The Complete Poetry of John Milton* (New York: Doubleday, 1990), 120 & 123.

⁸⁴ Brown, 20.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 24.

Brown is correct to emphasize the importance of *Arcades* in the narrative of the Castlehaven affair, but literary scholars, including Brown, tend to look at Milton's works for reflections of ideas or discourses of the trials. This is a significant endeavor to pull out the metaphoric language of the poems and masques, but it does overlook the perspectives gained by situating the poems within the historical and chronological *real life* contexts of the Stanley women. Rather than focusing on the poem and masque, we should focus on how they fit within the larger overall narrative of the Castlehaven affair. The performance of *Arcades* followed a year of rigorous advocacy by the dowager countess of Derby on the behalf of her daughter and granddaughter. The motivation for commissioning the poem may have been, as Brown suggests, to thank the countess of Derby for her commitment to her family. But if we view the performance of *Arcades* as part of the narrative of events following the Castlehaven trial, it also seems to be the moment that the family publically put the affair behind them. As discussed in Chapter 5, the Stanley women used family gatherings and masques to mark the victorious end to grueling legal challenges. For the Stanley women and their families, redemption and absolution came with *Arcades*, not with *Comus*.

Milton's poetic imagery and language make it easy to forget that this redemption did not come easily. Breasted, like Brown, argues that the countess of Derby was the only person from the countess of Castlehaven's family to respond publically to the events of the Castlehaven scandal.⁸⁶ Literary scholars pay attention to the role of the countess of Derby because of her connection to Milton, but historians have not fully considered

⁸⁶ Breasted, 214.

what her influence in the aftermath of the trial really meant. The countess of Derby never liked the earl of Castlehaven. Less than a year before Castlehaven's trial, she wrote to her daughter, Frances, "I am sometimes from home at your house which I am building to set it forward; That if it should please God to call for me, I might have a place to lay my stuff in out of my Lord Castlehaven's fingering."⁸⁷ Clearly she viewed her son-in-law as a shady character who was not to be trusted.

In keeping with this general disdain for Castlehaven, the countess of Derby wasted no time and spared no efforts to protect her daughter and granddaughter's reputations with a "sudden blaze of majesty."⁸⁸ In April 1631, the countess of Derby pleaded with Secretary Dorchester to ask the king if she could be charged with taking care of her daughter until the Broadway/Fitzpatrick trial was over. In the letter, she emphasized her desire that Lord Audley and her granddaughter should ultimately reconcile, and she mentioned that eventually both her daughter and granddaughter would need pardons. The dowager countess wrote to Secretary Dorchester that her hope was that "neither my Daughter nor [Lady Audley] will ever offend either God or his Majesty againe by their wicked Courses, But redeeme what is past, by their reformation and newnesse of life."⁸⁹ After the earl of Castlehaven was executed, the countess of Derby again pushed for pardons for Anne and Elizabeth. On 21 May 1631, she wrote to the king that she would not accept either of the women into her home until they received

⁸⁷ AE to FE, 14 June 1630, EL 6481, HEH.

⁸⁸ John Milton, *Arcades*, line 2.

⁸⁹ AE to Secretary Dorchester, SPD 16/189:140, [April] 1631.

royal pardons. Alice's desire to see her granddaughter and Lord Audley salvage their marriage was ultimately defeated in June 1631, when a deal was struck that ensured the young Lord Touchet would pay his estranged wife £300 per annum for life in lieu of ever living with her again. In an effort to secure her daughter's affairs, Alice also agreed to pay Anne £200 per annum for life. July saw the execution of Broadway and Fitzpatrick, and the next month, Alice again took up her daughter's cause, begging the king to show them favor. Finally, on 14 November 1631, Anne received a royal pardon for the crimes of adultery, fornication, and incontinency. Elizabeth's pardon came sixteen days later.⁹⁰ Titus Andronicus took swift and dramatic action to preserve some of his daughter's lost honor. Although the countess of Derby did not kill her daughter, she too took swift action in an attempt to restore some of her daughter's lost honor.

Although the countess of Derby finally had the outcome she desired, she remained acutely aware of her daughter's delicate situation. In 1635, the countess of Derby heard that her son-in-law, the earl of Huntingdon, had entertained Lady Eleanor at his home. The countess of Derby did not care that Lady Eleanor and the earl were in-laws. As discussed in Chapter 2, the dowager countess wanted to distance her family from Lady Eleanor. No family connection outweighed the horrific pamphlet that Lady Eleanor had circulated. The countess of Derby's granddaughter, Alice Hastings, wrote on her grandmother's behalf to her father on 1 August 1635, "[the countess of Derby] last well liking that she Lady Douglas had not other entertainment at your Lordships house then I doth appeare by your letter which she conceives was prevented by your own case

⁹⁰ Pardons for the dowager countess of Castlehaven and Lady Audley, SPD 16/203:53, 30 Nov 1631.

in so speedily sending your Lordships comand I obeyed."⁹¹ The countess of Derby dictated to her son-in-law whom he was permitted to receive at his home. She drew the fine lines between the close connections among early modern families, and placed her daughter above her grandson's mother-in-law. Years after the trial, the countess of Derby was still trying to call the shots.

Both literary scholars and historians have discussed these actions in recounting the Castlehaven story, but it is only when we really think about the mother-daughter relationship that we see what these actions truly mean. On the surface, the countess of Derby's plans seem rather odd. Why would she push for reconciliation between Elizabeth and Lord Audley when their marriage was a disaster from the start? Why would the countess of Derby be so fixated on securing pardons for Anne and Elizabeth if the courts found the earl of Castlehaven, Broadway, and Fitzpatrick guilty? Francis Dolan's offers one explanation in her analysis of the Castlehaven trial. Dolan argues that "the subordinates-son, wife, and servants-'won' the case, but those who supposedly participated in the indirect activities, whether consensually or not, and on whose testimony the prosecution depended were ultimately criminalized and resubordinated so that hierarchical, patriarchal order could be restored."⁹² By permitting the countess of Castlehaven to testify against her husband, the court temporarily bucked the regimented patriarchal order of society, but this order had to be restored. Pardoning the countess and her daughter did just that.

⁹¹ Alice Hastings Clifton to HH, 1 August 1635, HA Corr 1471, HEH.

⁹² Francis Dolan, *Dangerous Familiars: Representations of Domestic Crime in England, 1550-1700* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994), 80.

Alice made it clear that she would not accept Anne and Elizabeth into her home until they received pardons. This was not just for honor and propriety's sake, nor was it solely to protect her other grandchildren currently residing with her. The countess of Derby was an incredibly shrewd woman with a great deal of experience negotiating through the pitfalls of early modern aristocratic life and law. The Stanley women had spent years building and strengthening relationships with many of the peers who served as jurors. The dowager countess of Derby would not risk damaging any of their kinship ties. She kept her head above water in the Elizabethan court even after Jesuits approached and ultimately assassinated her husband in efforts to secure a Catholic monarch. She prevailed in the bitter lawsuit against her brother-in-law, William Stanley. Her correspondence with the king and Secretary Dorchester was not in defiance of the early modern system; the countess of Derby masterfully worked *within* the system. It may have seemed that she initially rejected Anne and Elizabeth, but in actuality, she was always working for them. Her desire to preserve Elizabeth and Lord Audley's marriage demonstrated Alice's respect for this fundamental union. Her advocacy for pardons showed her belief that order had to be restored. Both of these undertakings made the countess's objectives respectable in the eyes of the men who held public power. She was not chastising Anne and Elizabeth; she was securing any ground she could for them. The countess of Derby maneuvered through the precarious discourses of rape, adultery, and widowhood so that her family could save face. And most importantly, she did this with remarkable success.

All of these conclusions come together to recontextualize an event that, while on the surface seems to be extraordinary, actually demonstrate close connections to larger discourses of rape, marriage, class, and gender prevalent in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. It also serves as an outstanding demonstration of the relationships between the Stanley women. As salacious as the Castlehaven affair was, it can also help historians to access previously silenced issues. Herrup shows that the earl's life was an anomaly among seventeenth century English peers. But, a closer look at the countess's experience allows us to discern what it meant to be an aristocratic woman, a widow, and a victim of rape. The circumstances surrounding the event are bizarre, but the Stanley women's responses to them prove to be remarkably consistent with their characters.

Analyzing the Castlehaven affair from the countess's view reveals how peers viewed widows and matronly women of substantial status. We see that while at times these qualities could work to the woman's advantage, they were also tools by which to monitor and regulate the socially acceptable behavior of powerful women. The experiences of the jurors themselves demonstrate the myriad of expectations that shaped early modern life. The pardons doled out to the countess of Castlehaven and her daughter also tell us that even when exceptions were made to social expectations, the scales ultimately needed to be rebalanced. The events surrounding the trial also exemplify the channels available to women in order to preserve and protect their families. The countess of Derby seemingly moved through these channels with great skill. Her efforts to work within the realm of acceptable behavior not only reinforced a patriarchal hierarchy, but it also liberated her daughter and granddaughter from further courtly scrutiny. Lady Davies

may have continued to bash the Stanley women in print, but the celebration at Harefield and the performance of *Arcades* meant that the Stanley women had put the nasty affair behind them. Remarkable and significant parallels can be drawn in the way that early modern literature represented themes of rape, suicide, and shame, and the way the real people thought about sexual assault. Although the rape of the countess has little in common with other documented rape accounts, it still adheres to the central themes of both the literature and the law. Lady Davies used this same imagery as a weapon against the countess to avenge her brother's execution, much in the same capacity as fictional men sought to avenge the rapes and deaths of women they loved.

These connections ground the Castlehaven affair in a quagmire of complicated interpersonal relationships and social discourses, but consistency can still be found. The tendency of past scholars to view the Castlehaven trial as an anomaly limited its historical significance. The trial deemed the countess of Castlehaven a victim of rape and a threatening wife and widow. She lived with the heavy discourses these afflictions carried. But not all the women involved in this affair are painted as victims. The countess of Derby demonstrated the considerable avenues of redemption available to early modern aristocratic women who knew how to access them. She relied on political relationships, a strict respect for social order, and distinguished literary patronage networks to yield her desired outcomes. The Castlehaven affair is not an anomaly. By opening up the Castlehaven trial and re-centering it on the Stanley women, we not only see how it impacted them, we see how they impacted it.

Chapter 8

"Until the Joyful Resurrection": The Deaths and Legacies of the Stanley Women

By 1632, the turmoil of the Castlehaven scandal had subsided and the Stanley women were left to cope with the chaos in their private lives. Once Anne and the affairs of her children were settled, the countesses of Bridgewater and Huntingdon returned to their own families and tried to put the scene behind them. However, life would only return to normal for a short time. The countess of Huntingdon, the countess of Bridgewater, and the dowager countess of Derby all died in the 1630's. Only Anne would survive into the 1640's, but she lived and eventually died in seclusion. Their deaths reveal just as much about the variety of experiences of aristocratic women in early modern England as their lives did. The legacies they left in their tombs, funeral services, and memorial poems expose how early modern women conceived of their own mortality. Although the lives of the Stanley women were closely intertwined, in memoriam their contemporaries attributed certain unique qualities to each woman. These legacies also shaped the way that people conceived of the Stanley women in the centuries to follow.

Issues and questions specific to the region and time period shape the historiography of death in early modern England. Scholars perceive death by situating it against the backdrop of the post-Reformation period, the Renaissance, the rise of individualism, how gender and class influenced the proper ways of preparing for death, and how survivors mourned the dead. Scholars believe that for early modern contemporaries, all of these concepts seem to fall under an over-arching desire for

stability and social order that were at the foundation of life in early modern England. The role of individualism is the most debated issue associated with death in the early modern period. The notion that the seventeenth century saw the rise of people exerting individuality at their death stems from the work of Clare Gittings, who argues that "...indifferent signs of anxiety about death [in early modern England] can be interpreted as arising from a changing concept of self and a heightened sense of individuality."¹ Lucinda Becker directly challenges Gittings's thesis when she wrote, "Despite the work of Clare Gittings on the rise of individuality in relation to death and funeral practices in the Early Modern period, for most women facing death the need to conform, to present an acceptable image of oneself in death, must have been pressing."² Ralph Houlbrooke lies in between these two perspectives on death and the individual, as demonstrated in his argument that, "The Reformation, for example, whose influence on some aspects of funerary practice is well illustrated by Gittings, may have stimulated individualism (though this is far from clear), but it would be hard to argue that the growth of individualism played more than an indirect part in bringing it about."³ All three authors look at funeral practices and institutionalized rituals surrounding death and mourning to argue for or against the importance of the concept of individualism.

¹ Clare Gittings, *Death, Burial and the Individual in Early Modern England* (London: Croom Helm, 1984), 14.

² Lucinda Becker, *Death and the Early Modern Englishwoman* (Hampshire: Ashgate, 2003), 2.

³ Ralph Houlbrooke, *Death, Ritual, and Bereavement* (London: Routledge, 1989), 7. See also: David Cressy, *Birth, Marriage, and Death: Ritual, Religion, and the Life-Cycle in Tudor and Stuart England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997).

The role of individuality may be elusive when looking at death rituals on a larger social level, but a closer examination of the ways that specific people prepared for death provides important insight. Some early modern people left significant markers that indicate their desire to leave particular legacies, and this act suggests that individuals were concerned with the ways they would be remembered. While, as Becker argues, these actions may have been confined by gender and class, when we look at specific examples of the conscious construction of a legacy, it becomes clear that some early modern people did exert individual authority at the time of their death. The deaths and legacies of the Stanley women certainly exemplify this point. Elizabeth and Frances both died before their mother, and were survived by each of their husbands and children. Alice died a widow, as did Anne. Their marital status was just as important at the time of their deaths as it was in their lives, and it dramatically impacted the rituals and legacies that followed each woman's death.⁴

The countess of Huntingdon's road to physical decline began several years before her death. On 7 July 1632, Elizabeth wrote to her husband while conducting business in London on his behalf, "I am not very well. Since Thursday in the night, I have had much pain in my back and foot, but my back is well, and all my pain is now in my feet. Sir John Stanhope [and] Doctor Turner was with me this morning, and tomorrow intends to give me a purge. It is a feverish humor and wind comes from my spleen and I hope in

⁴ Barbara Harris has just published a very recent study on a similar topic, although she looks at the wills and tombs of women between 1450 and 1550. See Barbara Harris, "The Fabric of Piety: Aristocratic Women and Care of the Dead, 1450-1550," *Journal of British Studies* 48, no. 2 (April, 2009): 308-335.

God within a few days I shall be well."⁵ She wrote again to the earl five days later telling him that, "Sir Theodor Magerne had let me bleed at the instant when the porter came...[this had] settle[d] the wind in my bowels spleen and this day had given me a purge...I am a little weak having eaten almost nothing till this night since Thursday...I shall make a good journey for you."⁶ Despite her physical suffering, and perhaps even to the detriment of her health, the countess of Huntingdon did not lose sight of her purpose in London. She continued to travel between Leicester and London regularly in the final years of her life, ever determined to improve her family's financial holdings and her husband's reputation.

She finally died of uterine cancer on 20 January 1634 in Whitefriars, at the home of the earl and countess of Bridgewater.⁷ Peter Chamberlain, Doctor of Physics, issued a certificate testifying as to the causes of her death which read:

The causes of her death was the infection of the mother or place of conception. And that from the time of her being at Inglefield I never perceived anything to come from those parts of any offensive smell. Nor did her honor complain of pain save in bloody flux or looseness and upon the coming forth of the right intestine, from which being freed, she received her last hours with as much ease as slumber to a quiet mind and laboured body.⁸

According to the death certificate made by the College of Arms, on 4 February 1634, the body of countess of Huntingdon, "being laid into a chariot adorned with escleons and her

⁵ ESH to HH, 7 July 1632, HA Corr. 4852, HEH.

⁶ ESH to HH, 11 July, 1632, HA Corr. 4853, HEH.

⁷ Thomas Cogswell, *Home Divisions: Aristocracy, the State and Provincial Conflict* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1998), 210.

⁸ Account of cause of death of ESH by Peter Chamberlaine, 1633, EL 6840, HEH.

Ladyships coronet belonging to her estate and a black velvet cushion carried before her by two Officers of Arms in their Coates (deputed by Mr. Garter Principal King of Arms to attend the proceeding many of the chief nobility and persons of quality accompanying her) was conveyed towards Ashby de la Zouch."⁹ The entire community was heartsick at the countess's death; the Chamberlain of Leicester paid ten shillings to the herald for the safe return of the countess's body.¹⁰ Her funeral was held on 9 February 1634 and she was buried at Ashby de la Zouch. Her grave marker no longer exists.

The only surviving records of her death are a heraldic death certificate and the sermon preached at her funeral, which was published three times in the 1630's. The 1635 printed version includes a print of the countess of Huntingdon taken from an engraving made by John Payne. Payne was the preeminent English engraver during the time of Charles I.¹¹ The funeral sermon highlighted four primary points in the construction of an honorable legacy of the countess of Huntingdon: her own noble birth, her role in the continuation of the nobility through childbirth, the blending of her piety and intelligence, and her confidence in facing death. The unknown author praised the countess for her humility in spite of her noble Stanley bloodline and honorable marriage into the Hastings family when he said, "It were easy for me to name many noble names like unto these, to

⁹ Funeral Certificate for ESH, 1633, HA PP 18(6), HEH.

¹⁰ Chamberlain Accounts 1633-1634, 155, MF I/4, ROL.

¹¹ Antony Griffiths, 'Payne, John (*d.* in or before 1648)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/21645>, accessed 1 July 2009].

prove that nobility by which she esteemed herself principally honored."¹² The sermon praised her contributions as a mother by noting that, "She made the fruit of her body, to become the fruit of the spirit." He continues to hail the countess's piety and intelligence: "And as she had the knowledge of truth to give light unto her Religion, so she had the truth of Religion to give life unto her knowledge." And in the final passage, the author recounted that, "...the day of her dissolution, I coming to her, she professed, that whatsoever her sufferings were, yet she did nothing but clasp herself about her sweet Savior."¹³ All four of these points intended to highlight her nobility and goodness were common assertions made at the time of a noble woman's death. The sermon for the countess of Huntington closely follows a widely accepted script, stressing noble birth, motherhood, piety, and the humble acceptance of human mortality.

While the majority of the sermon focused on these qualities, the minister made a point of commenting on a personal aspect of the countess's life as well. This was an important element in the construction of her legacy. He recounted:

Her understanding was of great perspacity, and as she failed not to imply the same for the comprehending of such occasions and affairs, as might well advantage and sustain the estate of her house, and procure and reinforce the content and comfort of her noble Lord.¹⁴

The countess's tireless efforts to ensure her family's financial security had become an integral part in the way that she was to be remembered. She was not only a noble wife by birth and motherhood, but her actions also displayed her nobility as she strove to preserve and protect her family's status. She paid for this with her health and eventually her life.

¹² I.F., *A Sermon Preached at Ashby-de-la-Zouch* (London, 1635), 33.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 42.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 34-35. See also Cogswell, 207-208.

The countess of Huntingdon was not a passive wife and mother, nor was she spoiled and sheltered; she was an active agent on her family's behalf. The minister's incorporation of this in his eulogy implies that this was such a remarkable quality that it bore mention upon her death.

Much of this same language was prominent in the eulogies for the countess of Bridgewater, who died just two years later at the age of 52, on 11 March 1636. Far less is known about the causes of Frances Egerton's death than that of her younger sister. Her funeral sermon alludes to a sickness, although Keith Thomas mentions that she was an alleged victim of witchcraft.¹⁵ (Considerably more investigation would be required to fully discuss this suspicion.) The death certificate issued by the College of Arms recounts that upon her death at Bridgewater House in the Barbican, Frances's body was transported to the Church of St. Peter and St. Paul in Little Gaddesden in Hertfordshire.¹⁶ The small stone chapel is just a few miles away from Ashridge, the Egertons primary country seat. Her funeral was held there and her body was interred in a very humble memorial. Since her interment, the small church has become the primary resting place for descendants of the Egerton family. In 1819, the 7th earl of Bridgewater built the Bridgewater Chapel for the family at the south end of the little church.¹⁷

Regardless of its cause, the countess of Bridgewater's death also provides important insights into her life and into the legacies of the Stanley women. The countess

¹⁵ Keith Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic: Studies in Popular Beliefs in Sixteenth and Seventeenth Century England*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971), 538.

¹⁶ Death Certificate for the countess of Bridgewater, 1636, EL 6841, HEH.

¹⁷ *The Church of St. Peter & St. Paul Little Gaddesden: An Historical Note*, (Little Gaddesden: Hemel Copyprint Ltd, 1995), 8.

of Bridgewater, like her younger sister, apparently left no will. However the large quantity of poems and eulogies dedicated to her upon her death illuminate important themes and legacies. Like eulogies to Elizabeth, the issues of nobility, motherhood, piety, and acceptance of death are central. John Carter gave Frances's funeral sermon, of which a copy has survived, although it was never circulated in print. Carter claimed there "is no herald that cannot derive her pedigree from one of the wisest and worthiest kings of this Kingdom," referring to her Stanley lineage from Henry VII. Carter went on to say, "Twas a greater honour to her that she maintained the dignity of her birth; and lived and died in that honour she was born to...but the greatest honour the world can give her is this: she continued the line in well doing...the body of her bodility consisted in her blood, but the soul of it, in the eminency of her virtues..."¹⁸

Both the countesses of Bridgewater and Huntingdon were celebrated for these qualities, but the sermon given at the countess of Bridgewater's funeral provides more detail on her most revered qualities. Carter preached that she was both an exemplary courtier and a Christian because "So was she, who never returned from doing her duty at the Court, nor ever composed herself to sleep at what hour so ever, but she spent an hour sometimes more, seldom less, upon her knees, in doing her duty to the Court of Heaven."¹⁹ Whereas the countess of Huntingdon's funeral sermon proposed that her intelligence was a sign of her piety, the countess of Bridgewater's sermon explained that her piety was manifested in motherhood. Carter explained that:

¹⁸ Funeral Sermon for the countess of Bridgewater, 1636, 17, EL 6883, HEH.

¹⁹ Ibid., 19.

she lives in her children, they are her walking images, her living pictures: She lives in her virtues; her works praise her in the gate: She lives in her happy memory; every hearth is a monument, more durable than this costly marble: every tongue an epitaph to speak her praise...she desired not pompam funeral, and I endeavored not pompam prations: tis a little pile, that I have erected not a mausoleum tomb."²⁰

Although visitors to the church at Little Gaddesden today are surrounded with monuments and epitaphs to the Bridgewater family, Frances Egerton was humbly laid to rest in 1636 alone in a place that allowed her to remain close to her husband and many children at Ashridge. Frances founded the grand Bridgewater lineage that now crowds the tiny church.

Besides her funeral sermon, four other poems and a meditation dedicated to the death of the countess of Bridgewater survive. Each of these poems played an important part in constructing the countess's legacy. An anonymous piece, entitled *Meditation on the Countess of Bridgewater After her Death*, reiterated the sentiments of family and piety:

in these dangerous times her exact principles, as well in relation (to the purity of manners, as to the truth of religion, did still remain firm and unshaken. She might have been proud of her birth, boasted of her portion, and she extraordinary affection of her husband, and the finest of her children could have made her vain; But who ever saw, for all that, a more becoming humility, or a sweeter modesty.²¹

On 24 March 1636, Thomas Maye sent a eulogy to the earl of Bridgewater which read:

But when we read the practice of her mind
to the perfections of all good [*unclear*],
wise virtues did their habit manifest
so clear, that never they were seen to rest
but in a cause which no disorder see less,²²

²⁰ Ibid., 28-29.

²¹ *Meditation on the countess of Bridgewater After her Death*, 1-2, EL 6888, HEH.

²² Thomas Maye to JE, 24 March 1636, EL 6842, HEH.

Maye did not link Frances's virtues to her sex, like so many seventeenth century contemporaries, but rather, saw them as a manifestation of her mind. For Maye, the countess's well known love of reading and book collecting played an important part in constructing her legacy. Maye remembered her for her intelligence and the impact that her education had on her virtue. Two years after her death, Thomas Fowler sent the earl of Bridgewater a Latin inscription celebrating Frances as well.²³ She was clearly not forgotten; her loyal poets were committed to perpetuating her memory.

The most extensive tribute to Frances Egerton was penned by Robert Codrington. He dedicated the tribute to Frances's mother. Codrington opened his poem by paying respect to both Frances and Alice:

These tears on blessed Bridgewaters death, we do
Illustrious Lady consecrate to you,
In whom the honours of great Spencers line
And Stanley glories do unclouded shine,
Not to be dimmed to Death, while tears we pire
On your blest Daughters honoured hearse, this hour,
We look on you with joy, and live, for fewer
Deaths rage hath made you, but not less, or lower.²⁴

While his primary goal was to memorialize the countess of Bridgewater, he was careful to know his audience and ensure that the countess of Derby would not feel overshadowed by his devotion to her daughter. Codrington would draw from these same lines a few years later when paying his respects to the deceased countess of Derby. Codrington continued to hail the countess of Bridgewater's noble status and her lack of a tomb as important aspects of her legacy. He wrote:

²³ Thomas Fowler to JE, 17 June 1638, EL 6844, HEH.

²⁴ Verses on the countess of Bridgewater's death by Robert Codrington, EL 6850, HEH.

And giving each a kiss, did each divine
The growing glories of brave Stanley's line,
With great Bridgewater matched, whose loves shall still
The world with honor, and perfections fill...

Rich in her treasure, and to Fate present
Tis life alone to be her monument,
Which needs no graver's art, for every sigh
Shall better speak her epitaph, and die,²⁵

To those who paid tribute to Frances, it was of notable importance that she did not have a large monument constructed upon her death. Her effigy lived in the numerous children she bore and her honorable husband who survived her. Her exceptional piety and wisdom also constructed essential parts of her legacy. The countess of Huntington also lacked a substantial tomb, and her memory lived on in her children and dutiful husband. Her piety, intelligence and willful determination to restore her family's economic standing constructed her legacy. Both women received traditional heraldic funerals befitting women of their station, and neither woman left a will. In the cases of Frances and Elizabeth, poets and peers saw the lack of a tomb or monument as a testament to their humility and graciousness. They did not need monuments because they had noble survivors. However, their mother's death presents an alternate view of the construction of female legacy, as the countess of Derby desired a number of memorials.

The tomb of the dowager countess of Derby is massive and richly colored. It dominates the upper chancel at the north end of St. Mary the Virgin in Harefield. Lying on the tomb is the recumbent figure of the dowager countess, with statues of her three daughters kneeling at her side. The monument was meant to command the same attention the woman and her daughters did in their lifetimes. The majority of the tombs

²⁵ Ibid.

and monuments in the church belong to descendants of the Newdigate family. The countess of Derby's tomb, however, stands out from the rest for its size, grandeur, and vibrant color palate. The countess's figure is clothed in a bright red gown, matching the dresses on the three figures of her daughters kneeling below her. She lies on a carved black curtain, decorated with the crests of her birth family, the family of her first marriage, and crests representing the selective unions of her daughters. Although her hands are folded in prayer, she gazes up with open eyes into the green and gold dome of a dramatic canopy shrouded in matching green and gold curtains. Two sides of the canopy are enclosed with black tablets with gold lettering which tell the narrative of the countess's two marriages. The first reads:

This is the monument of Alice Countesse Dowager of Derby, one of the daughters of Sir John Spencer of Althrop in the county of Northampton Knight: and wife of the right Honorable Ferdinando Earl of Derby, By whom she had issue 3 daughters. His daughters coheiress Anne the eldest married to Grey Lord Chandos, Frances the second to John Earl of Bridgewater, Elizabeth the third to Henry Earl of Huntingdon. This Countess died the 26 Jan. 1636 and her aforesaid Honorable Lord and Husband (who died before her) lieth buried in the Parish church of Ormeskerke with his ancestors whose souls remaine in everlasting joy.

The second tablet simply reads:

This Noble Lady's second husband was my Lord Chancellor Egerton whose only daughter, was mother to Julian Lady Newdegate.

The top of the tomb is decorated with regal bird-like figures and horses and one final grand crest. The splendor of the monument is undeniable. The countess's human remains concealed inside this majestic tomb, staring up at her own recumbent figure, create a very personal feeling.

When standing beside this monumental masterpiece, it is easy to marvel at the life of the woman inside the tomb led. Yet, why is this aristocratic widow and mother of

three buried alone in a church that is crowded with the remains of another family? Was the countess's death and funeral as regal as her monument? The quiet church and immense tomb inspires day dreams about a solemn funeral march ending with a regal interment of the countess's body inside her tomb; but what was the reality of the countess of Derby's death?

The countess of Derby died on 26 January 1637, at the age of 77. Today her tomb, commissioned almshouses, and last will and testament survive. Her will outlines doles to the poor, the construction of her almshouses, her funeral requests, the distribution of blacks, and detailed instructions for inheritances and the fate of her estates. The sources left by and about the countess of Derby's death provide far more opportunities for insight than those left by her daughters. When read all together against the backdrop of her long and well documented life, it is clear that the countess of Derby purposefully constructed compound legacies that would represent the images of her nobility, charity, patronage, and independence. Her daughters left their legacies in the hands of their survivors, but the countess of Derby played a much more active role in dictating her own legacy. Her desires and surviving markers illustrate ways in which she asserted her individuality at the time of her death and developed her self-fashioned legacies.

The countess of Derby constructed her legacies using several different devices associated with death in the early modern period; some grew in popularity in the seventeenth century while others were tied to traditions pre-dating the Reformation. She strategically used her tomb, heraldry, almshouses, doles to the poor, mourning garb, and a

night funeral. Each ritual represented complex aspects of her character, and in the end, she created a multi-faceted legacy that would ensure her pre-selected desired memory would survive. She sought to remind her contemporaries of her charity, nobility, patronage, and independence. She designed her tomb and almshouses to express these same qualities, but by literally carving her legacy in stone, she ensured its longevity.

Gittings argues that strengthening concepts of individualism were at the center of death ritual in early modern England. The death of the countess of Derby epitomizes this individual self-fashioning of a legacy, yet the circumstances surrounding her life at the time of her death also played a role in dictating the options she had for constructing a legacy. Alice outlived Frances and Elizabeth, leaving the besmirched dowager countess of Castlehaven as her only surviving child. In the eyes of society, Anne was as good as dead. She could not serve as a testament to her mother's greatness in the same way as her nieces and nephews had done for her sisters. The countess of Derby had no honorable husband to mourn her. She had a number of grandchildren, but an aristocratic woman's honor was not so closely tied with those removed by an entire generation. Alice needed opulence and grandeur at her death because she had no virtuous living children to survive her. No mourner would find comfort in knowing that her virtues survived in her living children. The countess of Derby commemorated her daughters and her own life in stone and marble because she had no one else to do it for her.²⁶

²⁶ For further examples of women using building as a form of memorial see: Anne Laurence, "Women Using Building in Seventeenth-Century England: A Question of Sources?," *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 13(2003): 293-303; Elizabeth Chew, "Repaired by me to my exceeding great cost and charges': Anne Clifford and the Uses of Architecture," in *Architecture and the Politics of Gender in Early Modern Europe*, ed. Helen Hills (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003), 99-114; and J. Wilson, "Patronage and Pietas:

The countess of Derby's magnificent tomb is the most notable marker of her death, as well as a visual symbol of her life in Harefield. A 1972 publication, *Harefield and her Church* by Wilfred Goatman, reflects fondly on the tomb of the countess of Derby and mentions the countess's literary connection to poets and playwrights like Milton, Spencer, and Nash, as well as a communal point of pride: Alice and her second husband entertained Queen Elizabeth at Harefield in July 1602.²⁷ The countess of Derby and the Lord Chancellor purchased Harefield House from the Newdigate family shortly after their marriage in 1600. She passed the estate on to her eldest grandson, William Brydges. Upon William's death, the Newdigate family regained control of Harefield House. The countess of Derby and her descendents only lived in Harefield for a brief time, given the ancient history of the community. But the decades that the countess did call Harefield home have come to be regaled as one of the most glorious periods in the village's history.

The countess of Derby's tomb is more than just a portal to Tudor and Stuart England. The tomb offers immense insight into death rituals in the period. When looking at tombs and monuments of early modern England, it is imperative to first consult Nigel Llewellyn's work, *Funeral Monuments in Post-Reformation England*. Llewellyn's colossal survey of funeral monuments provides an invaluable lens through which to compare and discuss the artistic features of early modern tombs, and also to understand how early modern contemporaries conceived them. Llewellyn explains that

The Monuments of Lady Anne Clifford," *Transactions of the Cumberland & Westmorland Antiquarian & Archaeological Society* 97 (1997): 119-42.

²⁷ Wilfrid Goatman, *Harefield and her Church* (London: The church, 1972), 21-26.

"Monuments sought to replace the deceased within society, to give an impression of stability and, on behalf of the newer members of the community of honour, of lengthy continuity with the past."²⁸ Early modern tombs were intended to bridge the gap of death between generations as well as exemplify prized qualities of virtue and honor. Llewellyn looks at the iconography and structures of tombs and analyzes these physical features in light of the changing social, political, and religious climate of sixteenth and seventeenth century England to conclude that there were widely held visual standards that created cultural norms for the construction of these monuments. While tomb builders and patrons brought their own ideas to construction, certain generalizations can be made.

Some of Llewellyn's interpretations have recently been called into question by Peter Sherlock. Sherlock argues that tombs were not a replacement for the living as much as they "showed tension between life and death, and the afterlife...The memory of the dead lives on through their achievements, virtues and lineage, although these must be recalled and maintained by posterity."²⁹ While a tomb might not replace the living, it could serve as a means of furthering specific memories, and it would therefore be up to the discretion of the builder and commissioner as to which memories would be preserved.³⁰ For Sherlock this is also a reason to view tombs as "eminently suited to

²⁸ Nigel Llewellyn, *Funeral Monuments in Post-Reformation England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 235. See also: Nigel Llewellyn, *The Art of Death: Visual Culture in the English Death Ritual c. 1500-c. 1800*, (London: Reaktion Books, 1991).

²⁹ Peter Sherlock, *Monuments and Memory in Early Modern England* (Ashgate: Aldershot, 2008), 248.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 68.

promoting one's place in the world not as it actually was but as it should have been."³¹

This view situates the countess of Derby's tomb in a curious place.

Interestingly, the tomb of the countess of Derby closely mirrors a number of physical features Llewellyn has identified as typical among tombs constructed in this period. Llewellyn's work points out that many tombs display the recumbent effigy of the deceased lying in a lifelike state on a hearse.³² Although he based this statement on a generalization of tombs, it could easily be referring specifically to the countess's tomb. Llewellyn also identifies kneeling figures (typically representing the deceased's children) as a ubiquitous feature of post-Reformation tombs, as seen in the three kneeling figures representing the countess's three daughters. Llewellyn argues that this feature is important because "mothering was a woman's most important role and aspect of female experience referred to constantly on monuments."³³ The countess of Derby's desire that her tomb displays her accomplishment as a mother and highlight the marriages that she felt brought status and respect to herself and her daughters is quite common among tombs constructed in the period. Llewellyn also points out that tombs were often vibrantly painted as we also see in the brightly colored black, red, yellow, and green tomb of the countess of Derby. In short, the countess's tomb comprises many of the common aesthetic elements found on seventeenth century tombs.

³¹ Ibid., 40.

³² Llewellyn, 36.

³³ Ibid., 287.

Beyond these structural features, the countess of Derby's tomb also displays a number of crests and coats-of-arms. In 1800, Rev. Daniel Lysons identified these to be the "arms of Stanley, with its quarterings, impaling the arms and quarterings of Spencer of Althorpe. There are the arms also of the Countess's three daughters, with impalements..."³⁴ In designing her tomb, the countess selected crests to emphasize her birth family, the Spencers. The Spencer family rose rapidly through economic and social rank in the early seventeenth century. Throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the Spencers had established themselves as one of the nations leading providers of wool, mutton, and sheep sales. By 1621 Sir Robert Spencer, Alice's nephew, was believed to have been the wealthiest man in England, yet the Spencers faced continual disdain by the old aristocracy for their *new money*.³⁵

The Spencer family certainly attempted to silence the critics of older aristocratic families by marrying their youngest daughter, Alice, to Ferdinando Stanley, earl of Derby. The Stanley family ancestry dates back to some of the most recognized figures in English history. Their Tudor bloodlines connected them to the Cliffords, Greys, and Dudleys. Their Stanley lines connected them with the Howards and Hastings. With her marriage to Ferdinando, Alice Spencer left a rising gentry family and situated herself among the sixteenth century's most prominent aristocracy. Her Stanley marriage validated the increased the status of her Spencer roots and she used the heraldry to prove it.

³⁴ Rev. Daniel Lysons, *An Historical Account of those Parishes in the County of Middlesex which are not described in the Environs of London* (London: A Strahan, 1800), 112.

³⁵ Lawrence Stone, *The Crisis of the Aristocracy 1558-1641* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1967), 58.

Although there is a tablet that briefly mentions her second marriage, there is no other indication of her marriage to the Lord Chancellor on the tomb. It is possible that the countess of Derby opted not to even mention her second marriage in the tomb's original construction. In his 1802 book, *Memoirs of the Peers of England*, Sir Egerton Brydges gives a detailed description of the tomb and makes no mention of the second tablet.³⁶ Her second husband is not even referred to by name on it; it is only his powerful position at court that was displayed. Arguably the tablet's producer did not intend to highlight this marriage as much as use the tablet to offer an explanation as to why the dowager countess of Derby was entombed in a church that is primarily the burial site of the Newdigate family. It appears to be there as an afterthought.

Once the countess had reminded mourners of her own bloodline, her regal marriage, and possibly the impressive title of her second husband, she also made a point of highlighting the familial connections made through the marriages of her daughters. The countess of Derby displayed the crests of Lord Chandos, Anne's first husband, and yet noticeably left off any mention of Anne's second marriage to the notorious second earl of Castlehaven.³⁷ Frances is depicted next to the crest of the earl of Bridgewater. While markers denoting the nobility of the Lord Chancellor are absent, the earl of Bridgewater's crest is displayed with pride in the context of a marriage match, not a stepson. Elizabeth is also shown next to the crest of the earl of Huntingdon. The countess of Derby displayed her daughters' "trophy husbands" with pride. Her tomb

³⁶Sir Egerton Brydges, *Memoirs of the Peers of England* (London: Printed for John White, Fleet Street, by Nichols and Sons, Red Lion Passage, 1802), 394.

³⁷ Cynthia Herrup, *A House in Gross Disorder: Sex, Law, and the 2nd Earl of Castlehaven* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 62.

flaunts flashy reminders of her immediate connections to the Spencers, Stanleys, Brydges, Egertons, and Hastings as if to tell the world, "I made it." Llewellyn explains that heraldic displays on tombs were very important to the nobility and contemporaries of the upper classes would have recognized the families represented in the crests.³⁸ Even more interestingly, according to Llewellyn, "heralds claimed that their imagery instilled virtue..."³⁹

The magnificence associated with the tomb of the countess of Derby is not misplaced. Both in reality as well as published surveys, the countess's tomb is grand and vibrant and its amazing condition and visual similarities to other tombs of the period make it valuable and remarkable. The kneeling figures of her three daughters were a symbol of the countess's role as a mother. Yet, her tomb is not the first place that Alice is publicly associated with her daughters and hailed as a good and virtuous mother. The dedication of John Davies' 1609 publication, *The Holy Roode, or Christ's Crosse*, reads, "To the Right Honorable, well-accomplished Lady, Alice, Countess of Derby, my good Lady and Mistress: And, to her three right Noble Daughters by Birth, Nature, and Education, the Lady Elizabeth, Countess of Huntingdon, the Lady Frances Egerton, and the Lady Anne, Wife to the truly Noble Lord, Gray, Lord Chandos, that now is, be all Comfort when so ever."⁴⁰ In 1616, Thomas Gainsford wrote in the dedication of second book of *The Historie of Trebizond, In Foure Bookes*, "I thought it most befitting to look

³⁸ Llewellyn, 143.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 217.

⁴⁰ John Davies, *The Holy Roode, or Christs Crosse*, (London: 1609), 2.

out for some handsome props of supportation, and so have placed the daughters in one circle with the Mother: Yea, such daughters, and such a Mother, that me thinks you move together like fair Planets in conspicuous Orbs; from whose influence can proceed nothing, but sweet presages:"⁴¹ These dedications depict the influence that Alice had over her daughters, and celebrate all four women as a noble and idealized family. It is no wonder then that Alice desired her that tomb would establish this maternal connection as part of her legacy after death. She wanted to ensure that no one would forget her as a mother to her three noble daughters.

As discussed in Chapter 4, there are also a number of literary dedications to Alice alone. Perhaps the one that has the most significance in relation to the tomb of the countess of Derby is John Milton's *Arcades*, written in the early 1630's. The poem was commissioned as an entertainment for the countess at Harefield, and her grandchildren performed many of the parts. In it, Milton famously wrote:

Mark what radiant state she spreads
In circle round her shining throne,
Shooting her beams like silver threads.
This this is she alone,
Sitting like a Goddess bright
In the center of her light.

I will bring you where she sits,
Clad in splendor as benefits

Her deity.
Such a rural Queen
All *Arcadia* hath not seen.
(Lines 14-19, 91-95)⁴²

⁴¹ Thomas Gainsford, *The Historie of Threbizond, In Foure Bookes*, (London: 1616), 79.

⁴² John Shawcross, ed., *The Complete Poetry of John Milton* (New York: Doubleday, 1990), 120 & 123.

The lyrics of the poem and its performance in Harefield position the countess of Derby as a figurative local monarch of the community. Milton's poem exemplifies the significant connection between the countess of Derby and the village of Harefield. If she was the "rural Queen", then Harefield was her rural kingdom. The countess thus had a justifiable desire to build a grand tomb in the parish church.

With the construction of her tomb (and later her almshouses) the countess of Derby was not just a patron of literature, but of buildings and monuments as well. She commissioned Maximilian Colt, master sculptor to James I and later Charles I, to design and oversee the construction of her tomb. Colt had previously designed monuments for Queen Elizabeth in Westminster Abbey, two for James I's deceased young princesses, and eventually for James I himself. Colt is also notably acclaimed for the construction of Robert Cecil's tomb at Hatfield, and a number of design features in that estate as well as Whitehall and Banqueting House.⁴³ Commissioning the nation's master sculptor to design her tomb meant that the countess of Derby expanded her influential patronage beyond the boundaries of the literary world and extended that influence into the creation of monuments as well. A rural queen demanded nothing less than a royal sculptor. With Colt serving as the creator of her tomb, Alice could be confident that her funeral monument would exude the artistry, skill, splendor and nobility befitting her.

It is not surprising that works patronized by the countess would depict her as great, but this public show of grandeur is also complicated by Llewellyn's argument that a

⁴³ Adam White, "Maximilian Colt: Master Sculptor to King James I," *Proceedings of the Huguenot Society* XXVII, no. 1 (1998).

"problematic tension in [the] discussions and condemnations of magnificence lay between richness as a product and sign of peace and prosperity and as a negative token of vanity."⁴⁴ Llewellyn reveals that widows tended to be buried with their first husbands. While the tomb of the countess of Derby does display many common features of tombs from the aristocracy, the tomb also can be seen as vain or perhaps even threatening to social norms because she was buried alone in Harefield. This allowed her to self-fashion an image of an aristocratic, independent, and powerful woman. The tomb of the countess of Derby is figuratively situated in the center of this dichotomy between noble magnificence and vanity. It appears that she walked a fine line between these qualities throughout her life. Sherlock argues that women "used tombs to impose their place in the social order or to secure their family's honor within it, without fundamentally threatening the patriarchal basis of early modern society."⁴⁵ There is no question that the countess of Derby did use her tomb to secure her family's honor, and arguably her own, but she also employed a number of devices that dramatically threatened the patriarchal basis of early modern society.

The fact that she was a widow who was not buried anywhere near either of her husbands diverges from social norms. Her longstanding devotion to Harefield has been established, but there are several other reasons why the countess of Derby probably preferred to be buried where she was, rather than with either of her husbands. First, forty three years passed between the time of Ferdinando Stanley's death and the death of the

⁴⁴ Llewellyn, 248.

⁴⁵ Sherlock, 40.

countess of Derby. In that time, the countess married again, gained authority as a powerful courtier in both the Tudor and Stuart courts, arranged for three glittering matches for her daughters, successfully engaged in numerous legal battles, was widowed again, helped to raise many grandchildren and arrange for their marriages, endured the scandal of her eldest daughter's second marriage, and established a stunning patronage network. She was 77 years old at her death, and while there is no doubt that her early marriage had a lasting impact on the life she led, the majority of her life took place after the death of her first husband.

Second, it is also significant that the countess's relationship with the Stanley family suffered great strain after the death of Ferdinando. The dowager countess of Derby entered into a thirteen year long law suit with William, the 6th earl of Derby and her former brother-in-law, in defense of her daughters as coheiresses to her husband's estate.⁴⁶ Ferdinando left the majority of the properties in his control to his daughters in his will, and the new earl of Derby contested this will. He believed that inheriting the title meant inheriting all his family's lands. To have his family's holdings broken up and shared between three women while a Stanley male was alive to inherit them outraged him. The battle went through a number of phases and final ended with an Act of Parliament in 1607. This was an exceedingly tense legal battle. It is entirely possible that she did not want to negotiate her final resting place with her estranged brother-in-law.

⁴⁶ See Chapter 6 for a detailed discussion of this lawsuit.

Finally, it is very little wonder why she did not want to be buried with her second husband. Lord Ellesmere had been married twice before his marriage to the countess of Derby. Since his first marriage was the only one that produced any children, he opted to be near his first wife with a "solemn funeral monument...in Cheshire."⁴⁷ His eldest son, Thomas, was also buried at the same site. According to Llewellyn, this arrangement was common for people with multiple marriages. However, it is also probable that Lord Ellesmere would never have wanted to be buried with the countess of Derby under any condition, considering the many unhappy elements to their marriage. Historical records indicate that despite shared desires to accumulate wealth and stature, the countess of Derby and Lord Ellesmere had very different views of acceptable displays of this wealth. Louis Knafla explains that Lord Ellesmere "often could not tolerate her and the elaborate household which she maintained."⁴⁸ This point is vividly seen in a long memorandum composed by Lord Ellesmere near his the time of his death, entitled, "*An unpleasant declartion of things passed between the Countess of Derby and me, since our mariage and some directions for my Son, to be observed between the said Countess and him, after my decease...*" In it, he writes that for many years he had:

suffered her to dispose the whole [estate] as her own will and pleasure. And how indefinitely wasteful, probingly and proudly it hath been consumed and misspent, Harefield House, and the furniture and grounds, both within and without and too manifest demonstrations: Besides many idle journeys and vagrancies, and other occasions of vain superfluous and willful expense, which were not necessary or requisite, But which she in the light of her pride desired and sought after...[he continues with] it grieves me to remember...what reparations and

⁴⁷ Llewellyn, 294.

⁴⁸ Louis Knafla, *Law and Politics in Jacobean England: The Tracts of Lord Chancellor Ellesmere*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), 59.

sorrows I have suffered through her humorous, proud and disdainful carriage and her turbulent spirit, and by her curses railing and bitter tongue.⁴⁹

Clearly, at the end of his life, Lord Ellesmere did not look back lovingly at this marriage.

Depictions of the countess of Derby are as stratified as Llewellyn's interpretation of funeral monuments. Literary sources and her pedigree tell of a noble and regal countess, whereas more private texts reveal her to have been vain and excessive. Her elaborate yet traditional tomb can be interpreted as highlighting both aspects of these extreme personal qualities, but an even more interesting and complex legacy begins to take shape if we broaden our scope to also include the construction of the almshouses as another means the countess used to fashion her public image. If contemporaries who knew the countess saw her tomb as being "a token of vanity," the almshouses might have represented a virtuous and generous spirit. The almshouses, or hospital as they were referred to in her will, are located less than a quarter of a mile away and visible from the church. The houses are built of brick and form an H-like structure. Eight narrow chimneys rise up from the roofs, and today the front yard is demarked with a classic white picket fence. The countess called for the construction of the almshouse in her will, requesting that they serve "for the relief and maintenance of six poor women of the said parish to reside in such place" and that her executors and the parish appoint "a master of the said hospital and remained to read twice service or some other godly prayers daily to

⁴⁹ *An unpleasant declaration of things passed...*, 1615, EL 213, HEH.

the said six poor women." She also established a trust that generated £5 per year for the upkeep of the facilities.⁵⁰

The countess of Derby's almshouses, like her tomb, becomes a primary site of local history for the residence of Harefield during the succeeding centuries. Descriptions of the almshouses are included in numerous surveys conducted during the nineteenth century, but it seems that the annual £5 were not enough to keep the almshouses in the condition Alice envisioned.⁵¹ One surveyor observed in 1816 that, "It would seem that this latter sum is insufficient for the intended purpose, as the building is now in a very dilapidated state."⁵² This is why control of the almshouses was transferred to the Harefield Parochial Charities in the mid-twentieth century.⁵³ The countess of Derby's almshouses have been restored and renovated a number of times in the last century and now they house four, rather than six, women in modern apartments.

The countess of Derby obviously intended her almshouses to be used indefinitely but perhaps she also intended the construction of the almshouses to secure her as a patron of another demographic of Harefield: poor women, living primarily independently. It is telling of the countess's nature that the houses were specifically intended to be used by

⁵⁰ The Last Will and Testament of Alice Egerton, Prob/11/174, TNA.

⁵¹ For example, see: Nikolaus Pevsner, *The Buildings of England: Middlesex* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1951), 89-93. Pevsner mistakenly says that the countess of Derby built her almshouses in 1600, but her will indicates that they were not built until after her death.

⁵² J. Norris Brewer, *London and Middlesex: Or, and Historical, Commercial, & Descriptive Survey of the Metropolis of Great-Britain: Including Sketches of its Environs, and all Topographical Account of the Most Remarkable Places in the Above County*, Vol. IV (London, 1816), 577. For other local surveys that describe the almshouses, see Egerton Brydges, *Memoirs of the Peers of England*, (London: Nichols and Sons, 1802), 124; and Wilfrid Goatman, *Harefield and her Church*, 21-26.

⁵³ Harefield Parochial Charities, Home page, <http://www.harefieldcharities.co.uk> [accessed April 2, 2008].

poor women, not families or men. Their current inhabitants are an indication of this intended legacy. The countess's tomb represents a widowed woman who remained in Harefield, for eternity, on her own terms. The construction of the almshouses as a private residence for poor single women also symbolizes this same desire. Lucinda Becker argues that, "a woman need not be, indeed was unlikely to be, asserting any individuality from her deathbed, but the act of speaking out in itself might be perceived to be fraught with danger."⁵⁴ The expressed wishes of the countess of Derby defy Becker's argument, or at least show that Alice did not care if her desires were fraught with danger. It also shows her to be quite comfortable threatening patriarchal rule at the time of her death, as Sherlock argues would not happen. The countess not only asserted individuality in her wish to provide independent living for single women, but the construction of almshouses, along with nearly four hundred years of continuous use, indicates that the people of Harefield actually listened.

The almshouses were not the only grand gesture of charity undertaken by the countess of Derby upon her death. Her will also called for £50 to be distributed "to the poorest inhabitants of Harefield" and another £50 to be distributed "to the poorest inhabitants of Colham, Hollingdon, and Waxbridge," neighboring communities where the countess of Derby also owned property.⁵⁵ Ralph Houlbrooke writes that, "gifts to the poor increased in the post-Reformation period, but there was a sharp decrease by the

⁵⁴ Becker, 38.

⁵⁵ The Last Will and Testament of Alice Egerton, Prob/11/174, TNA.

early seventeenth century."⁵⁶ After the Reformation, "funeral charity subsequently declined as a result of a growing conviction that the soul could not benefit from funeral alms, coupled with the development of an increasingly reliable system of poor relief."⁵⁷ The countess of Derby's extensive alms-giving would either imply that she was partaking in an old Catholic tradition, or she was giving charity for another reason. While there is on-going debate as to the religious affiliations of her first husband, who was believed to either be Catholic, or closely associated with Catholic circles in Lancastershire, there is no evidence to support the idea that the countess of Derby was Catholic.⁵⁸ This means that she gave generously to underline her influence in local communities and perhaps to counter-act the grandness of her tomb.

Charitable giving was not the only old tradition associated with death that the countess of Derby requested. Her will also called for the distribution of blacks, or mourning clothes. Her will specified that twenty poor women from Harefield, twenty poor women from Colham, Hollingdon, and Waxbridge (collectively), all her household servants at Harefield House, her daughter, Anne, grandsons, George and William Brydges, and granddaughter, Alice Hastings, were all to receive blacks.⁵⁹ Houlbrooke points out that by 1572, most people were superstitious of mourning rituals and opposed

⁵⁶ Ralph Houlbrooke, "Death, Church, and Family in England between the Late Fifteenth and the Early Eighteenth Centuries," in *Death, Ritual, and Bereavement*, ed. Ralph Houlbrooke (London: Routledge, 1989), 30.

⁵⁷ Ralph Houlbrooke, *Death, Religion, and the Family in England, 1480-1750* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), 294.

⁵⁸ See Chapter 3.

⁵⁹ The Last Will and Testament of Alice Egerton, Prob/11/174, TNA.

to the distribution of blacks.⁶⁰ He also observes that blacks were very expensive, which may have been another deterrent to their distribution.⁶¹ However, despite these social and financial taboos, again the countess of Derby spared no expense in her mourning wishes. Her desire to have her servants and close family members in blacks created a band of mourners who could reflect her old fashioned, yet self-fashioned, grandness. Here again we see the "Rural Queen" ensured that a magnificent and luxurious Elizabethan funeral march would take place in Harefield on her behalf.

According to Houlbrooke, by 1637 large charitable donations and the distribution of mourning clothes had fallen out of fashion for the upper echelons of the aristocracy. But the countess of Derby's will and the survival of her almshouses demonstrate that these were still aspects of English death ritual she desired to take part in. The countess of Derby represents a generation of the English aristocracy whose lives spanned three controversial monarchs: Elizabeth I, James I, and Charles I. She lived through nearly eight tumultuous decades of religious turmoil. The excessive charitable giving and distribution of blacks outlined in her will connect the countess of Derby with an older tradition of death ritual that most people no longer practiced. On her deathbed she attempted to identify herself with ancient traditions. Thus, the countess of Derby secured the image of a woman who was born to a family of the rising gentry yet died with the grandeur of the old aristocracy.

⁶⁰ Ralph Houlbrooke, "Civility and Civil Observances in the Early Modern English Funeral," in *Civil Histories: Essays Presented to Sir Keith Thomas*, eds. Peter Burke, Brian Harrison, and Paul Slack (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 73.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 80.

Tithes and mourning clothes were not the only death rituals specified in the countess of Derby's will. She also gave detailed instructions for her funeral. Her will reads, "...I desire that mine own servants within two days and two nights next after my decent may carry [my body] to my said tomb in the night time there to be interred in decent and Christian manner, only with forty torches without any superfluous charge or [pompe] at the discretion of my executors..."⁶² In the seventeenth century, two styles of funerals were practiced by the aristocracy: heraldic funerals or night funerals. Clare Gittings argues "the main reason for holding [a heraldic funeral] was to stress the continuing power of the aristocracy and to prove that it remained unaffected by the death of one of its members."⁶³ This point is reiterated by Llewellyn's description of the influence of the College of Arms and the virtuous associations of heraldic symbolism. However, these observations situate the countess of Derby's desires in an odd juxtaposition. She commissioned a tomb that was dripping in heraldic crests and she received a death certificate from the College of Arms issued by William Ryley.⁶⁴ These signifiers of aristocratic status were paramount to her desired legacies, yet she did not want a traditional heraldic funeral service like those her daughters had been given. In fact, by requesting a night funeral the countess of Derby ensured that her funeral would be outside the regimented jurisdiction of the College of Arms.

⁶² The Last Will and Testament of Alice Egerton, Prob/11/174, TNA.

⁶³ Gittings, 175.

⁶⁴ Death Certificate for the dowager countess of Derby, 1637, EL 1019, HEH.

Gittings argues that "being buried at night allowed...more control over the ritual than...a heraldic funeral."⁶⁵ Her research explains that the prevalence of night funerals actually increased throughout the course of the seventeenth century and that this "reflect[s] the increase in individualism and decrease in heraldic influences."⁶⁶ Seventeenth century people read night funerals as deliberate attempts to side-step the ancient authority of the College of Arms (and indirectly the crown), and as a result, the death ritual of the aristocratic funeral was relocated in uncharted territory. Charles I made efforts to forbid night funerals, yet they continued to grow in popularity throughout the seventeenth century. Gittings explains that the desire for more individuality a funerals meant that night funerals could "emphasize private loss in the ritual, rather than any public display of strength."⁶⁷ This concept is in significant contrast to the work of Retha Warnicke, who writes that a woman's death "bed was used as a kind of stage from which to act out the last role of her life."⁶⁸ Warnicke argues that death, like virtually all aspects of aristocratic women's lives, was a public act. Gittings's interpretation of night funerals stemming from an emphasis on the rise of the individual shifts the focal point from a public death to a private mourning. Night funerals, therefore, served two purposes: to allow the deceased individual control over their funeral and to provide a private space for mourners to grieve.

⁶⁵ Gittings, 196.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 188.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 197.

⁶⁸ Retha Warnicke, "Eulogies for Women: Public Testimony of their Godly Example and Leadership" in *Attending to Women in Early Modern England*, eds. Betty Travitsky and Adele Seeff, (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1994), 170.

The countess of Derby's tomb, heraldic displays of numerous family crests, extensive charitable acts, and distribution of blacks all indicate that she desired to be remembered as a great and noble woman. The simplicity of this legacy is dramatically complicated by her explicit desire for a night funeral. The majority of her dying wishes were firmly rooted in ancient traditions of death ritual, and yet she wanted a new style funeral completely devoid of heraldic grandeur. It would be difficult to reconcile these requests if we saw the countess of Derby as the traditional archetype of the early modern aristocratic woman. Her request for a night funeral starts to make more sense, however, because she had already established her desire to be seen as an *independent* aristocratic woman. By building a tomb for herself, alone, and placing that tomb in Harefield, away from the resting places of her birth family and husbands, she asserted her physical independence. By requesting a night funeral, she wanted her mourners to be aware of her independence at the time of her death. Her contemporaries would remember her independence, but her heraldic and traditional tomb ensured that she would not rest too far from the acceptable social establishment.

It was imperative for the countess of Derby to employ tightly regulated religious rites because of the controversial locale of night funerals. Because night funerals were outside the closely regulated scope of the College of Arms, seventeenth century people often assumed the deceased was Catholic. The countess of Derby needed to guarantee her requests remained within conventional religious boundaries so as not to suggest that she was a recusant. The preamble of her will states that "...first I commend my soul into the hands of Almighty God my maker trusting in and through the only merits,

meditations, death and [relinquishment] of my most blessed Savior Jesus Christ to have free remission of all my sins and everlasting life in all glory and happiness with that my glorious and blessed Savior, my body I remit to the grave and dust from whence it came to be laid in the tomb which I lately made in the upper chancel of the parish church of Harefield...until by the joyful resurrection it shall be raised up to life."⁶⁹ Houlbrooke's research explains that the countess of Derby's preamble is completely consistent with the mainstream Protestant language of the seventeenth century. He writes that, "many testors left their souls to almighty God alone, often described as their maker, or maker and redeemer...In the early seventeenth century preambles which invoked the merits of Christ or expressed reliance on him were the most popular, and in much of southern England were used by the majority of testors."⁷⁰ The countess of Derby's preamble closely follows the script of accepted preambles.

Houlbrooke also tells us that, "many of the wealthier testors provided for funeral sermons."⁷¹ The countess of Derby also saw to this detail when she appointed her personal chaplain, John Prichard, to perform her funeral sermon. She set aside £10 for his services, or "if he be not present to make it then I give the said ten pounds to such other Reverend Preacher as my executors shall appoint."⁷² Very few sources survive that reveal details about the specific religious beliefs the countess of Derby held. Revealing

⁶⁹ The Last Will and Testament of Alice Egerton, Prob/11/174, TNA.

⁷⁰ Ralph Houlbrooke, *Death, Religion and the Family in England, 1480-1750*, 123.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 127.

⁷² The Last Will and Testament of Alice Egerton, Prob/11/174, TNA.

sources left by her daughters and sons-in-law indicate that they were a family of moderate Calvinists, and there is no reason to believe the countess of Derby did not fall in this category.⁷³ While many aspects of her funeral rites hint at Catholicism, there is simply no real evidence to make these allusions more than murmurs.

Unfortunately, the funeral sermon given at the countess of Derby's night funeral is lost. But, *An Elegy Sacred to the Imortal Memory of the Excellent and Illustrious Lady, the Right Honourable Alice, Countess Dowager of Derby...* by Robert Codrington has survived. Codrington presented the elegy to the countess's granddaughter, Alice Hastings. Alice was the eldest child of the earl and countess of Huntingdon. She was born in 1606 and the countess of Derby was her godmother and namesake. She spent much of her childhood and adulthood with her grandmother at Harefield House. The countess of Derby left a number of personal affects and a £3000 marriage portion to her granddaughter, showing that they shared a special bond.⁷⁴ This bond is accentuated in the opening lines of Codrington's poem, in which he called her the countess's, "most virtuous and lamenting grandchild."⁷⁵ In 1634, he dedicated his *A Treatise of the Knowledge of God* to the countess. In the dedication he wrote, "Goodness itself being so

⁷³ For details about the religious affiliations of the Hastings and Egerton families see Chapter 3. See also: Thomas Cogswell, *Home Divisions: Aristocracy, the State and Provincial Conflict*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1998); Irvonwy Morgan, *Prince Charles' Puritan Chaplain*, (London: Ruskin House George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1957).

⁷⁴ The Last Will and Testament of Alice Egerton, Prob/11/174, TNA.

⁷⁵ Robert Codrington, *An Elegie sacred to...Alice Countess Dowager of Derby*, [1637], C6715MI/E38, William Andrews Clark Library, Los Angeles, CA.

habitual unto you, that it seems she is become even your nature, and may be called as much your complexion as your practice."⁷⁶

Codrington expressed his admiration for the countess of Derby in his elegy while also borrowing several themes from the memoriam he had written just a year earlier for the countess of Bridgewater. He also discussed a number of the legacies that the countess worked so shrewdly to establish. Codrington wrote:

All shall improve themselves by her, and try
As blessed like to her to live, as blessed to die,
Religion shall rejoice, and Heaven shall smile
To see their pious troupes increased, the while
The grateful World shall holy trophies raise,
To Spencers honours, and high Stanleys praise⁷⁷

In this stanza, Codrington highlighted one of the most important aspects of the countess's desired legacy: the equal importance of her Spencer and Stanley roots. Also, like the countess, Codrington neglected to mention any connection to Lord Chancellor Ellesmere.

He also incorporated her tomb and her earnest desires for a long lasting legacy when he wrote:

More bright by death; yet weep! For yet this tomb
Holds Nature's cheapest treasures, would you come
And all perfections in one volume see,
Here every dust would make history,
Which he that looks on, and not spares a groan,
Adds but more marble to her burial stone⁷⁸

In this stanza, Codrington not only captured the stature of her tomb, but also alluded to her desire to "make history." This is in remarkable contrast to his earlier work that honored the countess of Bridgewater for her lack of a grand memorial. Although he used

⁷⁶ Robert Codrington, *A Treatise of the Knowledge of God...*, (London, 1634).

⁷⁷ Robert Codrington, *An Elegie sacred to...Alice Countess Dowager of Derby*, C6715MI/E38.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

poetic license to pay homage to his noble patroness, his goal was to create a long-lasting legacy and a feeling of pensive mourning. This piece resonates with the critical aspects of the countess of Derby's legacies which she worked so hard to build. It also illustrates that Codrington had mastered the role of the dutiful and loyal poet. He managed to admire the countess of Bridgewater's lack of a tomb as well as the countess of Derby's dominating monument. He independently took both the absence of a tomb and the presence of a tomb as signs of virtue and honor.

Sadly for the countess of Castlehaven, it is likely that no one talked about virtue or honor upon her death in October 1647. The Castlehaven Affair had sealed her fate. It also constructed her legacy fifteen years prior to her own death, despite the efforts made by the countess of Derby to ensure that Anne should spend the remainder of her life in relative comfort. The countess of Derby's will named her grandson George Brydges, Lord Chandos, as her primary heir. He received Harefield House, Hornpike, and all her leases in Harefield, Moorhall, Colham, Hillingdon, and Waxbridge. Upon George's death, these estates were to pass to his younger brother, William. Despite the disgrace of Anne's second marriage, the countess of Derby did not forget her daughter's well being. The countess of Derby's will instructed Anne to live out her life at Heydon House, in Ruslip. She also received eleven necklaces, which she was leave to her daughter Frances Fortescue, a black chain with gold, a new coach, two coach horses, all furniture for the coach, six milk cows, and a "competent number" of pigs and poultry from Moorhall to be moved to her new home at Heydon House.⁷⁹ It appears that Anne did remain at Heydon

⁷⁹ The Last Will and Testament of Alice Egerton, Prob/11/174. TNA.

House until her death, at which time her body was transported to Harefield House and buried there.⁸⁰ There are no surviving records about her life and death after 1637, and the exact site of her grave is unknown.

The legacies and deaths of the Stanley women seem to mirror their lives; there are significant individual qualities as well as considerable similarities. The rituals performed at the time of death for each woman mirrored her current social status. Both the countesses of Huntingdon and Bridgewater were survived by their husbands and children, and both women were given heraldic funerals. A heraldic funeral was an important demonstration of the Hastings continued aristocratic authority, despite the decayed condition of their estate. The countess of Huntingdon was a chief advocate on the part of her family. The pomp and circumstance of a heraldic funeral served as a crucial reminder to members of the aristocracy that the surviving earl and his children were still their peers. The heraldic funeral of the countess of Bridgewater also sent an important message to English society. The earl of Bridgewater was part of a new Jacobean aristocracy, and though he continued to gain political authority under Charles I, a heraldic funeral for his countess was a way of exercising traditional aristocratic privilege. Elizabeth and Frances left behind people who still had reputations to protect and ideally advance. While the earls of Bridgewater and Huntingdon each had their own careers and the careers of the children to tend to, grand heraldic funerals were also befitting the

⁸⁰Mary Ann O'Donnel, "Brydges, Anne, Lady Chandos", *DNB*, ed. H.C.G. Matthew and Brian Harrison (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/65144>, accessed November 6, 2006].

countesses of Bridgewater and Hastings, as they were coheiresses of the Stanleys. These funerals served as a testament to the unquestionable nobility of their wives.

The countess of Derby died an elderly widow which permitted her the opportunity to formulate her own agenda. There was nothing she could do to protect the reputation of her only surviving daughter; Alice was free to die on her own terms. The countess of Derby's tomb provided enough heraldry to validate her lineage, but she opted for a night funeral to demonstrate her independence. She had no husband to retain control of her property, so the countess of Derby's detailed will to bestow favor upon the remaining family members of her choosing. It is possible that some of these same sentiments could apply to the death of the countess of Castlehaven, although the lack of supporting materials makes any type of analysis of her death little more than speculation.

The rituals performed at the death of each woman were not the only differences between them. Each of the Stanley women left a compound and unique legacy in the minds of their contemporaries. These legacies were reinforced in the eulogies and memorial literature that followed their deaths. The sermon given at the countess of Huntingdon's funeral reminded mourners of both her literacy and piety in the statement, "her delight was in the law of God and she was an unwearied reader of the Oracles of Gods sacred word,...[she sought] the Tree of the knowledge of God, which is the Tree of life itself..."⁸¹ It also narrated how these esteemed qualities enabled her to astutely advocate for her family. These were the qualities that her minister and family wanted to remember and at her death.

⁸¹ I.F., *A Sermon Preached at Ashby-de-la-Zouch*, 35.

Those close to the countess of Bridgewater also selected specific themes from her life to celebrate. Frances gave birth fifteen times, which made her role as a mother a prominent part of her life and legacy. Her funeral sermon and every known poem written in her memory articulated reproduction as a sign of her virtue. The lineage that she and the earl of Bridgewater created was a testament to their greatness, which was also an important reason as to why she did not require an ornate tomb. The many children of the countess of Bridgewater lead her contemporaries to believe that her legacy lived in each of her offspring and in the continued success of her husband. Her funeral sermon told: "for never husband lost such a wife; never children such a mother; never servants such a mistress in few: She was that virtuous woman, whose price is above rubies."⁸² While she was also known for her piety and literacy, on her deathbed her motherhood and wifely devotion trumped all other redeeming qualities.

The substantial and diverse sources left regarding the countess of Derby's death allow a much broader analysis of her legacies than those of her daughters. In constructing her compound legacies, the countess of Derby relied on and also rejected the traditional social establishment at the same time. She wanted her contemporaries to remember her as her own person. Her distribution of alms and blacks kept her from being seen as straying dangerously far from accepted behavior because she observed longstanding traditions. Her heraldic and traditional tomb and humble almshouses built a legacy for the ages. She drew from old and new death rituals to maintain a tight control on her legacies, and she manipulated these legacies to instill a memory of nobility, virtue,

⁸² Funeral Sermon for the countess of Bridgewater, 21, EL 6883, HEH.

charity, patronage, and grandeur. These themes were demonstrated in Robert

Codrington's elegy when he wrote:

On poor mens griefs, for which with thankful eyes
They mount her praises to the echoing skies,
For though all virtues in their several ways
Fetch the descent of their illustrious rays,
And pedigree from heaven, yet none do fly
More high, or near it then doth Charity,

Nor any virtue can be understood
To be of more alliance unto God,⁸³

The countess of Castlehaven had no mother, sisters, or husband to mourn her.

She is known to have been survived by her eldest daughter, Elizabeth, and her two sons, George and William, although no information is known about her two younger daughters, Frances and Anne. Her sons made honorable careers for themselves in spite of their mother's demise. Elizabeth followed in her mother's footsteps and was lost from historical record following the Castlehaven trial. The affairs of her second marriage were so damaging that Anne's legacy was constructed long before she died. Upon her death she had nothing left to reflect well upon those who survived her.

Despite these various individual legacies and experiences, there were also some common themes illuminated in the deaths of the Stanley women, again with the exception of Anne. Elizabeth, Frances, and Alice were all regaled for their noble status. The title of "Stanley coheiresses" followed Elizabeth and Frances into death, and Alice's epitaph and tomb recounted the prestige of her first marriage. The elegies and eulogies of all three women made their Stanley line the primary artery of their noble magnificence.

⁸³ Robert Codrington, *An Elegie sacred to...Alice Countess Dowager of Derby*, C6715MI/E38.

Their respectable marriages and reproductive roles perpetuated the prominence of each woman, a fact which bitterly worked against the countess of Castlehaven.

Peter Sherlock points out that tombs "reveal how people of the past wanted us to think about their world...but the past cannot interpret itself and speak to the future."⁸⁴

Seventeenth century contemporaries may have remembered the Stanley women in specific ways, but a lasting legacy must withstand more than immediate memory. The nineteenth century saw a renewed fascination with the aristocracy of the English Renaissance. A number of peer books and historical surveys were published which provided biographical information and narratives for some of the most renowned aristocrats of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. It is of little surprise that the majority of these books are dominated by men; remarkably, the Stanley women also make appearances in their pages. While writing about Lord Ellesmere in his *Memoirs of the Peer of England*, Sir Egerton Brydges wrote,

His son, the first Earl of Bridgewater, whose patronage of Milton produced the exquisite Masque of Comus, which was acted before him at Ludlow, when he was Lord President of the Marches of Wales, married Lady Frances Stanley, one of the three great co-heiresses of Ferdinando, Earl of Derby, by Alice, daughter of Sir John Spencer [footnote: To this Lady, Edmund Spencer, the poet, dedicates some of his pieces, in which he claims relationship to her.], of Althorpe, in Northamptonshire.⁸⁵

Almost two centuries after their deaths, the Stanley daughters were still remembered as "the three great co-heiresses." Alice's Spencer and Stanley lines, motherhood, and patronage network remained her primary feats. In Brydges's discussion of the noble

⁸⁴ Sherlock, 231.

⁸⁵ Brydges, *Memoirs of the Peers of England*, 18.

Stanley family, he recounts in detail the lawsuit between Alice, her coheir daughters, and her estranged brother-in-law.⁸⁶ In the biography of Lord Chandos, Brydges wrote, "He married Lady Anne Stanley, eldest daughter and co-heir of Ferdinando Stanley, Earl of Derby, by Alice his wife, daughter of Sir John Spencer of Althorpe, knt. By this marriage he added a profusion of illustrious blood, and high alliances to his family. By this lady (who afterwards on July 22, 1624 remarried the unhappy Mervyn Touchet, Earl of Castlehaven)..."⁸⁷ Brydges then outlined the lives of the Brydges children, including mention of their close relationship with their grandmother, the dowager countess of Derby. He notably wrote, "This lady of whom I have said nothing under the article of the Derby family, deserves some memorial of her here." He then devoted several pages to the countess and highlighted her marriages, her purchase of Harefield House and the entertainment of Queen Elizabeth there, her literary patronage of Spenser, Milton, and John Harrington, and finally, a detailed description of her tomb.⁸⁸

Memoirs of the Peers and other books like it reveal some significant insights into the lasting legacies of the Stanley women. In the nineteenth century the countesses of Bridgewater and Huntington were remembered primarily as the earl of Derby's coheiresses, and none of their more personal qualities were remembered. These peer books recount the countess of Castlehaven's legacy as more closely linked to the nobility

⁸⁶ Ibid., 143-146.

⁸⁷ Ibid., 392-393.

⁸⁸ Ibid., 393-394. Similar accounts of the countess of Derby's life and contribution to Harefield, including her almshouses, also appear in J. Norris Brewer, *London and Middlesex: Or, and Historical, Commercial, & Descriptive Survey of the Metropolis of Great-Britain: Including Sketches of its Environs, and all Topographical Account of the Most Remarkable Places in the Above County*, Vol. IV (London, 1816) and Daniel Lysons, *An Historical Account of Those Parishes in the County of Middlesex. Which Are Not Described in the Environs of London...*

of her first marriage than it was in the 1630's, although they did not ignore the stigma of her second marriage. (Nineteenth century propriety probably excluded recounts of rape and sodomy while commemorating the great Renaissance peerage.) She too was described as one of the great Stanley coheiresses, although detailed memory of her life ends with the death of Lord Chandos. The scandal of the 1631 trial permanently tainted the memory of the earl of Castlehaven, but for the countess, the affair was written as an unfortunate footnote.

Essentially, in the nineteenth century the individuality of the three Stanley daughters was lost behind the patriarchal screen of history; they were wives, mothers, and coheiresses. Nineteenth century biographers tended to view the perpetuations of noble lines as the only real accomplishments of the Stanley women. Fortunately their descendents maintained their family's honor or memories of the Stanley daughters may have died with discontinued early modern titles. Men like Sir Egerton Brydges may not have searched for the individual legacies of the countesses of Castlehaven, Bridgewater, and Huntingdon, but that does not mean that they do not exist. An examination of the sermons and literature generated at their deaths shows that contemporaries saw each of these women in a unique way while at the same time, their deaths and funerals closely followed a scripted protocol.

Unlike her daughters, the countess of Derby stands out as a remarkable woman on the pages of history. Sir Egerton Brydges even believed that her life was so extraordinary that it merited mention of its own, although it did fall under the sub-heading of one of her sons-in-law. The countess of Derby overshadowed her daughters, even in death. The

carefully coordinated actions, such as the distribution of blacks and doles to the local poor, were lost over time, but the monuments built of stone and literary verse gave nineteenth century peers a tangible connection to the countess. Her intentions may have been vain, but they were also shrewd. Of all the Stanley women, the countess of Derby was the only one who left markers to herself *alone*; her tomb, almshouses, and patronage network meant that people remembered her. Surviving families and tarnished reputations prevented her daughters from doing the same thing. In a sense, being survived by no one meant that the countess of Derby could be remembered by everyone. She acted assertively to ensure that this happened.

Given the often challenging limitations of historical sources, it is too easy to see people of the past as one-dimensional, but I suspect that the countess of Derby was probably extravagant, proud, vain, yet also noble, charitable, and passionate. The existence of her tomb alone provides us with a remarkable material source from which we can glean insights into the woman who lies beneath it. If we consider a deliberate connection between her tomb and her almshouses, the impression of an even more interesting and well-rounded person begins to emerge. Her will provides invaluable evidence of an aristocratic woman who drew from ancient and newer death rituals to self-fashion her legacies in the minds of her contemporaries, as well as generations to come. For centuries, residents and visitors of Harefield have used the tomb and the almshouses as a way of claiming the influence and presence of the countess of Derby, but I contend that they mean much more. The countess of Derby selected these specific means to demonstrate the way she wanted to be remembered. If we "read" these constructions

together with the deathbed requests made in her will, we can see the countess as a mother, a patron, a wife, a widow, an independent woman with a proud and expensive style, and a charitable sponsor of the poor.

The countesses of Castlehaven, Bridgewater, and Huntingdon did not leave the quantities of materials that their mother left, which makes them easy to overlook. But the subtle ways in which their ministers spoke about them upon their deaths and the tragic and lonely fate of the countess of Castlehaven does make it possible to reconstruct the impact of their lives too. The countess of Bridgewater did not just leave a husband with a promising future and ten children; she left a library. The countess of Huntingdon was survived by her admirable work at court and the devotion of local poets, as well as her family. The countess of Castlehaven actually survived perhaps the most traumatic ordeal an early modern woman could endure, and her sons went on to prominence. All of the Stanley women were celebrated in literary dedications by poets and playwrights, some of whom are cornerstones of English literature and some of whom were mediocre minds trying to win favor. For centuries people believed high politics and men composed English history, but the Stanley women appear in lawsuits, literary dedications, stage notes, book marginalia, theological prose, household receipts, contracts, correspondence, tombs, and almshouses. Their lives provide a new opportunity for scholars to rethink the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Perhaps this is their most notable legacy.

Conclusion

When I was young, *Little Women* was one of my favorite books. Each of the March ladies possessed different traits that fascinated me: Meg was the conservative one, Jo was the passionate tomboy, Beth was the shy one, Amy was the sassy one, and Marmee was the strong but kind matriarch. In the story, they came together as a loving family in the face of the American Civil War. In moments of scholarly weakness, it is all too easy to apply this same model to the Stanley women: Anne did things differently from her sisters and paid an enormous price for it, Frances was the pious mother in a family of expanding wealth, Elizabeth was the pious mother who fought to keep her family afloat, and Alice was the shrewd yet proper matriarch. In this story, the Stanley women could come together as a strong family in the face of the Reformation, English Renaissance, and pre-English Civil War era. Fortunately, this dissertation is not a work of fiction. It is built on the premise that the Stanley women were not single-dimensional characters. They were not archetypes, nor should we think of them as such. They were a family of complex and dynamic women who assumed different roles for a myriad of situations.

The Stanley women, collectively and individually, were single women, mothers, daughters, wives, widows, and grandmothers. They worried, struggled, fought, and celebrated. They negotiated kinship networks and lawsuits. They were patronesses, educators, and educated. They prayed and were pensive with their faith. They endured violence and scandal. Some of the Stanley women created their own legacies, while others had legacies thrust upon them. They left letters, household accounts, wills, court documents, dedications, poetry, masques, family charts, religious writings, books, tombs,

almshouses, and estates. It is easy to think these women were anomalies, when in actuality it is the survival of this rare plethora of sources that makes them unique. As historians, it is our responsibility to strike a balance between who these women were in their individual lives and how they fit into the larger scene of early modern England.

Alice began her life as the youngest daughter to a rising gentry family. The Spencer family's wealth bought her a husband of ancient nobility. This served as a starting point, but Alice parlayed her marriage to Ferdinando Stanley into an impressive reputation of her own. The time she spent surrounded by Ferdinando's literary circle had a life-long impact on Alice. Ferdinando's death and the subsequent lawsuit with the sixth earl of Derby could have been the demise of the Stanley women. Instead, Alice astutely forged strong kinship ties with the Cecils and Talbots, among other impressive families. She not only held her ground, but her skill in arranging prudent marriages for herself and her daughters elevated their status. In 1594, she and her daughters faced an uncertain future. By 1604, she was married to Lord Chancellor Ellesmere. She had also ensured that each of her daughters possessed the tools they needed to follow her example. The dowager countess then struck out to build a reputation that still lives in literary masterpieces and early modern print. As a dedicated matriarch, she assisted her daughters through dangers ranging from childbirth to public scandal. She even took in several of her grandchildren to pass on her extensive knowledge in the art of maneuvering among the early modern aristocracy.

In the early seventeenth century, Anne's life looked as though she would follow in her mother's footsteps. Lord and Lady Chandos raised a family and built a small

kingdom around Sudley Castle. When Lord Chandos died in 1621, however, Anne only waited three years before marrying again. Her 1624 marriage to the earl of Castlehaven took her in a completely different direction from the rest of the Stanley women. At first glance, it would seem that Anne made the same choices as her mother made; she remarried rather than remaining a widow and she arranged for the marriage between her daughter and her step-son. But these choices yielded far different results for the countess of Castlehaven than they had for her mother. The local poets of Sudley Castle were replaced by the scathing deviants of Fonthill Gifford. Anne endured a very public rape trial, her husband's execution, and received a pardon from Charles I before retiring from public life. Her situation arguably would have been much worse if it were not for the countess of Derby's swift actions and her strong familial ties. Anne's sons, George and William, went on to inherit their father's title and lands. The dowager countess of Derby named them as her heirs too. Alice never made her grandsons pay for what she saw as their mother's mistakes. The tragic discourses associated with rape victims shaped the remaining years of Anne's life and reputation.

When Frances married her step-brother, John Egerton, their parents hoped that the couple would help the family thrive. The Bridgewaters surely surpassed these expectations. The earl of Bridgewater became a Caroline leader with his appointment as the President of the Marches of Wales. The countess of Bridgewater took her responsibilities seriously as well. She survived fifteen pregnancies, secured matches for her children, saw to their education, built a library of her own, and became a celebrated woman in literary dedications. She called Ashridge, Bridgewater House, and Ludlow

Castle home. In many ways, the countess of Bridgewater was a model aristocrat as she expertly played her roles as a mother, a wife, and a Renaissance woman.

Elizabeth must have also made her mother proud. She was only thirteen years old when she married Henry Hastings in 1601, and sixteen when she assumed the title of countess of Huntingdon. The Hastings family expected her substantial dowry to save them from financial ruin. History repeated itself twenty-two years later, when the earl and countess of Huntingdon married their heir, Ferdinando, to the twelve year old Lucy Davies with the hopes that her large dowry would end the family's financial hardships. When Lucy's estates provided more glitter than gold, the countess of Huntingdon went after the money with skill and intensity that surely put a smile on her mother's face. Just as Alice was the "Rural Queen" of Harefield, Elizabeth set up her own "court" for writers and theologians at Ashby-de-la-Zouche. She not only situated herself as an important figure for the local people of Leicester, but she also was a regular fixture in London. The countess of Huntingdon never allowed her husband's disdain for court to interfere with family business.

The experiences of the Stanley women come together to reveal remarkable insights into their individual and family lives. But they also offer scholars the opportunity to conceive of early modern women in new and interesting ways. The Stanley women, like other early modern people, used marriages as the primary means to forging kinship networks. Yet, they also employed various tactics to maintain and strengthen these ties. They turned to these kinship bonds to help see them through arduous legal conflicts. The Stanley women and their families marked their legal

victories and professional accomplishments by reproducing Renaissance masque culture in their own homes. The literary patronage, legal endeavors, and kinship networks of the Stanley women all combined with these performances to offer grand displays of the inner-workings of their families.

While the masques commissioned by and for the Stanley women demonstrate their successes and splendor, the Castlehaven scandal served as a different kind of stage for them. In many ways, the events surrounding the Castlehaven trial reveal the major themes in the lives of the Stanley women. This is not to imply that their lives were building up to this moment, nor is it to reduce the Stanley women to their roles in the Castlehaven affair. Rather, this dissertation argues that the Castlehaven trial shows the Stanley women in action. By exploring the trial from their perspectives we see how the dowager countess of Derby exerted her matriarchal authority in efforts to protect her daughter and grandchildren from public scrutiny. Their numerous encounters with the early modern legal systems prepared them to face the trial. These experiences also taught the dowager countess how to use the law to their advantage as she worked to secure pardons for Anne and Elizabeth. Anne's relations to many of the jurors also played a role in the outcome of the trial. And in typical form, when the ordeal was over, the Stanley women commissioned Milton to write a masque. The Stanley women and their families came together to put the devastating events behind them.

This dissertation has only offered one version of their lives; the rich and momentous sources about the Stanley women certainly merit further examination. This account highlights their mother-daughter relationships, but comments little on the

relationship between sisters in early modern England. Each of the Stanley women's individual families also deserves more study. Anne's life, apart from the Castlehaven scandal, is under-represented in this study because far fewer sources about her survive. This biography of the Stanley women helps to demonstrate that their lives, characters, and experiences were as diverse as those of their male counterparts. It also introduces scholars to four more early modern women whose lives have been previously shrouded in relative silence. This helps us to rethink the simple applications of the demographical categories of *maiden*, *wife*, *widow*, *grandmother*, *mother*, and *daughter*, and to conceive of our subjects as the real and complex women they really were.

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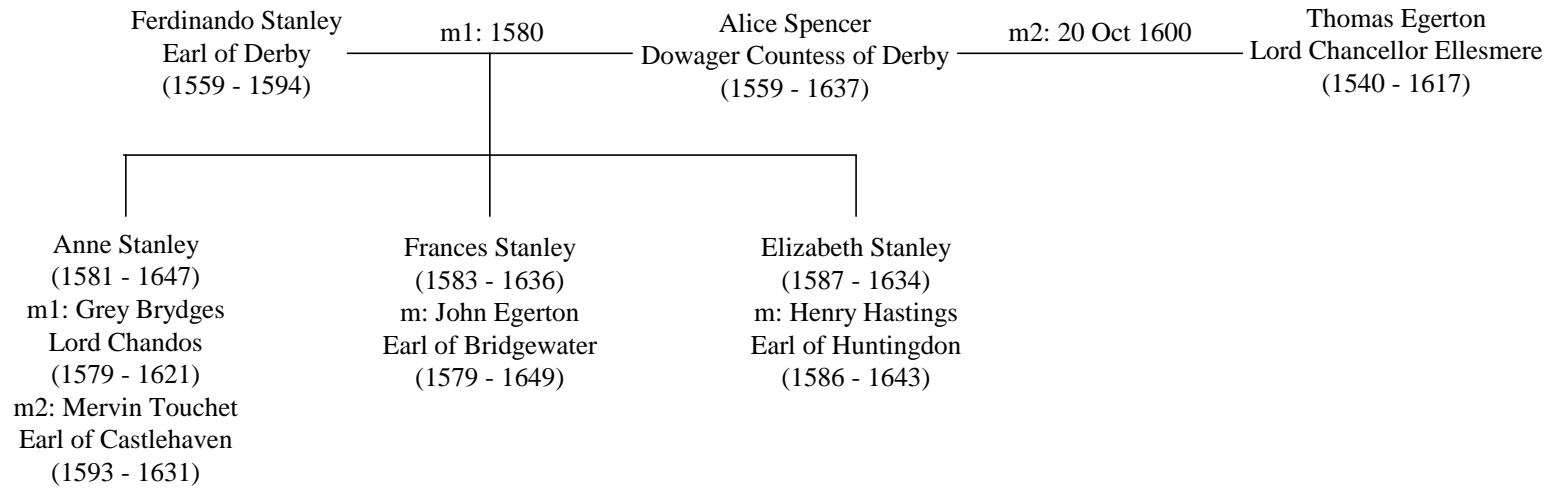
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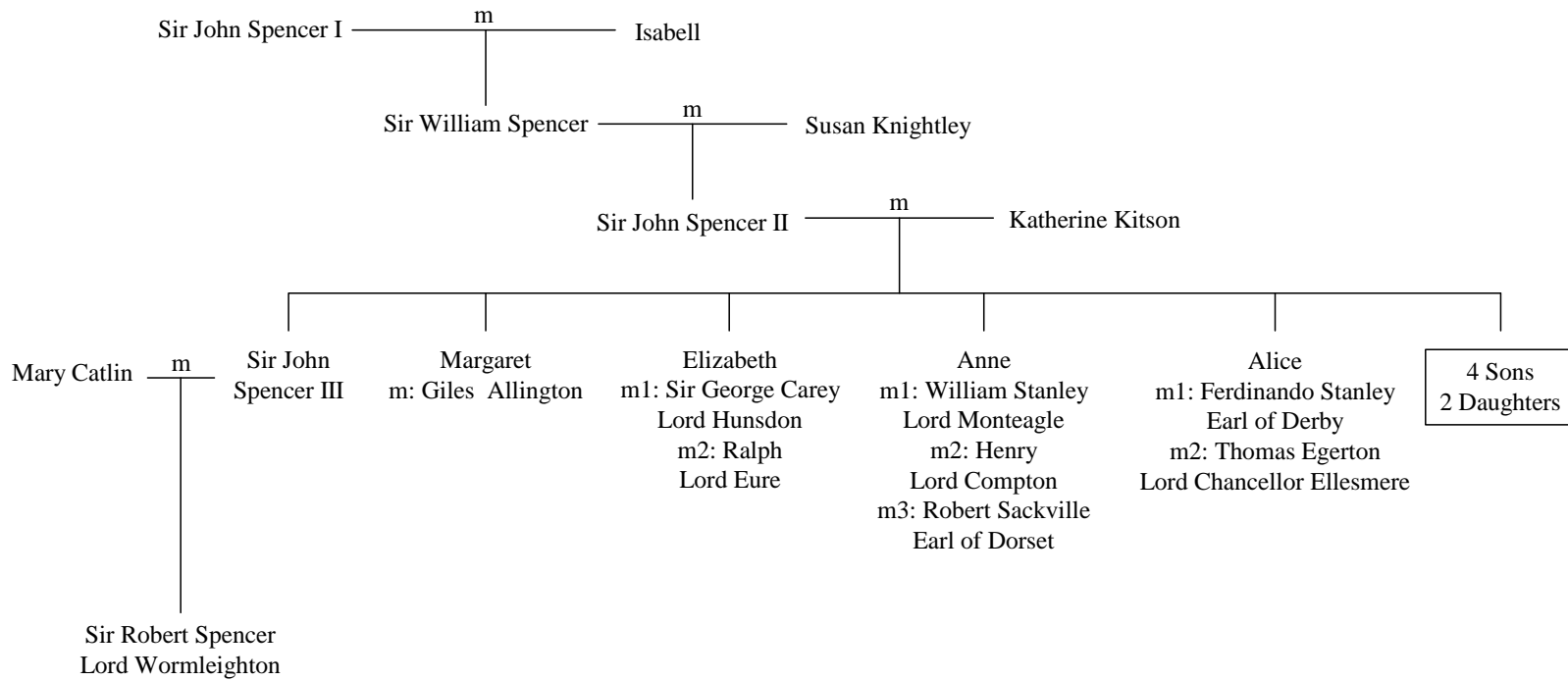
Appendix
Family Charts

The Stanley Women

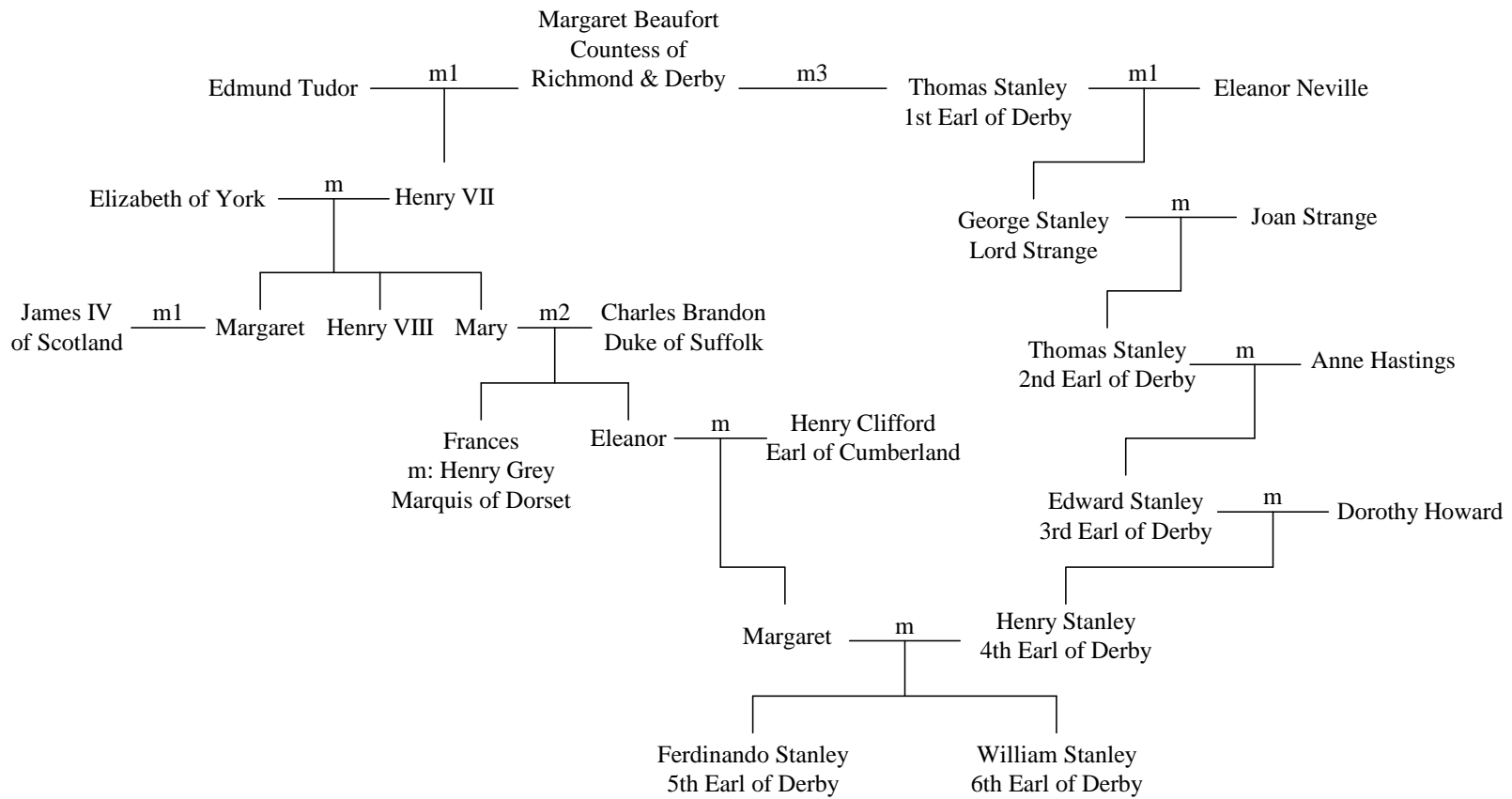


The Spencer Family

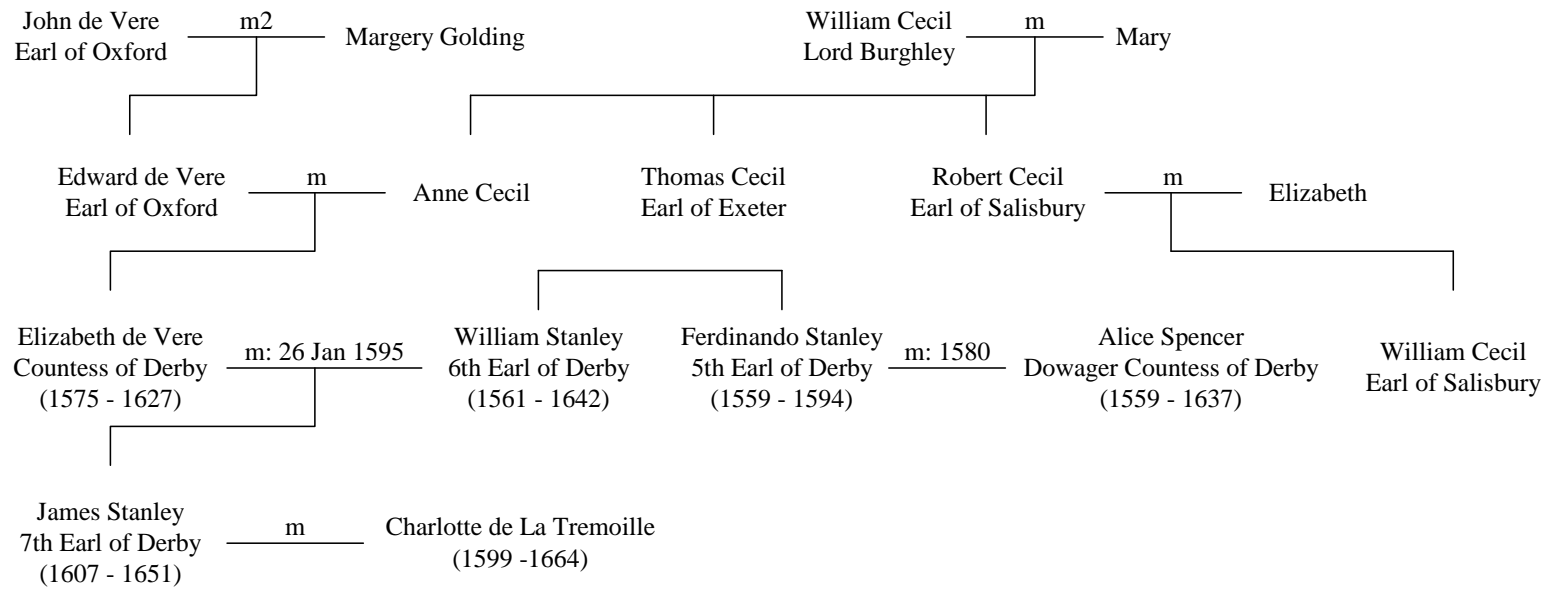
363



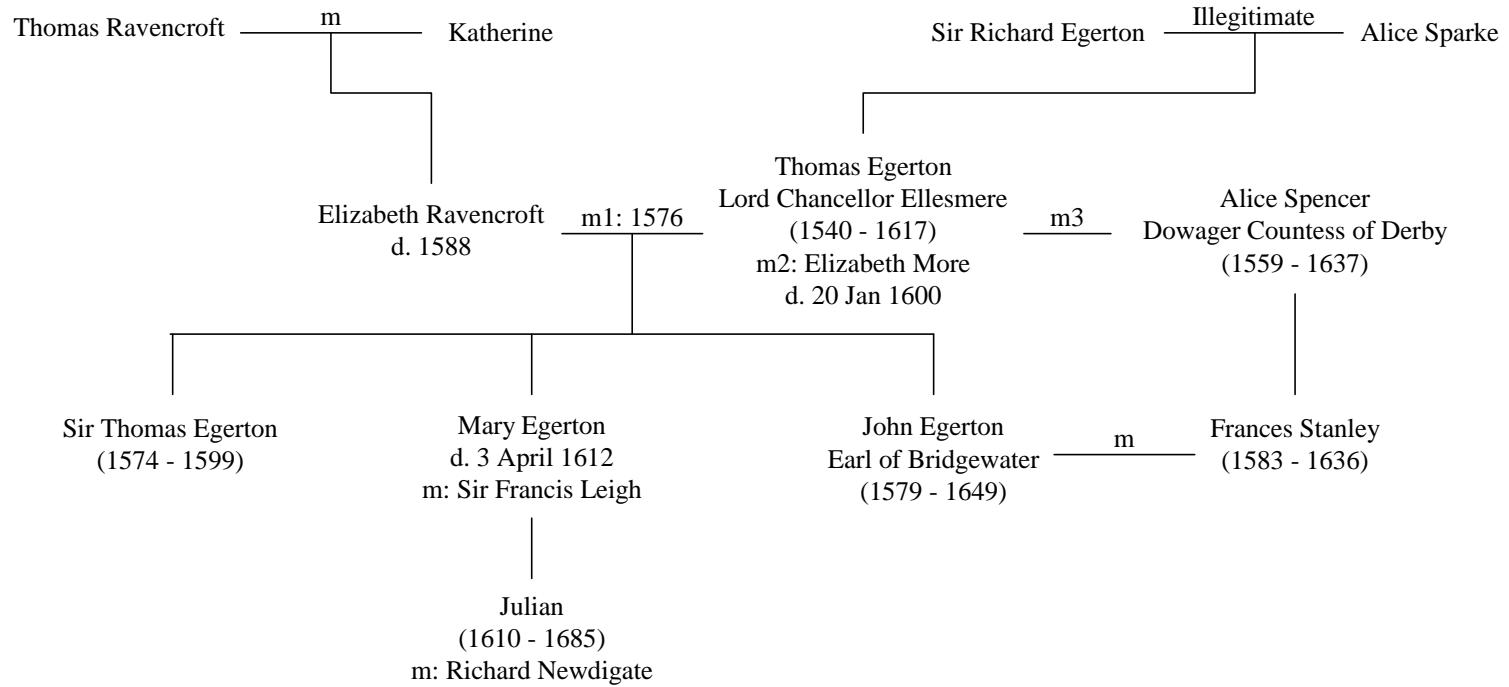
Tudor/Stanley Bloodlines



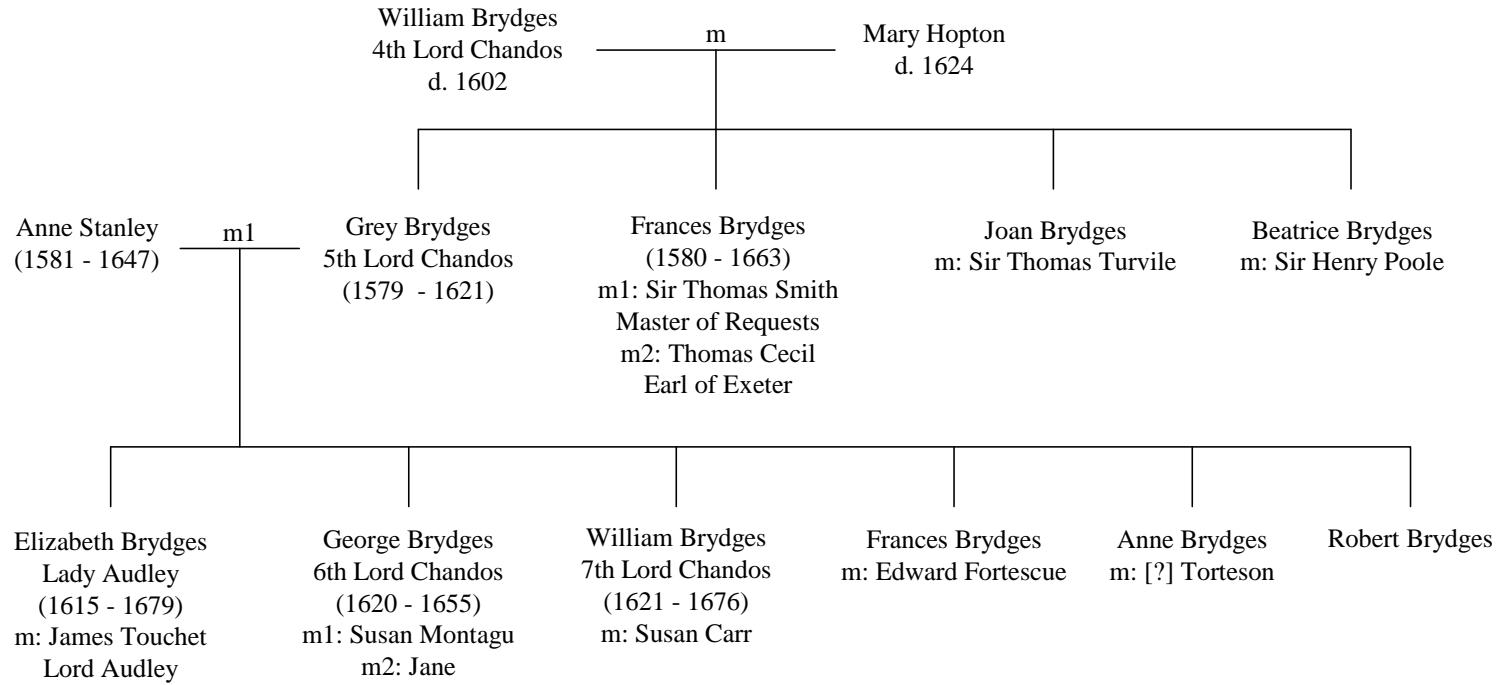
William Stanley and the Cecil Family



The Egerton Family

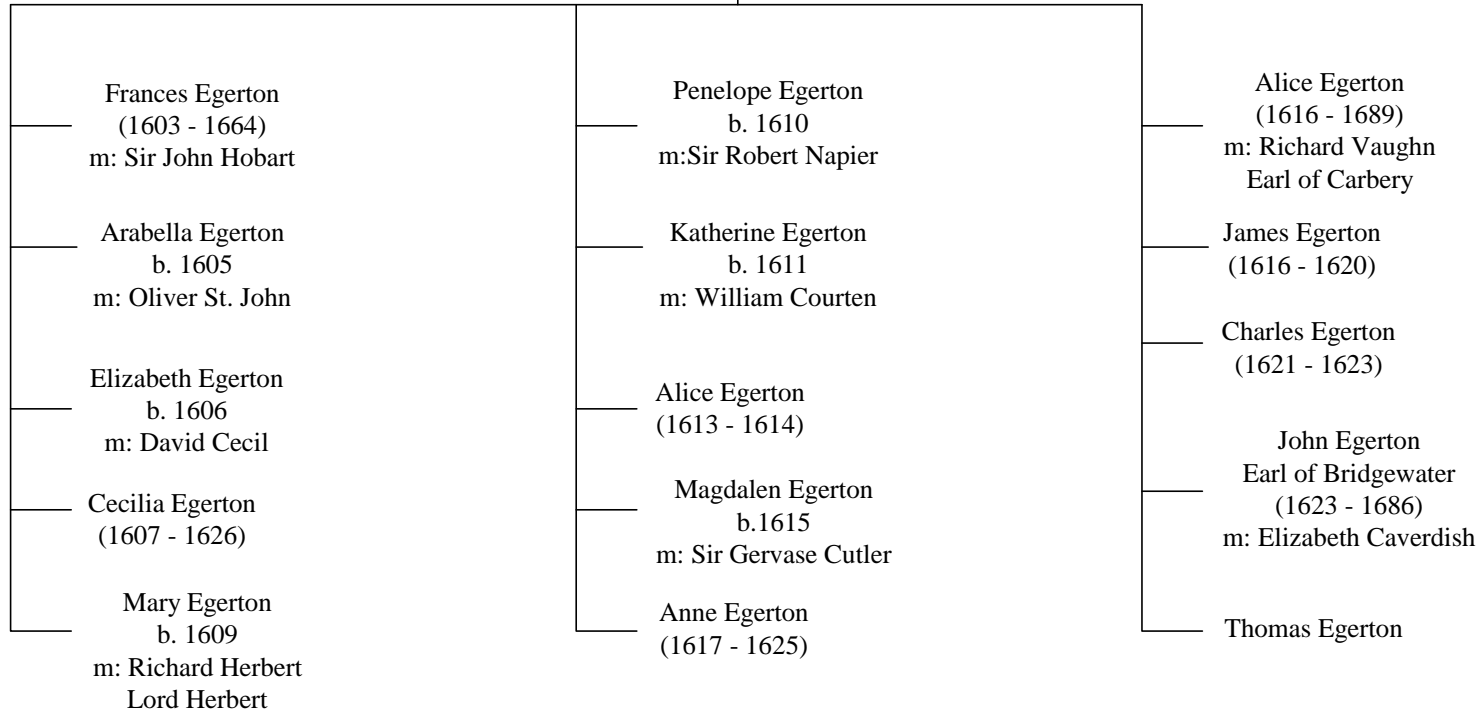


The Brydges Family

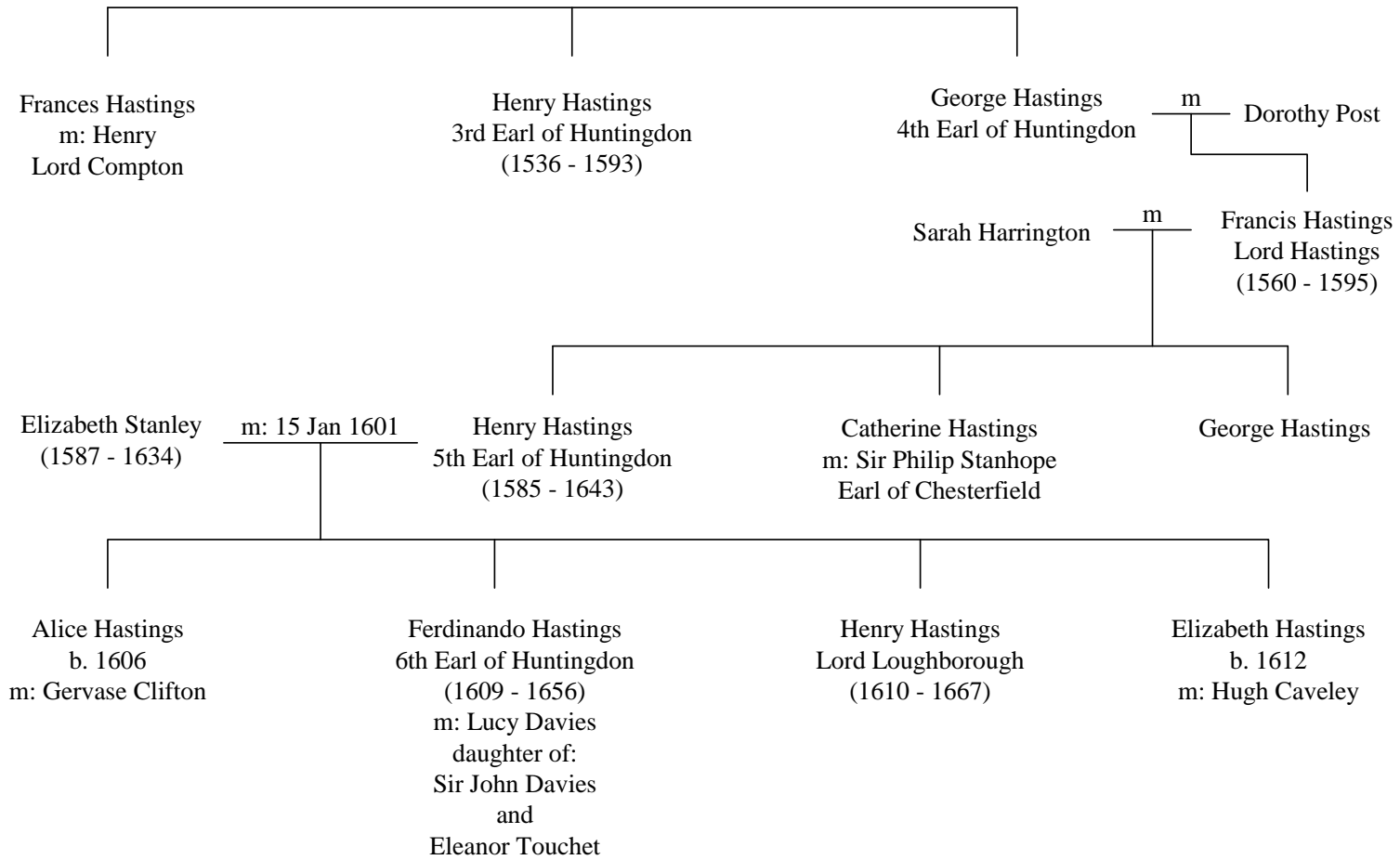


The Bridgewater Family

John Egerton
 Earl of Bridgewater
 (1579 - 1649)
 m: 24 Jan 1602
Frances Stanley
 Countess of Bridgewater
 (1583 - 1636)



The Hastings Family



The Touchet Family

